ORAL HISTORY RECORDING

TITLE: A J WHITTINGTON - WORLD WAR I

INTERVIEWEE: A J WHITTINGTON

INTERVIEWER: DAVID CHALK AND INTERVIEWEE'S DAUGHTER (?)

SUMMARY: FAMILY BACKGROUND; EARLY LIFE IN BROOKTON DISTRICT, WA; ENLISTMENT AT ONSET OF WORLD WAR I; WOUNDING ON GALLIPOLI; HOSPITALISATION IN HELIOPOLIS; LEAVE IN ENGLAND; THE SOMME; CAPTURE AT BULLECOURT; PRISONER OF WAR IN GERMANY; FOUR ESCAPE ATTEMPTS.

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START OF TAPE ONE - SIDE A

And I understand that you are an original?

Yes - Number 400.

Number 400, yes. And whereabouts did you enlist from?

Blackboy Hill - I was far up in the country, at Brookton.

At Brookton?

Yes. Then I got a letter from my cousin, he just joined a new battalion, the 16th. So I came sailing down and joined the same, the 16th - an original. That's why I got 400 for my number.

What were you doing up at Brookton? Were you parents on a farm there?

Yes. I went to school in xxx. I left school early, and then ... my dad had a fairly big lump of land at East Brookton, and so we were working on developing that when the war broke out. And, of course, I wanted to go straight away, but my dad was worried because my mother was away holidaying in [some spot in] Williams. So he said, well, he wouldn't say anything, wait till mum comes home. So I went in to meet the train from Williams and told mum what I wanted, and she said she wouldn't stop me. So that was all there was to it.

How old were you then?

Twenty-one and three months - had my twenty-second birthday in a repatriation hospital in Egypt. I lasted seven days on Gallipoli, for a start.

You would have landed with the 4th Brigade.

Yes.

The 25th or the 26th was it?

The 4th Brigade was made up of ...

The 13th, 14th, 15th and 16th.

Yes. And the 16th was made up xxx. Five companies in the old regiment - eight companies now.

Eight companies, yes.

Five companies from WA and three from South Australia. Well, we were mixed. Of course, they called that the 4th Brigade, and it was really half - less than half - south - and then the other brigade. Of course, Queensland and New South Wales had a battalion each.

Yes. You went into Blackboy Hill; you'd have known Percy Black fairly well, I suppose?

Oh, yes, he was a hero.

Yes, he was.

And, of course, he easily went from the ranks, up to become a captain. He was such a brave man - he got killed on the last - at Bullecourt. Bit of [generalship] - no generals had any brains. I think the best one who came along was old Monash, he was brainy.

Well, he was the brigadier for the 4th Brigade, wasn't he, for a while?

Yeah. In the 4th Brigade, the 16th Battalion - the other battalions - used to all - the 14th would xxx bodyguard.

Were they?

That was before.

Oh, I see, yes. That's interesting. And what happened to you on the Peninsula?

Well, we landed and went straight up - there was no front line - we climbed a hill - and that was Pope's Hill - and a couple of our officers, and a few men, went ahead, just leading, and they were grabbed by the ...

They were made prisoners, were they?

Yes. And while the word was passed along - must have been German officers - asking for our CO, and the old CO was up there with the other two. He just realised, took [in the situation] in the dark, in a glance - he darted back under the crest of a hill - and, of course, all our boys were along the left and right of this hill digging in. They knew he had old Pope ...

He was lucky.

They lost two officers straight away. Because they didn't know, you see, the information was being passed along by these darn German spies. And so old Popie realised it in time, once he got over the crest of the hill, where we were all digging in there.

And you were in the fighting up around Courtney's and Pope's Hill?

Yes. I fought for seven days.

It was a pretty hectic seven days, wasn't it?

Yeah. Never let off ... eased up the rifle fire the whole time. There was a bit of artillery fire, but the artillery was ours - some of the naval guns and some of our own artillery further back, firing over our heads, into the enemy lines.

And what happened when you were wounded?

Well, I would be xxx then - went to take another hill as soon as we'd moved in - still might have been Pope's Hill, I don't know. But we were - we kept this place till just after dark.

This would be early May?

Yes - 2nd May - second Sunday. We were all - we'd got on top of this hill, and we were all digging in, and fellows were getting knocked right and left. Anyhow, after about - I dug in a bit of a hole - I was in that and I got a terrific bang on the back. [I thought then] all the back of my shoulder was gone - it felt like that. So I said to my cobber - one of my cobbers was next, digging in to where I was - and there was an old sergeant there - suddenly this cobber shouted at us, said, 'Sandy's dead' - right alongside. And the other one - there was another one in it - [Honk Heasman] - he survived - he was a brave man. He became an officer after. But after we were digging, and I was digging in, I felt this terrific bump on the back of the shoulder, and my arm was swinging useless. I had to [turn round like that] and get back down past the dressing station - ambulance - this was in the dark - of course, we had a hurricane lamp. I said, 'I'm hit in the back of my shoulder', and this fellow - ambulance man - got a pair of scissors and went straight up there like that, tunic and everything. I went to look behind to see if I could see any damage to my shoulder, and I saw a little hole there. I knew I'd been hit in the front, but it hit the shoulder blade and expanded - took a chunk of bone. That's what made the big scar.

So it went right through, did it, the bullet?

Oh, yes - it hit the xxx - the first part of it - it was [too fresh] - it might have hit the shoulder blade, expanded, and took a chunk of bone out. I saw the X-rays after, and all one side of this - that there - like a mutton bone it is - took one bight right out of the edge of it. So that's what made the big scar, the useless arm.

And you were sent back to Alexandria, were you?

Yeah. Well, as soon as I got down to one of the dressing stations, the fellows put cotton wool and stuff on it, and then I had to go down to the bottom of the valley - that was the only communications - and they put my on a donkey there. So I was sitting on this donkey, and he took this donkey down to the base where the boats came in. All the wounded got down there,

and rowing boats came in - or pinnaces, I don't know which it was. But anyhow, we were there. As soon as we got down onto the beach, they gave us a hot cup of cocoa. So we were waiting for the next boat to come in, and the hospital ship was lying just offshore. And so it was not till after midnight we got on this little rowing boat, or pinnace, or whatever it was, to go out to the hospital ship. Of course, each time I got down there they'd all put another lot of dressing there - it was all soaked. It was as xxx as blazes going out there, exposed. So we got to the hospital ship after midnight - she was all lit up - a neutral ship.

So we went up the gangway - gangplank, or whatever it was - and I remember just sitting down, and they pulled all these bandages off again, and stuck a bit of rubber tube in - quite a big hole. Anyhow, I just sat there - it was pretty well numbed by that time - then they gave me a needle and sent me to bed. I had a beautiful dream.

What did you dream?

Well, all kinds of pleasant things, and, of course, it was ... just went to sleep with this drug; it was a wonderful sensation. I wanted them to give me some more the next night, but they wouldn't do it.

It was morphine, I suppose.

I think it must have been. Anyway, the next morning I woke up - I couldn't get up - a nurse put her hand behind me - this is on the hospital ship - and all the pillows were all soaked with blood, it was still bleeding. Anyhow, I was not suffering then because I still had the influence of this drug, I suppose.

After that, well, it was just a continuous ache for three months. I suppose all the nerves were shattered. So I was three months [in hospital].

Did you get back to the Peninsula again, or not?

Yes. After the August landing - the Pommies landed.

Yes, down Suvla Bay.

Yeah, and that was our bit of stupidity.

The whole campaign was, wasn't it?

Yeah. They were supposed to have run up and took the top of this hill, but they did nothing. Well, that was their commanders, you see.

He was relieved, wasn't he?

I don't know who was responsible, but they were quite useless. I think old Ian Hamilton's plan was alright - he was the commander-in-chief - but the mob that landed at Suvla Bay did nothing.

And you came back in August?

Yes. I was there only about three more weeks, and both battalions were getting pretty low with the sick, so they sent the Battalion off to Lemnos Island for a rest. And the fist thing you do when you go for a rest like that, you go [call] the doctor and they'd put a thermometer in your mouth - they popped this in - I don't know what the reading was. Anyhow, they said, 'Stand [one side]' - xxx. I didn't know, I just felt lackadaisical - I didn't care, whatever happened - and I said, 'Stand one side'. After that they put a number of us in a tent hospital on Lemnos Island, to be fed on milk. Because it was enteric fever, it perforated your stomach.

You had enteric fever, did you?

Yes. They said afterwards - I didn't know about it - another man had typhoid. So anyway, they had to feed you on a soft diet till your stomach could stand going eating anything solid.

And you didn't go back to the Peninsula after that?

No, not after the second trip. And then they kept us in this tent hospital on Lemnos Island, just feeding us on milk, and the big hospital ship came in, the Mauritania.

Oh, yes, I've heard of her.

And so all the mob that were disabled, they were put on the Mauritania for England. When I was in hospital in Egypt this arm was pretty useless, and the doctor said, 'I'll send you back to Australia'. Well, I said, 'I don't want to go back to Australia, I want to go to England'. So he sent me to England on this hospital ship, the Mauritania. And they kept us - of course, being patients, we were kept under observation then for another six months.

And you went across to England?

To England, yes.

Whereabouts in England did you go?

Portsmouth.

And to a hospital there?

Oh, just a hospital there. I remember I was getting about alright then, partly alright. All the patients were under observation, so I remember having a most interesting time there on Nelson's own flagship, the Victory, in dry dock.

That's right, yes.

I had an interesting look at the old Victory. So that was all passed over because this observation for the after effects - enteric - I could have been a carrier, and that's what it was for.

Yes, to stop it spreading.

Yes.

Did you come back to Egypt again after you had been in England?

No. I was kept in England then - Gallipoli was evacuated - and so they Turks made another go at the Canal.

That's right.

And they were repulsed. And it was getting towards the end of the Turks, and so they made one xxx and got repulsed. And so they made another go. There was a big battle at a place called [Acre]. The Turks were holding our forces under seige, but after that time the Light Horse were there, and the Light Horse put out a scouting party and scattered the Turks way up in the hills, a long way from the front. They were surprised; they could see the Turks withdrawing their guns in the distance. And, of course, that was the end of their resistance at that place. The Turks were resisting, and our fellows couldn't shift them, until the Light Horse got around their flank. When they saw them withdrawing their guns, of course, that was the beginning of the end. I wasn't there, of course.

You were in England at that time?

Yes.

How much time did you spend in hospital? Or were you mainly in a convalescent camp?

Yes, in England I was about three months in hospital, then they put us into a - the hospital patients - into a convalescent camp. They were feeding you up like pigs there, till you were ready for the front again. A couple of other fellows and me, we went off having a nice cool-off in the shade - they'd call you on parade - I'd go down to xxx xxx disappeared. Anyhow, a couple of other blokes and me said, oh, we are not going down there - the general will only count us and fall out. So we didn't take any notice. One sergeant came up, then the second one, so we immediately went down. And the silly old cow, who was OC of the camp, send - he'd been a civilian doctor, I think, in Cairo - and he put the boots in - or they came round - that was extreme punishment for disobedience and absent without leave, and so on - xxx gaol. So these other couple of blokes, and the men, we were in to this place where they xxx mines, or claimed they did. There was a corporal sergeant, inflicted the punishment on the fellow who deserved it.

Anyhow, he started - stripped off, you only had a pair of shorts on - you had to do physical jerks. There was this sergeant - a bully - he said - asked whether I'd been - I started to explain - he said, 'Shut your trap'. That was their job - bully. So we come to this xxx - I couldn't put my heart in it - some had shoes and flippers on - I said, 'I can't, I've been shot through the shoulder'. And he came over and looked at me, very sceptical. I said, 'It went in there' - he went round the back and there was a big red scar there. So he said, 'Stand to one side'. xxx xxx. I thought it was xxx been in the clink.

Yes, that's good. And when did you join the Battalion again?

Oh, after I had this eight days in the clink, went back to what they called oddments of the different battalions, to go back to Gallipoli. So we were there, they called that base details - I was in the game for about a week, I think. And then they were short of men on Gallipoli and so they went through this base details, and collected all the men who were available, to go back for reinforcements. So the first thing they do, they called the doctor, to go back for reinforcements - this was after - it must have been after the second period in hospital. So I went before the doctor again. He said, 'How are you?', I said, 'Alright', and that's all there was to it. He didn't look, he xxx at me. So I went on the draught for Gallipoli again.

This would be about November 1915?

No, it was August - end of August - just after the Pommies landed.

This was in Egypt?

Yes.

I see.

So I enlisted - I called it base detail - it was all oddments of the different units.

So you were in gaol in Egypt?

Yes.

That was a base there, or somewhere, wasn't it?

Abbasiya.

Abbasiya?

Yes, well, it must have been - that was after I came out of the clink, when I came back. So anyway, I went before the doctor again because I wanted to go over - I still had a crook arm, but it was healed. So the doctor said, 'How are you?', I said, 'Oh, alright' - 'Okay' - he didn't look.

Didn't he?

That's all. I had a cousin who was back on Gallipoli, you know - heard a bit that he was still there, so I was a bit interested to see what had happened on Gallipoli, although I never did much - I could have used a rifle bayonet, especially on sandbags in front. But anyhow, I was there for about three more weeks, and that's when they decided that the Battalion have a rest.

And then you discovered that you had enteric fever?

Yes.

And you went across to England?

Yes.

And you were there about six months?

Six months, yes.

So that takes us through to really February 1917 - that's 1916.

Yes, well, the Battle of the Somme was raging then - in France.

Had the Battalion gone across to ...

Oh, yes.

Well, the Battalion was in Egypt until the end of May ...

Yes.

... 1916, and then it went in June across to France.

Yes. And it was in France before - where we were, after coming from England, after - these fellows had got over the enteric - we were encamped there, we could hear, you know, over the front lines - hear them a mile away, I think - heavy bombardments there.

This was in France or in England?

Yes, in France.

Oh, in France.

We was within hearing aid of the bombardment on the front.

So you were in England, and then you were in hospital, then a convalescent camp ...

Yes.

... and then you went across to France?

Yes.

Do you know what month that was?

Oh, I don't know, it must have been ... during September, I think, or October because they took all those who were fit to travel, they took them back to France, and did a bit of training in France, within June.

Oh, I see, within range of the guns.

The front. So after a week or two at this place - they called it the Bull Ring there.

Oh, yes, I know - that's at Etaples.

Yes. And so we were there two or three weeks - we could hear what was going on in the front because of the bombardments. After about three weeks or so there they took us up and we rejoined our old units.

Whereabouts was that, do you remember?

Oh, it was near Albert, near Albert, because Albert was a big suburban town, just behind the front line.

This was near Pozieres, wasn't it?

Yes. Napoleon first went into action at Pozieres, I think. This town of Albert, it was surmounted by a statue of the Virgin, and the Virgin was hanging out on its side. That's all I remember about that. Of course, it was uninhabited be civilians. That's where we first joined up with xxx - the battalions were xxx term of duty at the front line for a week or so, and then they'd be relieved and another one would go in. We'd be back in reserve. So that was another - couple or three months, I think - until the Bullecourt disaster, of course. So that was a bit of generalship, the same as all the other generalships.

A bloody disaster, wasn't it?

They had a few tanks there, but they were only new tanks, they were only targets.

What rank did you have when you came back to France? Were still a private?

Still a private, yes.

And were you in one of the special sections, like a bomber, or a Lewis gunner?

I was in the scouts then.

You were in the scouts?

Yes.

What was the task? What did that involve?

The task - path finders - we were the scouts - called themselves the Intelligence Department - when a battalion did a tour of duty, the scouts had to go ahead and, you know, give their report.

Yes, I see, they had them going to the front line, for example ...

Oh, yes.

... to find out where the Battalion was supposed to be.

And then, when we got captured - of course, the Battalion overran the German positions, and then we got xxx back - we got kicked out. And I was kicked out - xxx - and I threw away everything I had. So I got half way across xxx line - no-man's-land - and there was a bit of a lull. So I popped up - I was only xxx xxx all over no-man's-land.

The Germans were?

Yeah. So they collected all of us and threw everything away to get back.

And you were defenceless?

Yes.

So when the Germans did overrun the Hindenburg Line, you tried to get back to ...

Yes.

... the British front line ...

Yes.

... or the Australian front line ...

Yes.

... and you got about half way back, did you?

Yes.

That was well done.

Well, we ended up in a deep shell hole, I was going to wait till it got dark to do the rest, but it was too late. The blighters went right over and were attacking our lines as they collected all the stragglers. So I xxx xxx

Didn't keep going?

Didn't look round. But it was xxx leading officer xxx xxx - a cousin of mine, he had to deliver a message or something, and he said they were in the bottom of a dugout, [blew it up].

Really? This is the 16th Battalion?

Mm.

This is before or after Bullecourt? This is while Bullecourt was happening, or after Bullecourt?

I think it was during the blue xxx xxx. Of course, old Pope was still our commander until after Egypt, I think, but I wasn't with them then.

END OF TAPE ONE - SIDE A

START OF TAPE ONE - SIDE B

That's right, he left in Egypt.

And when I joined them again - old [Drake Brockman] - he was, I believe, later on xxx - I don't know whether he was xxx, but he wasn't popular.

Wasn't he?

No. But the old bloke, Pope, he was a game old boy. I don't know whether he'd be invalided, or what.

No, he was transferred to another ...

Was he?

Yes.

He was a much more popular commander than Drake Brockman.

I see, yes.

Pope later become Commissioner for Railways.

Where did Drake Brockman come from?

Oh, I don't know, I suppose he was on the aristocracy - xxx. Old Popie, I saw him afterwards when I was on the station in Brookton, and he was on a special train going up, as his job, Commissioner for Railways. I saw him on the - he was going with a mob of other officials, on the Brookton platform - I had to be there - this bloke come along - I said, 'Good day, Colonel', and he said, 'Good day', you know, and he kept going. But that was his job, as Commissioner of Railways. But he was a front-line soldier, I don't think the other bloke ever was.

The 4th Brigade was fortunate in having some good officers.

Oh, yes.

Brand was good, then, of course, there was Monash, originally.

Yes.

There was Cannon and Terry [McSharie] in the 15th.

Who?

McSharie.

Oh, yes. I didn't know much about he who went through all the - well, after I got taken prisoner, that was on 11 April, I think.

My grandfather was captured then.

Was he? But what used to annoy us afterwards, we all learned the German position, and our artillery, instead of waking up and shelling - counter-attack on the part of the Germans - they

did nothing.

I know the story.

So it was really disgusting.

You'd have stayed there, wouldn't you?

Mm?

You would have stayed there and been able to been reinforced ...

Oh, yes.

... got more ammunition up, if the artillery had opened up?

Yes, if they had, but it seemed to me, they did nothing, although that was just our general xxx.

Yes, it was xxx. And at Pozieres and Mouquet Farm, did you see any of the fighting there, or not?

Oh, yes.

You did?

After we got there - and Pozieres had taken place, and we rejoined them, and then they made an attack on Mouquet Farm. Well, I was in that. Of course, there was some - I think our blokes got into position, but they lost touch with [Weir], and so they did nothing, they had to retire. While we were retiring there - went back - it might have been before we started to retire - I got a trip! bang! - a big junk of shell or something hit my steel had, put quite a dent in and knocked the hat off. It would have caught me about there.

Above your nose?

Yeah.

It would have probably killed you.

Oh, it probably would have mutilated me anyhow - but it dented this tin had and knocked it down onto the ground in front of me. So that one piece of tin hat saved my life.

What else do you remember about that night attack at Mouquet Farm?

Well, as I say, they must have lost connection with what was behind. Anyhow, the officer or sergeant in charge could do nothing because they'd lost connection with the reinforcements behind, so they just had to withdraw. It was during that withdrawal - or before it started - anyhow, that's when I got my tin hat dented.

What company were you in?

I was in the scouts at that time, but I was with C Company.

You were originally C Company?

And then they picked out - one time they had a rifle shooting contest amongst scouts, and I got up pretty well amongst the shots - I was about fourth, I think - so I was to be a sniper then. They gave me a telescopic sight. Then, of course, just after that time, there was a big rush of flu on and they sent me to England. They sent all the sick and wounded back to England for Christmas.

This is December 1916?

Yes. And that's where I wondered what hit me because I had a bad attack of flu, but I soon recovered. We had Christmas in England and went back to the front. I was still in the scouts.

Who was the officer in charge of the scouts?

Bill [Linus].

Bill Linus, I've heard of him, yes.

He was very popular too. Another one was [Rodge], I think, but Bill Linus was very popular with the boys. And of course, Bill Linus had been a shop assistant in Brookton.

So you knew him well?

We knew him, but oh, gosh, he was a fine fellow, he was game, and not at all pompous. He came back alright, but he was a good man, good leader.

What friends did you have when you first enlisted? Was there anybody from Brookton that you knew?

Oh, this cousin of mine, he was in the same battalion.

What was his name?

Martin - George Martin.

George Martin?

Yes. And he had been in a number from around my home in Brookton - there was about eight - there was a little community hall there, and there was about eight men in that community hall who were at the landing on Gallipoli. Had about eight, I think - six were killed - in the course of another couple of weeks - and two were wounded. So they were all war casualties.

Who did you go away with? Did that cousin of yours enlist? Oh, he enlisted after you, didn't he?

Yes. He was in - they were just making up the 16th Battalion, so I hopped down to Perth and

enlisted in the same battalion, you see, and we were in the same - different companies, that's all - B Company from south-west, and A Company from Goldfields, and so on. And so we were both 16th originals - original 16th. But the other fellows around Brookton - as I told you just now - three Kerlewises, one was a captain in the regular forces, and the other two boys were killed on Gallipoli.

What was their name?

Kerlewis.

K-E-R-L-E-W-I-S?

Yes - connected with xxx in Perth. Anyway, this one - one of the Kerlewises - he was in the regular forces, you see - he was a captain - and the other two were farm boys from Stony Crossing. That's was where we all enlisted from, xxx.

Stony Crossing?

Yes. There was two boys - the three boys were on the farm, I think, with their father. One joined the 12th Battalion and the other two came into the 16th.

That would be the 11th Battalion, wouldn't it?

Yes.

11th.

Might have been the 12th, I think - there was a company of them - one company made up partly of Tasmanians.

That's right, well, that was the 12th.

One was in the 12th and the other ... the other three were in the 16th. And the tragedy is, there

was only one of them survived. You see, one was a captain in the regular forces, and of course, he was killed, and the other two boys - only one survived, as I said, he may have, after a while, after his three brothers had died.

There were some tragedies. Then you were with the Battalion at Mouquet Farm, and then you were with them right through until December when you got the flu, and you went back to England, and then you came back to France again in early 1917, I assume?

Yes. Well, I was in the scouts then, and we had a rifle competition, and they picked out the best shots.

For snipers.

I was pretty high.

And you became a sniper?

Yes. I was then with the scouts, you see, but I was issued with a telescopic sight. But that disappeared completely when I xxx hospital with flu. And then to everyone's surprise, they loaded all the fellows in hospital straight back to England for Christmas. So I had Christmas in England.

That would be nice. What happened then? What do you remember about that?

After that we was in hospital, for a start, at Christmas, then afterwards we rejoined the able bodied men - I went back to France, rejoined - they kept sending reinforcements to the Battalion, so I went back to France then. And that was when I was in the scouts. So that's as far as I know.

And then you were with the Battalion there, through until Bullecourt?

Yes. That was the biggest mess that you ever heard of. Our Artillery did nothing to stop the pressure on the front line.

And when you were captured, which camps did you go to? Were you wounded at Bullecourt?

No. They kept a lot of our prisoners in a barn there - oh, we had for bunks a bit of straw - and I had trench feet at the time. Of course, your feet swell up. So we were in [Dramen]. Mostly able bodied fellows were kept there - old Horrie Ganson was one of them, I think - to work behind the lines.

That's right.

My feet - they must have looked at them - and they sent me back to Germany - I went to Friedrichsfeld xxx and Horrie was kept working behind the lines.

He was there until December, in fact ...

Yes.

... before he got to Friedrichsfeld.

Yes. He was a wonderful old worker, old Horrie - he still is. When I got - this is after I got captured, you see - with trench feet I was sent straight back to Germany - Friedrichsfeld - and Horrie was kept working behind the lines.

Where else were you? How long were at Friedrichsfeld?

Oh, about three months, I think - two or three months - but we were starved, and we had no Red Cross parcels. They hadn't got in touch with us - the Red Cross hadn't - but after they got in touch - that might have taken three months - then they sent us foodstuffs - oh, wonderful. They kept us alive, we were well fed, but before that we had xxx mangel stew - oh, it was pretty terrible. You could fill your belly and you'd still be hungry.

And you were a private so you were required to work, weren't you?

Yes. Well, all the privates, up to the sergeants, I think, had to work.

Did the NCOs have to work?

Oh, yes, a lot of them did. I know one of my cobbers, he was a corporal, he had to work.

What was his name?

Williamson.

What was his first name?

We all called him Jock.

Jock Williamson?

Jock Williamson. I think his wife was part of a ladies auxiliary.

And he was a 16th Battalion man?

Yes. I remember old Jock, he had to wear it, and he was a corporal.

Well, that's a bit unusual. I know a Corporal Wheeler from the 15th Battalion, and he wasn't required to work, although he did go and work so he could escape - couldn't get out of those big camps. What work did you go and do?

Well, they sent me down to what they called a commando working party, at a place called Ohligs.

How do you spell that?

O-H-L-I-G-S. When I got down there this working party - they called them commandos - there

was about eighty prisoners there, in this camp - they'd be in a big hall of some kind. And so when I got there there was five Canadians there, two other Englishmen, and one Aussie, me.

You were the only Aussie?

Yeah.

What were the rest of the men?

Mostly French. Some of them, well, they'd been there for about four years, and so they - only one adventurer who came in, he made several attempts to escape, but he got caught each time, he never made xxx. I asked him what was his religion, and he said Anarchist. So he was a quirky sort of fellow, but he had plenty of guts.

Was he Australian or English?

English, yes - no, he was a Frenchman, that bloke - Anarchist. Well, some of the other Frenchmen were good cobbers of mine, they helped me get away, the last time I got away from there. I had to get hold of a pair of wire cutters, and so one bloke, where he worked, he used a pair of these wire cutters - he was dead scared of giving them to me that night because he thought somebody might see him, you see. Anyway, I had these wire snips, so I went out and cut a hole through the window - barbed wire across. But there were two strands, you see, each wire had to be cut twice - barbed wire - two strands. Anyway, I got a hole cut there. Two of my French friends, they understood what was happening, I had to go back and xxx them out - no sound to anyone - they hopped out of bed. One put a rug down over the barbed wire so I could get into the street - that was seven or eight feet down. So they put a rug over the wire's I'd cut, and then held another rug while I dropped. And they xxx my bag of provisions then. They closed the window after that. And so I was gone into the night.

And Horrie was telling me that you had four or five escapes.

Oh, yes.

And the last time you were successful ...

Yes.

... but you arrived in Holland the day before the Armistice.

Yes, only to find out that the Armistice had been signed. But still, it was lucky for me, in a way. I'd got through - I had to walk into Holland - the village of Arnhem I think it was - in Holland.

To Arnhem?

It might have been - I just forget the name now. Anyway, I'd got through, I'd got some information from a couple of young Pommies who'd got caught on the frontier there, and they said - one of them was sent back to Friedrichsfeld where I was. This bloke told me, he said, 'We should have been off the road. And just to the north of us there was a big pine plantation.'. And he said, 'We should have been on that instead of following the roads' - see, and they ran into a sentry. And so that was the information I wanted. They said, 'Go up the road, turn in at the railway, cross over the railway, and then get off into this pine plantation. Don't go on the road.'.

So I followed all those instructions, at night. I found out I had the right equipment. I had a luminous pointed compass, so I could tell where I was going, but previous to that I was only able to get an ordinary compass, and you had to light a match. Well, the third time I went straight from there - I was out amongst the sentries because I came upon one bloke doing his beat when I was crouching behind the hedge. I could tell it was a sentry because I could hear his bayonet flopping against this, as he marched. And I was dead scared to light a match and read my compass - and it was cloudy. If it had been starlight, I'd have been right - but it was cloudy. So I was scared to light a darn match, and I was sneaking along the road there - a bit of a track - run bang into the sentry. But if I'd have had the right compass then - but you couldn't get it.

And you made that compass, I suppose, did you, from a razor blade, or something?

No, no, it was a made compass, only, you see, it was only just an ordinary compass, you had to light a match to see it. So when I got amongst the sentries I was scared to light a match. If only

I'd had the luminous pointed compass then, I would have been able to get away.

How did you get the luminous pointed compass?

Well, I didn't get that till after I was - towards the finish, when I'd been - after I'd had that stroke of TB, they put me in charge of - working for the rest of the TB patients.

You had a lot of sicknesses while you were away, didn't you?

Yes. Anyway, I got that - I don't know how - you could get these things by giving some of your Red Cross parcels to the people who were hungry, and I fortunately got one with a luminous point.

Was that through the guards, or through German civilians?

Through German - it must have been German civilians - might have been Russians who were employed by the Germans. Anyway, I got this compass, and so I reckon that if I'd had that before I would have been away before. But not having it, and getting amongst the sentries, I was frightened to light a match. It was a terrific worry to be on the frontier and couldn't get over it.

And how were you caught at that time?

This was the last time I'd been, as I say, orderly in the sick barracks for a long while, and there's - the Germans made one of their big offensives - they took out one of the British Armies, captured a couple of hundred thousand. And so one of those young blokes, he came to the camp where I was working as an orderly, and he said, 'I got caught on the frontier'. And he described if they'd got over the line, at this village called [Bree], got over the line, and walked straight, south-west, to the frontier. And of course, they didn't know any better where the frontier was, but they said on the north side was a big pine wood.

And you had to go up to that?

They'd got over this line, get out into the pine wood, then go straight ahead. And I went ahead,

and I kept going ahead, till I came to a big wide river.

Was that the Ems?

The [Muse] - a couple of miles inside of Holland. So I knew I was in Holland, but what the country actually consisted of, I don't know, but probably a number of little tracks, all guarded. I got off the beaten tracks, that luminous pointed compass saved me because I could follow a compass and get through the pine woods. So I kept going, and I still don't know what the frontier consisted of - probably a ditch, or a road - but I wasn't interested in anything as I kept going till I come to this big wide river.

This is all in the dark, isn't it?

Yes. And just before dawn I come to this river, Muse - a big wide river. Well, that pulled me up, but I knew I was in Holland. So the next morning I just hugged the river down, running parallel to the frontier - hugged it down till I come to a Dutch village, and I saw a bloke in uniform, and I stopped him in the street. And, of course, I couldn't speak German - I understood a few words. Anyhow, this bloke knew I was a prisoner, and so he took me down to the house of a priest, and the priest could speak English. And I said, 'I've escaped from Germany', and I wanted the British consul for Rotterdam - I didn't know anything about consulates. So this priest said, 'I'll send you back to join up with the interned naval division' - that had been taken prisoner - disarmed - when the Germans took Antwerp. And the garrison at Antwerp had about four thousand men, so I had to escape into Holland and they were disarmed, and kept interned. So they sent me down to these internees. About two or three days after I was there, the Armistice was signed, but we didn't know anything about that.

When I joined these internees and landed in England, the English papers had 'Four Australians arrived in Hull after having escaped from Germany'. So they knew at home, in Brookton, that I'd escaped - it came out in the paper.

Oh, I see, they saw your name?

Yes - 'Four Australia arrived in Hull, England, after having escaped from Germany'.

Isn't that interesting?

So they all knew before they got any word from me.

So that was good, wasn't it?

Mm.

Who were the other four? Do you remember them?

There was two blokes from one party.

Were they Australians, the other three?

Oh, yes, they were. It said four Australians arrived in Hull. There was two blokes from one party, and one bloke from another party, and me, in the third party.

You went on your own?

Yes. Well, I started off with a young Tommy, but he got caught before, but he got sick and he couldn't go on after the second night - took two or three nights to get onto a part of Germany. And the second night he couldn't go on - he started coughing blood - he said he'd have to give himself up.

So what happened then - I wrote to him after - never heard any reply. So either got shot, or he died, but he didn't reply anyway.

You wrote to him in England?

Yes. Well, I went on, of course.

What was his name, do you remember?

Proud, I think.

END OF TAPE ONE - SIDE A

START OF TAPE TWO - SIDE A

You met the Pommy who got caught there, yes.

On the front.

At Friedrichsfeld?

He had a couple of cobbers with him - the three got caught - so he told me - I used to laugh about that, in the hospital - and so he told me, he said, 'There's one bloke ...' - three of them got caught - he said, 'One bloke is sick, he's not going back', so that was what I wanted. I hopped up to the Red Cross xxx - our Red Cross - and said, 'Put me on the place where this bloke's going back'. So I got back there, and I was there - about Monday, I think - I put in the rest of the week working, and that's when I saw the opportunity to - I got the information about this [plane]. So I was on the same side of the Rhine as this other one, but the Rhine was an impossible obstacle to get over. See, I was on the west of the Rhine, and I went up to this village that this fellow was working at - I was only on this other working party with this other cobber, and he gave me all the information. And then the poor blighter got ...

Let out. I might just get a photograph ...

(Break in interview)

And when you were working in Germany, were you always based at Friedrichsfeld?

I was what?

Based at Friedrichsfeld? I mean, was that your camp?

Oh, yes.

Did you go out working to various places from Friedrichsfeld?

I did from Friedrichsfeld, but then after I had this TB haemorrhage, they put me in charge of the rest of the patients in that hospital. I had to cart the food down to them, and that was after I'd been on that, I was getting itchy feet again, I wanted to be doing something. So I met this young Tommy who'd been taken prisoner when the English Army was ...

This must have been, what, September 1918, or thereabouts?

Oh, 1918 ... September ... I don't know when they was taken, but it must have been about then because actually we ... I met this bloke while I was still being the orderly in the hospital. I met this bloke, then he said three of them were escaping, and they got caught on the frontier. That's when they should have been in the north amongst the pine wood.

Well, when he came back - I met him, just after he did his escape, so he gave me all the latest information about what to do. And, of course, I had to find this out in the dark, and it was quite a very good description. So when he said, 'You go up, stay along parallel to the railway. At the village of [Riege] you cross over the railway, and then you get off the road after half a mile, into the pine woods.'. I followed his instructions, and I kept going till I come to this big, broad river.

The Muse?

Yeah. And from then on ...

How did you get across the river? Oh, you went down the river to the village, yes.

I knew I was in Holland, a couple of miles inside the frontier, but I don't know what the frontier consisted of.

Did you have a map?

No.

But I suppose you'd seen maps in the camp.

Oh, yes; and I knew that once, if I could keep going - I knew that I was in Holland when I come up against this river because from memory I knew that the frontier runs parallel to the river.

What were you doing down at Ohligs? You went to Friedrichsfeld, what, about May 1917, or thereabouts?

Oh, after Bullecourt.

And then you went out to Ohligs, didn't you?

Yes.

What work were you doing there?

I was put - the disposal of the local council - say, put you on some job - and I was put on a job mixing mortar for bricklayers. I escaped from there, and, of course, they caught me again.

Whereabouts were you billeted at that time? What were your quarters?

Oh, that was a big old hall-like place, it had a stage one end, and the rest - I believe it had been an old estaminet of some kind - there were about eighty prisoners there.

And they were all in bunks, were they?

Well, there was some of them in bunks, and there was five Canadians, and two Englishmen, and they were up on what used to be the stage. And all the rest were Frenchmen. Of course, one Canadian, he'd had a go - before I any go, he'd had a go, and got caught, and he must have convinced himself that it wasn't worthwhile. None of the others had a go.

There were a lot of Belgians working there, and could go and talk to our Frenchmen in the xxx. And the Frenchmen would give them a bit of food and that kind of thing - their home was occupied Belgium, you see.

Oh, I see, yes.

We were getting worked up nicely, getting a fellow being fed up, and he was going to lead us all out. We were all to catch a tram ride - tram - to go into Dusseldorf, then get on the train and off to the frontier - all worked out nicely. But the blighter got scared and he pulled out of it. So these two Frenchmen that I was going to go with, they were disgusted, and they said, oh, they are going to have a go - they followed this other fellow's instructions. And so I xxx to me, I needn't go in it, unless I had the chance. We went right, and we got on the tram alright, and one Frenchman said, '[Ride free] at Dusseldorf'. But he didn't know that we had to change trams to get into Dusseldorf.

So when we got to the end of the change, whether it were changed, these two Frenchmen - they'd been sitting over there in the bus, and I was over here - I wasn't supposed to walk with them, I trailed behind. And we all sat there, long enough to arouse suspicion. And these two Frenchmen eventually got out and walked down the street. They looked behind, like this, and a bloke behind yelling out 'halt!' - it was a German soldier chasing them. And I pretended I wasn't part of the ... I never even looked round, and he rushed straight past me, chasing these Frenchmen. As soon as he got past - it was war time, you see, the streets were very badly lit - so I ducked down one side street, still not looking around for anyone - because if I'd have looked around, I might have ...

Aroused suspicion, yes.

Anyway, he rushed past me, chasing these Frenchmen, and I ducked down a side street, and then walked down, going north. And there was snow all over the ground. And as I was walking down, and got out of the town, and walking past meadows, and it was white with snow. I still refused to look round, and I heard a fellow calling out, 'kummalier, kummalier' - something like that - 'Come here - here, come'. And I still didn't look round, but after a few seconds - split

second - I saw a dog galloping along the snow, and it was a fellow coming behind on a bike, calling his dog. And so he rushed past me - I xxx across him, and his dog went too. But if I'd have looked behind and got panicked.

Yes, it would have aroused suspicion.

Yes.

That was good. What month was that? How long had you been at Ohligs before you went with them?

Oh ...

So this would have been ...

Not six months - couldn't have been six - it might have been six months.

It was winter, wasn't it?

Yes. When I finally went, the Belgian was going to show us the way to get to Holland. Well, of course, he got scared and wouldn't go, and the Frenchmen decided they were going to go. It seemed rather foolhardy xxx that they didn't go, we had to change trams before we got to Dusseldorf.

Where did you end up? Did you ever find out?

Well, after these two Frenchmen got chased, I kept going until I got into Dusseldorf - a big city - and at the end of one of the bridges over the Rhine there was a park. I went and sat down in that park, puzzled as to what I should do. So I had a bit of German money on me, I thought there might be a toll bridge, so I got a mark and that ready. After sitting down in this park for an hour or so, I decided to ... might as well get caught now than get caught in the morning.

So I put the German note in my hand, went up, and there was a xxx - at the end of the rail there

was a walkway - there was no - it might have been a toll collector. Anyway, this was after midnight, so there was no-one there. I thought I'll be sure to run into him at the other end, and the same thing. I suppose it must have been a toll, but they must have taken off at midnight because the Frenchmen told me after, he went across in the tram the next day, and they had a toll gate. So I'd got over the bridge, didn't pay anything, and I walked over the Rhine.

Yes, that was good.

That was the biggest obstacle. And then once I was on the west of the Rhine - well, I only had to keep west of the Rhine, go north till I could find a description where this young bloke had told me - this was the village of [Bree].

This is on your second escape, is it?

Er ... no, it must have been ...

This is your third?

Third.

The one with the Frenchmen, and on the tram, was that your first escape?

No, that was the second escape.

That was your second escape?

Of course, we'd been arranging with the Belgian - or they had - that we could get away - he'd show us the way.

That was your second escape?

Yes.

And what happened after you left Dusseldorf?

Yes. Well, that's when I walked until I got into Dusseldorf, and sat in the park there waiting.

And you went across the bridge?

No, this was before I crossed, I was out in the park, waiting, wondering what to do. And I thought it I sat there - I was just wondering what to do - so I thought it would be as well to try the bridge. So I got this mark note ready, and bolted up across, ready to pay my way, but there was no sentry there. I kept going - I thought he'd be sure to be at the other side - and there was none there. So I was over the Rhine, and that's where I wanted to be.

And what did you do then?

Then I just kept walking for ... That must have been the second attempt - I kept walking anyway, still on the road, not knowing anything better. And all of a sudden I ran - yell of 'Halt!' - ran into the sentry on the road because I didn't know, I thought I was probably ten miles upon the frontier, and I was right on it.

Really?

I didn't know it because the difficulty is getting a map - to know where you are. Anyway, he just made me stop there; he blew his whistle and some relief come up, and they marched me back to their ...

That was a shame, after getting across the Rhine like that.

And the bloke who'd come to collect me the next day, he put a big cord around my hand and he held the other end with his hand, so I couldn't have got away - this was daylight, of course.

So they took you back to Friedrichsfeld, did they?

Yes.

And did you have to spend time in solitary confinement?

Oh, yes. So after they tried you, you were punished for attempting to escape, and they would give you solitary confinement.

For how long?

A fortnight - it could have been starvation. By that time, of course, the Canadians provided me with food. As soon as the Red Cross found me, I got parcels the same as the Canadians did.

There were Canadians at Friedrichsfeld too?

Yes - they were on this working party - called Ohligs.

And you did solitary confinement at Ohligs or Friedrichsfeld?

Well, the first time - oh, I just forget the order of them - but the firs time they put me in a xxx gaol in Ohligs. I was put in their solitary confinement, but, of course, by that time the sentries used to have to come up with their starvation allowance - one of the sentries from the working party where we were camped, with the eighty people. My other cobbers - the Canadians - could bribe this fellow to hand me a packet of biscuits. I would have been tortured with starvation, only they sent me enough. Of course, they sent me - there were two soldiers and a corporal in charge, as well as a number of civilians, on night duty. See, well, this fellow - one of the soldiers, he must have been probably put on off duty from the front, whatever it was - anyway, he could be bought. So they'd give him a bit of food if he'd deliver a bit to me in the clink. This was in the civilian clink. I put in a fortnight there.

What were the German rations?

Oh, it would have been starvation.

What would that have been, a bit of black bread?

Two slices of black bread and water, that's all you got for two days; and the third day you got one slice of bread and a bowl of soup. And so it was starvation allowance.

Anyway, thus sentry from the base - where all the prisoners were, they called that a commando - eighty Frenchmen in it, and five Canadians.

And what were the Canadians doing? Were they also working for the council?

Oh, no, they had different jobs, mostly for the council. But one fellow tried to escape - he was working rouseabout, anywhere - and, of course, he tried to escape by getting through the toilet window. He had a hole file that wouldn't cut anything, so he had to prize the staples out that held the wire - this was done before I started. Anyway, one attempt to escape must have finished him, he didn't try again - none of the others tried.

Do you remember the names of any of those Canadians, or not?

Yes. The fellow who had made one attempt was George [Flewelyn].

How do you spell that?

Oh, Flewelyn - I suppose it's ...

F-L-E-W, I suppose.

Anyway, he was a Canadian from the maritime provinces, New Brunswick, and two of the others were from the wheat belt.

Plains, yes.

Manitoba or Saskatchewan. The two Englishmen, they were shop assistants, I think, from England - but they hadn't been there long.

And what were their names?

One was [Bret], the other was [Baden].

Baden?

They used to be sarcastic, poking fun at me - 'Never get out of Germany while xxx your arse'. Anyhow, they wouldn't try. So anyway, I'd tried three times from that particular place.

From Ohligs?

Yes. One was with the Frenchmen.

That was the second time? The first time was when you went out through the window with the blankets and so on, or was that the third time?

That was the third time - couldn't have been the third time because - I forget, it must have been the second time - because the Frenchmen - that would be the last time I escaped from that particular place - it must have been the third time. Anyway, I'd cut the window and they joined in, the Frenchmen. And they come out - one put his back over the torn barbed wire, and I helped put the other blankets for me to hold on till I got down to the street - it was only about seven or eight feet, but it had been too far ...

It was a stone building, was it?

Yes - looked like it. But these windows, they were the problem. You see, they'd barbed wired them. Anyway, when I and the two Frenchmen - I'd cut the windows - I think everyone might have been listening in.

I suppose in the hall, everybody could hear you, couldn't they?

I thought I'd be smart, I'd put a bit of rag in the pliers mouth so it wouldn't click. But every time I cut a wire it went ping! So anyway, I got it all cut, bit enough to get through, and [guard

attacked these Frenchmen] - my cobbers - and they come out, put the xxx down so I could get over the barbed wire, and then another one for me to hold onto, and then handed me nine week's rations.

That was from your Red Cross parcels?

Yeah.

That you'd saved up?

Yes. Then I headed off into the night - the Frenchmen shut this window again. And the next morning - it was a Sunday morning, I think - a German corporal - Frenchman told me afterwards - he counted all the xxx xxx in threes - there was one man short. He went back and counted them again, and there was still one man short. So he said, 'Whit-ting-ton'.

What does that mean?

My name.

Oh, Whittington, yes, I see.

And there was no answer. That's all I wanted to know, he said - 'Whit-ting-ton' was missing.

So you had a reputation by that time?

Yeah.

What was the first escape that you made from there? What happened at that time?

Well, I forget where I went, but there used to be a xxx place with the taps for water and washing, surrounded by barbed wire, right up over the top.

This is - whereabouts was this?

This is in Ohligs. See, these barbed wires had got loose. So one of the Canadians - he worked at a butchers shop - he brought back some hooks, and he hooked them up, and hooked them down, enough for me to get through. Then he shifted his hooks.

I went on my own then - I was out for about a couple of nights, and I got caught. I passed a couple of people in the street - I was new to the game, I was a bit scared, I didn't stop, I just walked off through the meadows. After a while they come after me, and they had a dog. So I thought I'd be unobserved; actually, they knew of it because it was always announced in the paper. A little boy used to go to work where we went to work, and he was going to school or work - he was learning English - and he asked me what I'd been doing. I said I wanted to go home and see my people - I didn't tell him I hated the place. But he said, 'Yes' - he understood - 'In the papers it was written'. It had evidently been reported in the papers that a fellow had escaped.

And did they do that as a matter of course? In other words, if somebody escaped ...

It would be announced in the local paper.

So that people could look out for them?

Yeah. I didn't know that, anyhow, that's how I became prominent in the German newspapers.

The last escape was from Friedrichsfeld, was it?

Yes.

That was from the hospital?

That was from the hospital, yes. But see, I'd left the hospital for one week to join up with this other Tommy who had got caught. So he gave me all the information.

So you knew?

I got the luminous pointed compass.

Why were you sent back up to Friedrichsfeld again? Why didn't you stay at Ohligs?

Oh, well, because I was ... the last time, when I was sent back to Friedrichsfeld, that's when I had this haemorrhage.

Oh, of course, yes.

They put wet blankets - wet sheets - over me. They gave me the job then of being rouseabout for the other patients - all had TB I suppose.

So you escaped four times?

Yes.

And the fourth time you were successful?

Yes.

And so you must have spent a fortnight each time you came back ...

Yes.

... in solitary?

Yes. Once was in the civil gaol in Ohligs, and the other two times would be in Friedrichsfeld, the base camp.

What were the gaols like there?

Oh, the gaols, you'd have had two days dark cell, and one day with lights on, but you still had

the starvation [rations]. But I could, in the dark cell, I could get my bunk over and get up near a crack in the window and read.

What did you read?

Oh, I must have had a book from one of the other boys, I didn't know - I couldn't read German, of course.

Did you keep your little bible?

No, I never had one - if I had, well, I never, ever carried it. I know, one of my cobbers, he had it, and he got a bullet damaging his bible - but I never had one. This bloke xxx.

(Break in interview)

... to Bullecourt, if I may. You were with the scouts at that time, were you?

Yes.

And Bill Linus was your officer there?

Yes.

Was he captured, Bill?

No - I don't know. I don't know whether there was - I think he was - there were two scout officers in my team; one was [Rog], I think, the other was Linus. So Bill wouldn't have been captured because my job on this attack on Bullecourt, the infantry went over - the tanks went over and knocked down some barbed wire, then the infantry went over. Then they must have got too far in.

The tanks or the infantry?

The infantry. And a lot of the Germans were in deep dugouts, and of course, they come up. Don't know what happened, but it was a terrible mess. Our artillery should have supported our mob that got ahead, then the mob that had got ahead would have had some chance of getting away. I know I knew a few fellows who did get away.

Who were they, do you know?

One was Albert Reid - he'd dead, of course, now - and not too many more. But I was finding out to where we were pushed back - the counter-attack - our artillery was doing nothing, so the remnant of what few were left could see things, we tried to get back. See, and I got back into this deep shell hole, I thought, well, the darn Huns wouldn't bother coming over no-man's-land, but they did. Caught a good many prisoners that were trying to get back.

Who was with you in that shell hole, anybody or not?

END OF TAPE TWO - SIDE A

START OF TAPE TWO - SIDE B

No-one. I thought - I regretted it ever afterwards - but I thought I'd sit in this shell hole till dark.

Yes, well, there was a lot of machine-gun fire, wasn't there?

Yes. It was too late, see, when I woke up to it. The blighters, I didn't think they'd go over no-man's-land, but they did.

They were quite good soldiers, weren't they, there?

They were.

They were Wurtemburgers.

They could only go as far as our lines, then they'd be stopped.

That's right.

Anyway, they collected a good lot of prisoners who tried to get away.

What happened during the attack across to the wire? - you know, the first attack, early in the morning of April 11. Can you remember what you were doing, how you got through the wire, and all this?

The scouts had the job of laying a telephone line back from headquarters, you see. Well, we went as far as the German front line, and the telephone line petered out - it was cut. What happened, I don't know, but we couldn't communicate with the people back. So that's all we knew. And then, of course, we were in there - this German front line - for an hour or two, and then they counter-attacked, you see. That's when our artillery went to sleep.

How did you get through the wire?

Well, I was on a place where the tanks - quick old tanks - they had a pair of big wheels at that back to steer them. I got through the wire where the tanks had been. But the tanks soon got put out of action.

A party of four scouts were to lay this telephone line, keeping touch with headquarters.

So you were following up with the infantry, laying this telephone line?

Yes.

And you got up to near the German line, and you discovered that the line had been cut behind you?

Yes. Then, after a while, you could see fellows escaping back because the position was - there was no artillery support - so that's where I made the blunder, by thinking they'd only kick us back. Instead of that, they found a lot of prisoners in shell holes.

Do you remember anything about the fighting actually during the early part of the attack, when you drove the Germans out?

No, I don't. There was one of the boys - he died a couple of years ago - Arthur Kelly - he was on the machine-gun, and he said he could see where one of the machine-guns had kicked out a lot of empty shells. So they'd used the machine-gun, I suppose, to support what prisoners were there - what troops were there - but evidently, he couldn't find out what happened to the leading force, whether they went too far or what.

So the 16th Battalion, there orders were to take the first trench?

Mm.

And then go on to the second trench?

Mm.

And then the 13th Battalion, which was behind the 16th, was to go through the 16th Battalion to Riencourt?

Mm.

The machine-gun that you were talking about, this is obviously a Vickers gun, is it - a Maxim gun?

Yes.

That Kelly took across?

Yes.

He was in the machine-gun company, was he?

Yes. And he could see where they'd used a lot of bullets.

This is the Germans?

No.

The Australians?

Yeah - Vickers gun. But then I don't know how he got back, or what happened, or whether he got caught in the trenches, or the shell holes, of what happened. But it was probably ... just assuming there'd been not enough strength in the German lines to stop the 13th Battalion, if they were to go through - we never knew that, of course. But oh, the mud. I know my cousin, George Martin, he said he had to go back to headquarters, as a runner or something. He said old Drake Brockman and his adjutant were boozed up, asleep on the table. He said - George reckoned he could have put a bomb between them and left them. But oh, I think there was no generalship at all.

It was a muddle, that's for sure.

It's always been a muddle.

There was great courage in getting through the wire though, and taking those xxx.

Oh, yes, yes. But where they all got caught, I don't know. I think Horrie Ganson, he was caught - I don't know how he got caught - but he was kept working behind the lines.

What happened when the Germans found you in the shell hole? Can you remember them coming over to you?

Oh, yes, they were all ahead of us. And I looked up and found them - they'd overrun my position.

They were good, weren't they?

Oh, yes.

Can you remember anything about the fighting, the counter-attacks?

No, only that I think the 16th Battalion - what was left of them - some of them got back, but the rest of them must have got too far forward - I don't know what happened to them.

Yes. When they were first attacking, they just kept going?

I think they did.

And they went too far?

They went too far - they must have done because I only saw the remains - Kelly was telling me where the - one of the machine-guns had spat out a lot of empty shells. But I don't know, they must have went too far. Whether they tried to get back - I never asked Horrie how he come to get caught - but I do know ...

He got caught in the trenches.

Yeah, in the trenches.

The Germans bombed them back into a dead end.

Yes.

And they had no bombs, no ammunition, and they had to surrender.

Yes. I knew that he had been kept working there, and, of course, my luck was in when I had swollen feet - trench feet - so they sent me back to Germany.

How did they send you back - on a train?

Oh, yes. And then they kept us in a kind of a shed, or barracks, sleeping on some straw. I've forgotten much about it. Then we went to this base camp at Friedrichsfeld.

What was it like there at Friedrichsfeld?

Oh, a lot of them were on parcels, and they were alright. But others - I don't know whether they were not getting parcels, or what, but they didn't have much food. But they said there had been one or two who had made their escape from Friedrichsfeld and got back to England. I decided then and there that I'd be in the escape business. But that's all the information we could get.

And what were you wearing when you were an escapee? Were you wearing the Red Cross uniform xxx?

No, I got an old pair of pants - the main pants had a pale yellow strip right down, top to bottom. One of those, I got an old French (person) to sew that up, and it was like a pair of skinny legs. But xxx identified them as a prisoner. And the other times, well, I bartered some of my Red Cross food - I got an old overcoat, and a pair of pants. That's all I wanted really.

And you had Red Cross boots, I suppose?

I think yes, I think they could have taken your boots as booty, from the war.

This was your army boots?

Yes. But I don't remember much about that, they never took my boots. That would be a legitimate conquest.

The Red Cross sent you shoes, didn't they?

I think they did - I've forgotten much about it, whether they did or not. They certainly ... when they found us, they kept us supplied - we used to get three parcels a fortnight - they were

wonderful, the Red Cross. That's why I gave the blighters a good share of my - put in an appeal, because if it hadn't been for them, well, we would have starved.

That's what my grandfather said.

We would have starved.

Did you go and see Nurse Chomley after the war?

No, I didn't. These other two who got away at the time I did - on different jobs - they went to see her. I forget xxx - she said they did actually try and send a compass over in some of the tinned stuff, to some of the boys, but it was a very difficult thing because they used to open - you were supposed to open your tins. I never, ever had one sent to me. But it was a very difficult thing to do. Of course, it would have condemned the Red Cross.

And you didn't know any other Australians really, while you were a prisoner, did you?

No. Only one, after I was doing this hospital rouseabout - I was doing that for six months or so - I knew a few then.

Who did you know then?

An old bloke called [Hughie Orr].

How do you spell that?

O-R-R, I think.

Hughie - Hughie Orr. Was he a 16th man, or not?

Yes, he was. And there was another one, Joe [Wallblack].

How do you spell that?

W-A-L-L - but he lost a leg. He evidently got run over by a ... working on a train.

In the salt mines?

I don't know what he was doing, but he lost his leg. And old Horrie, he was working behind the lines.

Then he went up to near Denmark.

Yes. And of course, those fellows, they near Denmark, or near Poland, they had a pretty impossible job to escape. See, all the time I could make a go, I was fairly close to the frontier. One time I was out seven nights.

Were you? Whereabouts did you stay?

Oh, you'd just sleep in the bush somewhere. Actually, I wondered, looking back, I must have had a little bottle of water - I don't know - I just forgot that - but I had a little bag of xxx. But the drinking part of it, I just remember I had to drink water where I found water, doesn't matter what it was. I know once on the road - that's the time I got away when it was snow everywhere - I kept having a mouthful of snow, and it didn't satisfy myself a bit.

There is not much water in snow, is there?

I suppose my mouth - I got nothing. A little while after I was dry as a bone, after I'd been going a few hours, and I'd got over the Rhine. I still kept going, and it came on to be a drizzle, and I saw a little puddle on the side of the bitumen. I lay on my belly and drank. You couldn't see, but at least it was drinkable.

How soon after you were captured did your parents know you were a POW?

Oh, might have been missing for a while - I don't know. When they did know, they'd been notified by the Red Cross, I think. When I used to try and escape, and got caught, my mum said

to one of the people in Corrigin, I wish he wouldn't keep trying to escape, because it meant that I might have got more punishment. All I did was get this fourteen days.

They were good about that, weren't they?

Yes - starvation. But I suppose there was a double-edged sword, really; if they'd punished everyone severely, they wouldn't have got any labour.

No.

They wanted labour.

Yes, that's right. And your mother knew you were trying to escape, did she?

Yeah.

Did you write to her?

I wrote to her and told her - lead pencil writing - and I told her what happened. I said I'd tried to escape - they probably kept the letters and censored them, but they handed them to her. And then she knew I was trying to escape, but I think the Germans didn't mind her knowing that because it would convince the rest of the troops that it was impossible.

I see, yes.

I know that Pom - last time I left this Ohligs, xxx and the two Frenchmen helped me escape. There was another old French prisoner, he'd been there for four years, I think. He shook his head - he was talking to this Canadian who could speak a bit of French - he shook his head and he said, 'It's no good - not possible - but,' he said, 'he had plenty of courage'.

Well, you certainly did.

The Frenchman was telling me what the old Frenchman told him, because this Canadian, he was

learning French.

I see. And when those two Frenchmen helped you out the window, they came too, didn't they?

No.

That was the second escape?

It must have been the third, I think. They were good friends of mine, and they went out to help me, but they didn't want to take any risks themselves.

Do you know their names?

One was Tricot and the other was Michael.

How do you spell that, do you know?

T-R-I-C-O-T.

And the other was?

Michael - M-I-C-H-A-E-L, I think it was.

That was their Christian names or their surnames?

Would have been their surname. But anyway, Tricot - his Christian name was Arthur - [Artuah] - the other bloke, Michael, he was one that escaped on this [phosphated] trip that we had in Dusseldorf on the xxx - Michael was one of them.

Tricot wasn't the other one?

No - but he was a nice fellow, Tricot, and he was quite willing ... put the rug over the barbed

wire and let me down, then handed my provisions, they, of course, they shut the window after that.

What did you have your provisions in?

Oh, one of these little breakfast cases.

What's a breakfast case?

You know, like a little cardboard picnic case.

Oh, I see, yes.

[Or the other one] might have been a bit of a bag - but this little breakfast case, I had my week's provisions in that.

You took a week's provisions, did you?

Yes.

And did you ever have a map, or only a compass?

Well, I all the maps I could see were if you were on a station, and you could see one on the station. That's the only things I had. I tried to get a map from this little boy - who said in the paper - but he was put wise. He couldn't get me one. That was the main help. If you'd have got a map, and the right kind of compass, I would have been away earlier.

Can you tell me anything about Percy Black? Did you ever know him at all?

No, I didn't know him much. He was a pilot, I think, as he went to the war.

He was a machine-gunner, wasn't he?

Yes. He was the idle of the 16th, they all thought the world of Percy Black. He was a brave man.

And you didn't see or know of anything that happened to him at Bullecourt?

No.

You just heard that he'd been killed there?

Yes. But the cobbers that I went away with, or went into Bullecourt with - you see, the old C Company, there was four of us, used to knock round together.

Who were they?

One was Taffy John, the other was Ernie Skinner, and I think the blokes name was ... Out of our party of four, they were all casualties that day. Skinner was wounded.

This is a scouting party?

Yes. They were my cobbers, but they were still in ...

They were in C Company?

C Company.

Skinner was wounded?

Skinner was wounded, and [Charlie Hines] was killed - Taffy John, he was wounded too. Two wounded, one killed, one prisoner, that was our knock-about party - all casualties.

When you mean a knock-about party, do you mean that if you went into an estaminet or something, they'd be the bunch you would go with?

Oh, yes.

They were your cobbers?

They were my cobbers, and we'd buy a bottle of French wine, and be a bit merry.

That's great.

But that was a tragedy.

Oh, it was shocking.

Four of us ceased to exist - one killed, two wounded, and one escaped.

And did you see ... You followed through the wire, behind one of the tanks, didn't you?

Yeah.

Did you only see one, or more than one?

Oh, I don't think we saw that, but the tanks, you see, you could hear them coming ten miles away - [they made so much noise].

You think that the Germans certainly knew you were coming, didn't they?

Yes. But the tanks came up, and the [twelfth] attack was called off the first day - then it started - and that night. Well, the tanks rolled through the barbed, and, of course, my particular telephone line went through the barbed, after where the tanks were, but they probably got knocked out pretty quick. They were clumsy looking old things. To steer them, you see, they had these two big wheels at the stern. Anyway, they knocked down the wire so we could lay the telephone through it.

Was there much machine-gun fire at that time?

Oh, I don't know about it - I don't think there was - but our fellows got into the trench, I suppose, and went too far. But me being with the telephone ...

Do you mean they went too far that way, or went too far that way?

Forward. They might have been heavily counter-attacked and pushed back. I don't know what happened to them. xxx xxx.

You mainly stayed in the first trench, did you?

We did?

Did you?

Well, we stayed in the first trench for a while, found out the telephone was useless, then fellows were bolting back, getting back, getting pushed back - and the artillery was doing nothing. And so a lot of our fellows must have been caught like I was.

Who were the fellows that were with you with the telephone line? Do you know their names?

One was - I might have forgotten - four scouts - one was [Tomley] - Ernie Tomley - but I forget the other two blokes.

That's okay; you are doing really well to remember their names; I think it's very good. And it was, of course, snowing, wasn't it, at Bullecourt? The ground was covered with snow?

Yes. Well, it must have been a snowy winter because - I forget much about the snow on the ground at Bullecourt, but what I did know was the snow on the ground when I was a prisoner in Ohligs. And this bloke, after I'd ducked down one side, after a few Frenchmen was getting chased, I ducked down a side street and come out away from the suburbs. I was walking down this beautiful snowy field, on one side. That's when I heard the voice saying, 'You kuma here'. I

thought I'm sure to be caught and was expecting to be grabbed any moment. Couldn't believe it.

You must have spent a cold night, that night.

Oh, yes. Well, of course, I went on into Dusseldorf and sat in the park.

That's right, yes. And then you got caught, didn't you?

No; well, I sat there and I didn't get caught. I reckon I would get caught if I sat there till midnight - in daylight - so I got a mark note ready to bribe in case I had to pay, and walked over the bridge, and there was no-one on duty.

You got caught a few hours later, didn't you?

Oh, [in the next dark], I think.

The next night?

I didn't know how close I was to the frontier, so I walked bang into a sentry.

You didn't see him?

No - well, you wouldn't. I didn't know, I thought I was ten mile away, having no map, and I was on the frontier.

What memories do you have of the Russians in Germany? Did you have much to do with them, or not?

Well, we used to see them, but the poor blighters, they had no Red Cross, and, of course, that nation had given it away. And the xxx saw the poor blighters, they were starved, ill used and treated like animals. But I had a couple of sovereigns I'd fastened in my tunic, up here.

Inside the lining?

Yes - after I'd got them in Egypt - I thought they'd be very handy to have. I had two on the first landing, and some cow pinched them out of my money belt - my comrades did that while I was asleep. And so this other two I'd kept in the xxx of my coat, but after about a year or so, they started to leave an impression. And there was an old Russian jeweller in the camp - and Englishman had a sovereign, or something like that - an old coin - and he got this Jew to make the solid gold coin into a ring. Well, I had two gold coins, so I gave this old Russian jeweller - I don't know how he smelted them - but he smelted the two coins into a bar, and then joined it up to the xxx. I've still got the ring. You can see where he spliced it up with the alloy. You can see the pitting on each side of the ring, with these little pit holes. So how he melted it, I don't know. But anyhow, this Englishman found out a jeweller could do the job if he gave him enough food, so I did the same thing. So I got my two sovereigns put into a ring. And it's still a souvenir. Like at xxx, I wore it out in Germany.

What was you doing when the Armistice came? Oh, you were in Holland, of course.

Yes. When I got into Holland, I knew I was safe because I came up against the River Muse. They knew at home, as soon as I arrived in Holland.

That would be good, wouldn't it? I suppose you spent quite a lot of time in Egypt, didn't you, because you were there when you went across ...

Yes.

... with the original battalion, so you would have been there at the end of 1914, wouldn't you?

Er ...

Of early 1915?

Early part of '15, I think it was, because we needed xxx, and then we went across to Lemnos Island, and that would be - the landing was on the 25th - I must have been on Lemnos Island - a

beautiful big harbour there.

Mudros.

Yes - Mudros Harbour.

What were you doing at Christmas time in 1915? You were in England, weren't you?

'15?

Yes.

Yes, that was after ...

You had enteric fever, didn't you?

Yes - oh, yes, that's right, I was in England for Christmas. Yes, I was there with - they bundled off a lot of fellows who were sick with the flu - I must have had a temperature - so they cleared off all the cot cases in the local hospital to England. I happened to be amongst them because I'd had a temperature. And I was in England for a couple, or three weeks, and then went back to the line.

Whereabouts were you in England?

END OF TAPE TWO - SIDE B

START OF TAPE THREE - SIDE A

3rd March 1918 - I was caught in 17, I think.

You were in Friedrichsfeld at that time, were you?

I might have been out in the working parties, see, in this base camp, might have had [been him

flown out] - they were prisoners. So I don't remember, I wouldn't be on that picture.

Do you know anybody who it?

(Incidental conversation)

I think that bloke there, in the pale coat tunic, I think that's Hughie Orr - he used to be a sergeant in the 16th.

Oh, yes, that's third row, and he's fifth from the left.

Yes, I think that would be him.

The next one is Mr - that's a Michelle Arthur Tricot, isn't it?

Yes, Arthur Tricot.

And that was at Ohligs, 11th December 1917 it says on the back.

I know, that's when his photo was taken, he gave me the photo after. He was a very nice bloke, and quite a stylish looking fellow, and a polished up little moustache. But he was very helpful.

Do you know who the men are in this one, the group of four with the two seated?

Yes. He was an older prisoner, and he's a prisoner, and these two little blokes ...

At the back.

... were in the British Army - got captured - and they were just boys. They were hard up for food, and this bloke took on this one - helped him with his rations.

Oh, that's on the left, yes.

With our rations - and this bloke helped xxx - xxx two boys, and the two old hands.

They are two Australians, are they?

Yes.

The two seated?

I don't know what unit he was in, but this bloke was studying for the church.

Do you know their names?

Yes; that was Thomas - Walter Thomas.

On the left.

And the next one is George Anderson.

George Anderson, right.

I forget what George was, but he was a good-hearted fellow, you see, that's why he took on one of these boys who had no food, and this bloke took on the other one.

Why weren't those boys getting parcels?

Well, because, you see, the information about their captivity didn't go back - took a while when it went back - they were missing for a while - and then, when they found out where they were, they sent parcels. But just two little boys - they were only boys - about eighteen, I think. And this parson fellow, he was a very real parson - a real, genuine minister.

Was he in the 16th, Walter Thomas, or not?

No.

You don't know what unit?

I don't know what unit.

I could find out what they were.

Yes. But that was his name, Walter Thomas, and he was a real Christian.

Do you know where he came from in Australia?

Down in the south.

This is in Western Australia?

No, in New South Wales.

In New South Wales?

And this bloke ...

Oh, I know Braidwood, yes.

This bloke here ...

Yes, he'd probably be a 13th man.

After the war he went opal digging.

That's the one on the right?

Yes. He wouldn't go to church at all, and this fellow was studying for the church; and this fellow, although he was sincere - parson - he said this fellow's a Christian. And he wouldn't go

to church, but he said he's a Christian.

That was taken in Friedrichsfeld also, that photograph?

Yes.

(Background conversation)

So it's Walter J Thomas - oh, I can soon find out more about him. And then there are the four of you here in the photograph. You knocked about together, didn't you?

Yes. We used to knock about together when we were behind the lines, drink a bit of French red wine, sugar added. The unfortunate part, you see, these two got shot - wounded.

That's the one seated, and the one on the left - POWs.

I was left in no-man's-land, and this bloke was killed - he was the gamest one of the lot.

Was he?

Oh, yes. He was a very calm sort of a fellow, never got excited, but he had plenty of courage.

They are standing is W A Johns, and then yourself, A J Whittington, and then C C Hines; and sitting is E S Skinner.

Skinner, yeah.

That was taken at [Pequinie] in France on November 1916.

This fellow, Hines, he was the gamest one of the lot.

Yes, he was the chap that was killed.

Yeah.

Do you know how he was killed?

Oh, in that day when we went over at Bullecourt, but he'd be killed like a good many or them were killed. But I know he was a most remarkable fellow, you'd almost think he was effeminate.

Would you?

He was scared of nothing.

And what about this one taken in front of the pyramids and the sphinx? Are you in that one?

Yes, that's me there.

On the left.

And this is another cobber called - I forget his name again - but this bloke's name was Johns - that's him there.

That's Johns - that's W A Johns.

And this one was Parker.

Parker in the middle.

See, that photo there contains me xxx and Johns.

And what was Parker's first name, do you know?

Fred Parker.

Fred. And they are all 16th men?

Yes.

(Background conversation)

He was a farming family from York, Parker? Whereabouts did Johns come from?

He was down near Boddington - he took on a soldier settlement scheme farm at Boddington.

Is that where he came from before the war?

I don't know whether it was - it was near Narranderah, I think, because he used to speak of Narranderah.

(Background conversation)

Yes, he was Welsh, he was a Welshman.

And that's seated ...

xxx was an Englishman - and this bloke was an Englishman - so there was three Englishmen making up the original battalion.

They were all original men, were they?

Yes.

Oh, were they? So they'd be great palls.

Yes, that was a tragedy. This little fellow was the gamest one of all.

That's always the way of it, isn't it?

Yes.

It's a good picture, that one.

Yes, well, you see, that one - Johns and me together - me and just Johns.

Do you remember anything about going out to the pyramids?

Oh, yes.

What was it like climbing them?

It's all cut away; instead of being smooth, it's just all steps. I started to go up a bit - went up a few yards and I'd had enough, I couldn't take it, it was too ... But I went into the centre of the pyramid.

You couldn't take the height, is that right?

No. Every step was about three feet, I suppose. And then I went into the centre of the pyramid, and that was about one of the biggest scares I had, going into the dark pyramid.

Why?

When you come into the centre - there's a burial centre in the centre of the pyramid - but oh, it was dark, and hot. I didn't feel at all happy, I was glad to get out again. Of course, we had candles, or something like that.

To see where you were going. And I suppose you had a guide, did you?

Oh, yes, we had a guide. It wasn't a very happy thing for me, going into the dark.

You had to go down, did you?

Yeah.

And can you tell me a bit more about these two Australians, the ones at Friedrichsfeld, the ones seated? They were captured at Bullecourt too, were they?

Er ... I wouldn't be sure of that, I think they were. But this fellow, he was a very religious man.

Yes, the parson.

These two were in the camp a good while when these new arrivals arrived.

That would be after the British losses - when the Germans attacked ...

Yes.

... on the Western Front, wouldn't it?

One British Army, under [Gough], I think, was completely surrounded. Must have taken a hundred and odd thousand prisoners.

Yes, that's right.

Well, these two boys would be in it - see, a lot of them, young, inexperienced. I suppose they were ... In the camp - I was back in the camp with these other two - they took pity on these two boys, and that's why this parson - this fellow wont accept God, he wont accept the bible, but he said he's a Christian. He was a good-natured fellow.

That was charitable.

(Break in interview)

What's the parson again?

That's Mr Thomas again, yes, I understand, yes, I see. Yes, that's him there. So I've got two of him. That's the one seated in the wooden chair.

(Background conversation)

He was a mining surveyor in South Africa - an Englishman - but he was, oh, a brilliant man. I used to stand alongside of him at night, when we were getting counted, and he was pointing out the different constellations. He taught me a lot about star navigation.

His name was Major ...

Yes, Cyril Major.

Cyril Major - so Major was his surname?

Yes. Oh, he was a ... always sending home to England for some historical book, or some scientific work. One of his woks was something to do with the childhood of astronomy. Yes, he was born in China, but he became ... well really, he was a scientific man, and he had the jobs of being the mining surveyor for a big company in Chile, South America.

(Background conversation)

Oh, yeah, most of them, he had a lot of photographs he carried in his pocket, of his home, or his place where he was surveying in South America - mining surveyor. He'd have one of a lady - Lady [Bill Fame] - that's the only one the boys were interested in - but he didn't send me that one.

Do you remember any concerts while you were a POW?

Oh, yes, they used to organise in the camp a few concerts. I wasn't in the big camp long enough, you see; I'd be out on a working party. But when I got the longest period in Germany was when I had TB, you see, and they put me as a rouseabout, collecting the ...

This was at Friedrichsfeld, wasn't it?

Yes, at Friedrichsfeld. And then, while I was in Friedrichsfeld, these other boys - of that age - came along - prisoners - and one fellow, he was a prisoner, but he had just made an escape. You see, the party of three of them went up to this little village called [Vies], and then turned west, or south-west, heading for the frontier. They didn't know where they were, they were just bowling along the road and run into the frontier sentry.

I've heard of a few accounts like that.

They gave me that information - and this little bloke that was with them, he was only seventeen, I think. Well, he knocked up after the first or second night out, and he was coughing blood. So I wrote to him afterwards, and whether he got shot, or died, I don't know, but I had no reply. But he was only a boy, about seventeen - a big fellow.

And what about the concerts? Do you remember any of those in the camp when you had TB?

There were a few, I suppose, comedians and songs, and so on.

(Background conversation)

Yes, the prisoners would organise it, wouldn't they?

Yes, organise.

(Background conversation)

Anyhow, when I eventually did get over, they knew at my home in Brookton that I was away because it had 'Four came ...' - [in the Brookton - Western Australian - 'Four Australians ...' - giving their names and numbers - 'arrived in xxx after having escaped from Germany'. So they knew that the day after I got into Hull.

You were lucky they heard so early. And how were you caught on your various escapes? What was the first time you were caught?

The first time, I was bowling along the road, after getting over the River Rhine without striking any toll gates.

That's right, you told me that.

Bowling along the road - I thought I was ten miles off the frontier, and I was right on the frontier, and went bang into a frontier sentry.

That was the second time. The first time, I was caught - it appeared in the papers evidently - and I saw a couple of fellows coming along the road, and I walked straight past them for a while. Then I got out into a bit of a meadow.

Yes, that's right.

And lay down. And these two blighters came along - they had a big dog - so I couldn't do anything. So they just - they probably knew from the papers that there was a prisoner missing - and so they might have known when I ducked off one side. It was the first time I was out, so I didn't put up any bold face going past everyone, I tried to avoid them. Anyhow, they probably knew from the papers that there was a prisoner missing. And the little German boy, who was practising English on me, when he asked me where I'd been, and I said, oh, I wanted to get home to see my people. And he said, yes, he understood; he said, 'In the papers it was written'.

But he was a nice kid, I think he was going to school still, and he used to walk up with the prisoners going to work, and so he used to get talking to me. I know he was a kid who collected my English. We saw a big locomotive on the line - we had to cross the line - and he asked me what it was. I said, that's a railway engine. He said - next day he come along - he said his master had said, that was not 'ingun' it was 'engine'. He was leaning better English than I knew.

Anyway, this fellow wrote to me after. I didn't reply - well, I didn't, because they would have

probably suspected me of spying. But he was a nice kid, the way he put it - 'In the papers it was written'.

What about the last time you were captured - the third time?

The third time ... the third time I got away with two Frenchmen. They were the ones we used to make themselves xxx with this Belgian who was going to lead us out.

That's right, and you were there with the tram.

Yes. Then the Frenchmen were so disgusted - there were three of us that could do it - and the Frenchmen were so disgusted - they thought they knew it all because the Belgian had pulled out, he was too scared. So these two Frenchmen said they are going - following the instructions the Belgian had given them - and the Belgian couldn't escape because his country was occupied - Holland was neutral.

Anyhow, these two Frenchmen, the Belgian had told them what he was going to do - go into Dusseldorf, get a train and go to the frontier, and then jump out and go over the frontier. Sounded that simple.

Anyhow, the two Frenchmen were so disgusted that they thought that they knew it all, and so they got on the tram. I was instructed by them to, you know, trail along behind so as not to be one of the party. Anyway, we stopped in the tram too long and so aroused suspicion. And the two frogs were going down the street, and I saw them look round like that, and away they went - rush. A soldier, who must have been on leave, rushed, yelling 'halt!' He rushed straight past me, but I didn't look round, I pretended not to be a party. He rushed past me yelling 'halt!' to these Frenchmen, and I could hear them, flat out down the street. Anyhow, he caught one of them, and I ducked down a little side street - because there wasn't much town lighting - and that's when I headed off for Dusseldorf.

I headed off to keep on the east side of the Rhine - see, the Rhine was a big obstacle. I only got as far as the bridge over the Rhine, and sat down in the park, really puzzled as to know what I was to do. So I thought, well, if I stop there all night, I'll be caught, and if I try to get over the

Rhine, I'll have a German mark note to put on the counter. Anyway, there was a sentry box each side - not occupied - it was after midnight. So I got over without paying anything.

Did you get any books sent to you while you were in Germany?

No, but my friend used to get books sent. He had one, 'The Conquest of Mexico', or 'The Conquest of Peru' - he was an authority on Spanish history - an authority on astronomy and everything - he was a brilliant man.

And this was Major - Cyril Major?

Yes, Cyril Major. Oh, he was a brainy man.

(Background conversation)

He pointed out - he sent a letter to me after the war - pointed out how the ancient Egyptians had known the entrance to one of the pyramids - or something - pointing to the pole star. The pole star at the time might have shifted a bit - the present moment, of course, the pole star is straight in the zenith, straight up overhead - it's Regulus - all the time - the others all circumpolar, going around it.

Of course, yes.

(Background conversation)

We are talking about Halley's comet.

I saw it when it was xxx, it was brilliant. They say it's not as brilliant now. It was evidently closer to the earth - of course, they are a marvellous thing, it's part of the solar system - comes back every seventy-six years. I suppose, by the time it gets to the end, it's furthest away, it's moving very slow; then, as it approaches the sun, of course, it accelerates.

(Background conversation)

Finish this little tape that I'm making. When you got back to London, Mr Whittington, did you go and see Nurse Chomley? Do you remember Nurse Chomley?

No, I didn't go and see her, but a couple of the other boys, who had got away with me, they went and saw her. She pointed out how they used to try and smuggle compasses over in a tin. And, of course, when you'd have to hand over the tins of your Red Cross parcel into the office, see, and the blighters - if there was anything like a tin of dripping, they'd pinch that and substitute another one. In the officer they'd do that. So you'd have to, if you were getting things like that, open them straight away. By the time you wanted to get it, they'd have a tin of carrots, or something like that, for it.

So the Germans would open your parcels?

Yes.

And then they would see that you had some dripping ...

Yes.

... or something that they wanted?

Yes.

And they'd swap it for a tin of carrots or something?

Yes.

And they'd keep the dripping?

Yes. And, of course, a lot of the boys, they didn't want tinned carrots, they only wanted dripping, the same as the others. There was a good bit of that done. Of course, they were that hungry themselves, they'd stoop to anything. I made the peace with one fellow, and it used to be

always sent up to gaol with the rations for the week, while the bloke was in gaol. So if it hadn't, I would have starved in gaol, it would have been terrible. Only the other Canadians, who were getting their Red Cross parcels before I got mine. So they'd bribe the sentry and he would deliver a packet of biscuits, or something like that.

Would he?

Yeah - so that I was getting fed well enough in the clink.

This is in Solitary confinement?

Yes - it was solitary confinement - I always was looking forward to the next time I would escape, so I used to do a lot of physical jerks, and I used to walk a mile up and down this cell, so that I would be fit if I saw an opportunity.

Did you ever recite any poetry, or anything like that?

No, no, no.

Didn't get bored?

Yes. It was to be - it could have been after - when you were getting Red Cross parcels, to be put in gaol would have been terrible starvation - it would have been torture. So that to get some food into the prisoners - the other members would bribe a sentry so that they would throw in a bit of - packet of biscuits, or something like that. But they were hungry all right. The first consideration was the army, next was the civilians, and the last were the prisoners. The poor, unfortunate Russians, their country was eventually suing for peace, so that they were starved.

Did you see many of the Russians die from that sort of ration, or not?

Oh, yes, well, we were - just as I left - the last time I left - there was the start of that epidemic - flu - and we used to see them go along - oh, half a dozen - coffins go along, to be buried. So I suppose it was weakness with them, and they had no resistance, and they just died.

END OF TAPE THREE - SIDE A

START OF TAPE THREE - SIDE B

What about the Belgian and the French Red Cross? How good were they?

Well, French used to look after their own prisoners, and the Belgians, of course, were occupied by the Germans.

Of course, yes.

So they had to be rationed too. And so the Frenchman - a lot of Belgians, I suppose, speak French - and they used to talk to the civilian workers. You see, the Germans took all the population of Belgium - all the able bodied - and made them work. So the Frenchmen could talk to them through the window, and that's how I got able to borrow a pair of pliers. I couldn't find any where I were, but the French - one of the Frenchmen - he worked where there was a factory - I don't know whether it was a factory, or what it was - but he collected a pair of pliers. And, of course, he was dead scared, [looking like this], he was handing them out to me; he was afraid he'd get spotted.

Anyhow, I got through the window alright. There were two strands of barbed wire, each barb was a double strand, with the barbs on it. So I thought I was going to have a silent pair of snippers, but every time - instead of softly closing its jaws, it made a ping. So the idea I had of cutting the wire silently didn't work - and it was after midnight, you see. All the sentries always had someone on duty back at the office, and if they suspected anything they could switch on the lights, and see, we were all exposed. So when I was cutting the windows, I kept one eye on their office to make sue they didn't switch on the lights. I would have just had to dive back to the bed.

How did the Belgians get their ... They didn't get any parcels from Belgium?

No, no.

Their families didn't send them anything?

No, well, as far as I know, they didn't. But they were conscripted labourers.

They were fed better than the prisoners?

Better than ... I think they would be better ... they would be fed like the civilians - and, of course, the prisoners were last. We would have been starved until the Red Cross found us and got food parcels. We were starving alright.

And the French, they were getting parcels from their Red Cross in France?

Yes, and they were also getting an issue of big scone-like biscuits.

From Switzerland?

Yes. They'd get them - there was an issue of them from, I suppose, their Red Cross. But see, they'd be not relying entirely on the German food - they had nearly enough of the biscuits they got - big spongy, scone-like biscuits.

Once you were getting parcels, did you ever worry about the German rations, or not? Did you still have their bread and food?

Oh, yes, we used to eat their bread, and there would be stew if we wanted it. All those who had parcels would just let the stew go to anyone else. Some of the Frenchmen, I don't think they had any - didn't have any wealthy people to send them parcels. These scone-like biscuits, they were very nice.

What about the Russians? Did you ever try to help them with some food from your parcels, or not?

No. We used to - it was a big camp - we used to hand over our ...

(Background conversation)

We'd just hand over our portion of stew to the Russians. But those poor blighters, they were starved.

I might have told you, I had two sovereigns concealed in the lapel of my coat. After about six months they left an impression there. So I decided I'd have to get rid of them. And there was an Englishman there, he'd had a sovereign brought from England, and he gave an old jeweller there a couple of tins of meat, or something like that, to turn this sovereign into a ring. Well, I had two sovereigns, so I paid the old jeweller these two sovereigns to make me a ring. I've still got the ring.

Yes, you told me that. Would those sovereigns have bought any food, or not?

Oh, no, I don't think - you couldn't have bought food. All you could do, I suppose - all the Germans, all the sentries - there was a corporal and two sentries, and two or three civilians - was all part of the headquarters of this camp of about eighty men. If you got paid some German money, you could buy pencils and paper, but you couldn't buy any food, although it was German money.

This would be the German prison camp money?

Yes. There was also the money you got was prisoner's money too, so it was no good amongst civilians. But you could raise a bit of money, by getting genuine mark notes, by selling something. Of course, that's where the Red Cross helped us a lot, that enabled us to buy things.

You'd sell some soap, or something like that?

Yes. Well, if I'd have only been able to buy the equipment I wanted, I would have been away earlier. I could have bought a compass with a luminous point, a luminous needle, but the only compass I ever got - except the last time - was one with a black needle, so you'd have to light a match.

You didn't want to do that.

No - you couldn't do that on the frontier. I knew I was on the frontier once - puzzled as to what to do - and it come over cloudy, and I was lost. I was scared to light a match, and I was sneaking along a path, went bang into a sentry. But if I'd had a luminous pointed compass, I wouldn't have been on that track - just a bush track of some kind.

Do you remember any instances in Friedrichsfeld with the Germans being brutal to the prisoners?

In some places I believe they were, and they had prisoners down in the mines.

Yes, I've talked to one who worked in a mine.

I never had any experience like that. It's rather a wonder they didn't send me there because I'd got away from this camp three times. I was sent back twice to the same camp. Another time was the time I had the haemorrhage of the chest.

They thought it was TB?

Yes.

(Background conversation)

This is in Western Australia?

This is in the past. And I told him I'd had a haemorrhage of the chest, so he knew straight away.

Your daughter asked me to ask you how they treated TB?

Well, they just - I was bleeding pretty badly, for about a week - they covered me with wet sheets, and ice on my chest, to stop the blood.

That sounds pretty primitive, doesn't it?

Yes. Then, when I was able to get up, they kept me there and I had to be the rouseabout then for the rest of the patients.

I was talking to a man yesterday, Horrace Rumble, who had tetanus. Do you know Horrace Rumble?

No, I didn't know him. He had tetanus, you say?

Yes.

That was dangerous, wasn't it?

Yes. He was fourteen stone when they captured him, and he went right down to six stone.

Gosh, that was a near go.

He was lucky to still ...

Lucky to have got over tetanus.

(Background conversation)

... to the frontier - I wanted to go down within sight of the Rhine - the Muse. I wanted to go down, but you wouldn't go down. After I'd got away, I kept going until I come to this big wide river. And I knew then I was two miles inside of Holland, but I don't know what the frontier consisted of. But evidently there was a number of little tracks and sentries at each one. Of course ...

You just missed them.

When I ran into a sentry the third time I tried, was because my compass was no darn good, I had to light a match. But if it had been starlight, I would have been right, because you can always get your bearing from the pole star. So that was between the deep sea and the devil. I was afraid to light a match, and I knew I was amongst the sentries because I heard one come plonking along the street - by the path - that was beat. I could tell it was a sentry because you could see his bayonet plonking onto his legs like that. But I was just sorely puzzled because it was cloudy, and I've got no sense of direction if I don't have something to go by. I'm completely lost without a compass or the stars. When it's cloudy, you can't see any stars.

(Background conversation)

What did they do for your trench feet? When you were captured you had trench feet, didn't you?

Yes. Well, they just ask you what ... how do you feel, or so - they found out I had trench feet - stand to one side. They put all those who were wounded, and had some form of dissablement, they sent them on into Germany, and the fellows who were able bodied, they kept working ...

Behind the lines.

... behind our lines.

And how did they treat your trench feet? Did they do anything about it, or not?

They didn't do anything about it, no. Well, I suppose it got right on its own because ...

You were able to walk though, I assume?

Oh, yes. But I suppose - I forget exactly what happened - they put us into a shed, what prisoners they'd collected - collected them in no-man's-land - and they stuck us into a shed - a good lot of us - and we only had straw to sleep on. A couple of days later we were sent into Friedrichsfeld, a big base camp.

Do you remember anybody with you at that time? Can you remember any of the names of some of the people who were in that group?

No, I don't remember.

Any of the officers?

I met them after - met a fellow called Kelly, he used to be a manager of the co-op in xxx - xxx neighbour - and he was treated the same, he was sent back - he wasn't kept behind the line. Poor old Horrie was kept behind the line.

That's right. And what sort of news did you get about what was happening with the rest of the war at that time?

Oh, we used to get the German version of it, of course, and there was occasionally a little paper, I think, came out in English. We could see by the papers that - these little papers that come out anyhow. Wasn't a question of getting over the air - the papers that came out pointed out the great German victories. They had three great victories - took one British Army. Then they were getting fed up, I think, because our aeroplanes were dropping information - you've taken 240,000 prisoners, and America is landing 300,000 every month. That was propaganda, and it was right because it demoralised them. The enemies were getting, in spite of their conquest, they captured a lot of English troops, they were getting the enemies more numerous than ever, the Yanks landing 300,000 a month.

Did you see this happening, or hear of it? How do you know about that?

We heard it - I think the Germans used to quote the communications of the allies, and, of course, it got through to us like that. And, of course, that was the facts that they were getting hard pressed and short of food, and after all their victories there was more men opposing them than there was before. I think that demoralised them.

What about your morale during that period? You didn't know really how the war was going, did you?

No. Well, the first part of the war, that was the most miserable period of my life.

Was it?

Taken prisoner, taken to Germany. I heard then that it was possible to escape. There might have been one or two prisoners from this big camp, Friedrichsfeld, who had escaped and got back to England. So I decided then and there that I was going to be in the business. And so I took me xxx.

You did well to get out though.

(Background conversation)

When I got hit - that was a terrific lot of rifle fire again - and I felt sure I'd been hit with half a shell - thought the back of my shoulder was gone.

Hit your shoulder blade, didn't it?

A split second it was. I recovered to find out I was still there, but my arm was useless, swinging, and it felt like warm water running down my back. When I got down - I crawled out of a dump, alright, and crawled down - we were on top of the hill - crawled down behind the hill, about forty of fifty yards, and there was a dressing station with the field ambulance. And they said, 'Where are you hit?', I said, 'At the back of the shoulder' - that's where I thought. He got a pair of scissors and went straight up there. I looked behind to see it, and I could see the hole here, and so I knew what had happened. But it was a remarkable feeling, it was just as if you'd been on the ground and somebody had been on the roof and threw a brick and hit you, it was that much of a jar.

(Background conversation)

Of course, it acted as a dumb-dumb. When a bullet hits bone, it spreads. It made a small hole going in, hit the shoulder blade, expanded, and took a chunk of my shoulder blade out with it.

That's what made the big scar, and that's why it appeared that I was hit from behind.

Well, as I told you, the ambulance men cut this up, and it was as cold as billyo. And I got down to the bottom of the valley where there used to be this communications with the beach, and this bloke with the donkey - I got on the donkey, I couldn't kick the ground - [he tried to be ...]. Anyhow, this bloke with the donkey, I think he probably dragged the donkey along with one hand and stopped me falling off with the other because I was nursing my arm like that. That was the second Sunday, seven days after the landing.

And you think that might have been Simpson with his donkey?

Could have been - I think there was only one donkey there.

(Background conversation)

I was going to ask you a little bit about being on leave in England and Ireland, I think. Do you remember anything about the first leave that you had over in England?

Yes. I think we had a fortnight off after having enteric fever. And then I got mumps when I was out, so I had to go back and get some more of my leave when I come out. And so they asked me where I wanted to go - of course, we were in Portsmouth at the time - and so everyone wanted to go to London, but I said I wanted to go to Killarney. So that was it, I got across to Killarney. Then I wanted to see Belfast from Killarney, so I got as far as Dublin, and I deliberately got on the wrong train to go to Belfast. So I got a ride to Belfast for nothing.

And did you know anybody in Ireland?

No.

You didn't?

No.

You just wanted to see Ireland?

Just wanted to see Ireland, I'd heard such a lot about Killarney, so I wanted to see Killarney.

What had you heard about it?

Oh, there was a song about Killarney's lakes and fields, one of the beauty spots of Ireland. I wanted to get as far away as I could, see as much of the country as I could. I didn't believe in going to London and boozing up there. So I fixed at Killarney, the next time after I come back from Germany, I fixed up at Culloden.

Oh, yes, up north.

In Scotland. I wanted to see the old Culloden battlefield.

How long did you spend in Ireland?

Oh, a couple of weeks, I think.

What did you do in Belfast?

Oh, I met some Belfast people, and they were very proud of their city chambers - marble stairs and that kind of thing - xxx what it was. But it was a very great shipbuilding yard, Belfast. That's when I went to Ireland and seen as much of Ireland as I could. So I had to get lost to go to Belfast. But they were pretty good, the guards would tell you if you were lost, xxx think that you were lost.

What sort of preparations did you make for your escapes? I was going to ask you about that. How did you get together all of the things for that - your clothes, and your compass, and your rucksack?

That was due to the Red Cross giving us a good supply of food, and we could bribe the Germans. I got an old civilian overcoat, and some civilian pants.

What colour were they?

Oh, they were black, but with a big wide stripe down the pants, down there, indicating prisoner. So I got an old coat and leave this one in the camp, in case you got back again. I didn't get back. When I got xxx civilian clothes, after one of the Germans xxx I happened to be out. I was walking down the streets, in one of the German towns, in broad daylight, and I saw four Russians coming out, dragging one of these hand carts, and a sentry escorting them. Well, I did nothing, I just walked straight past them, never looked sideways. So nobody spoke; I reckon if I'd have spoke, they would have known straight away I was an escapee.

xxx one of those times, when I was walking through a little town further north, and a woman come up to me. And, of course, I was afraid to speak, so I burst into a fit of coughing and walked on, without answering, so she wouldn't be any the wiser. I suppose they thought I was a dope, or a bit xxx, or something like that.

And the civilian overcoat and trousers that you got, you hid them, did you?

No.

In the prison camp, when you were preparing to escape?

Oh, yes, when I was preparing, I'd just get hold of them, and then, when I got through the window and on the track, well, I'd be in these clothes, they wouldn't be prisoner's clothes.

What food did you take with you?

Oh, a lot of biscuits - and I don't know if I had a little bottle of water, I'm not too sure - other than that I'd have to drink from a stream, ditches, and things like that.

I don't suppose you'd be able to take any tinned food because the Germans would have opened all the tins.

Yes. So I had dried food - biscuits. I know I was going in the middle of the night, past an orchard, and there was a house just up, a hundred yards away, and a dog was barking there. And I went through this orchard and spotted some pears. So I grabbed a few pears - whether they were ripe or not, it didn't matter - and went on. But see, the dog was evidently tied up, he never came too near me.

The dogs were always a problem, weren't they, because they'd smell you, wouldn't they?

Oh, yes. Anyhow, the dog didn't come near me, so he must have been tied up.

Did you take anything to sleep with - a blanket or a coat?

No. I used to lay up in the daytime and walk all the night.

Whereabouts would you hide? Can you remember some of the places you camped?

You'd find many places - I had to look for a place just before daylight, and get into a wood of some kind - a young wood, all the better. You'd just lay up all day there.

Why was a young wood better than an old wood?

Because the vegetation is closer at the bottom - a high forest wouldn't be much good.

And you'd make a bit of a hole for yourself somewhere, would you, and hide?

Oh, yeah, just lay down through the daytime, and walk on at night. I could keep my direction, if I only had an ordinary dark compass, by lighting matches; but if I could see the stars, I didn't need a compass.

How did you get a luminous compass eventually?

Well, I must have offered a bribe to somebody - this was towards the end of the war - I was sent to a camp, just west of the Rhine River, to work - and I must have got the compass in

Friedrichsfeld camp, I was there for so long, and bribed someone, some German, to get a luminous needle compass. So I was alright then. I went according to the information I'd got about this little village called [Vies], so the fellows who got caught from there, one of them was going to go with me. I said, 'I'm leading the way, you can follow'. So I went up to this place, come to the village of Vies, then started to go along the road where they got caught, only for about half a mile, and walked into the pine wood.

Were you on your own at that time, or was he still with you, that man?

Er ...

END OF TAPE THREE - SIDE B

START OF TAPE FOUR - SIDE A

Yes - that's xxx came to live there.

It would be bearing when you arrived, would it?

Yes, it was. Most of it was all big red [may] peaches everywhere, very much in demand on the goldfields. And then you had also vines and a few other native peaches, so that when we got the Brookton we already had plenty of fruit to eat.

You sent it to the goldfields - by train?

Yes, take it into the Brookton shire and then it would go by train to the goldfields.

Do you know how much you got for some of the cases?

Well, I don't know - my mum said it was four pounds a case - a terrific price - that was only the very early fruit, see, and I think they were earlier from Brookton than they would have been from the south-west.

Was there a shortage of fruit at that time?

Yes, very much a shortage.

Grandma ran turkeys?

Yes. I just forget if we sold them, but they did well.

Well? How?

Well, they'd stop away in the spring when there was grasshoppers and green stuff about, and they wouldn't come home till they were nearly grown up - stop away in the bush. Occasionally eagles would go for them, and, I think, dingos, but there was no dingos by this time.

No foxes.

But the eagles. I know, one time, got in a great state if you saw the turkeys a quarter of a mile away, near a water hole, and an old eagle dancing around amongst them. See, he wanted to grab one, but they were kicking up a big row, and keeping out of the eagle's way. He couldn't swoop on them and grab one until it ... Anyway, I don't know what happened - she ran down, I think. She was surprised to find these turkeys making a terrific squeaking wail, the old eagle chasing them, on foot.

Yes, on foot. Now, she didn't pen them at night?

No, no.

They just ranged?

They just ran at large.

What was the Brookton township at that time?

Oh, it was just one pub, and a couple of stores, and a post office, and a railway station, and a few other houses for the residents. But it was only a small town. We used to have to go into there to collect our stores.

And, of course, you'd do that with buggy or spring cart.

Yes - sometimes a buggy, of course.

What do you remember about the Buckinghams? I remember them coming one to Grandmas.

Well, the Buckinghams were old settler friends of mum's and dad's at [Kelmscote]. And then, just before we left Kelmscote there was a bit of interest displayed by the people of Kelmscote on the grazing country up round west of Beverley that we used to go through going to Brookton. So some of the Martins - that was not the Martins, mum's family - there were two families of Martins, one had no connection to the other. So a couple of them went up - one of the Buckinghams - and they selected a lot of this virgin country out near West Dale, just on the edge of the [Garra] Forest - Kettle Rock.

Kettle Rock?

That was the area. So one of the Martin boys - Fred - and Olive Buckingham - that's one of the old members of the family - the Buckingham family - he selected quite a lot, and Fred Martin selected Kettle Rock. And I think Buckinghams was on what they called [O'Conner's] Gully.

Well, later on, old John, he got married and he came up to settle on the place, and his son is still there, as far as I know.

When they selected land, did they have to pay a sort of a rental per acre?

Yes.

What did they pay for it, can you remember?

It was on ten - twenty - year's terms, and it might have been, according to the classification, up to ten shillings per acre. I don't think you paid anything for about five years, other than survey fees, and then you paid off sixpence an acre a year. You see, over twenty years it was ten bob. Well, some of the land was cheaper than ten bob, maybe five.

You weren't expected to pay interest on the money?

No, that was what you had to pay. And you had twenty year's terms to pay for this purchase price - conditional purchase might have been seven or eight shillings, or ten shillings.

Now, just before the war, you and granddad started looking out east.

Yes. They were going to build a line from Brookton to Corrigin, and so all the healthy young fellows went out, looking around, selecting these blocks - most of them had been surveyed. I was interested also, so we went poking around, looking at different blocks - this would have been three or four months before the war.

What would you do? Go out in a spring cart for a week, or something?

No, a few days and then come back. And then we found one we liked very much, and I was going to have the place in my name. Dad went down to Beverley to put in the application. Then, of course, it already gone. And while we were looking for another one, the war broke out. And, of course, I couldn't get in xxx - xxx xxx went in and got in with the first contingent of 20,000.

When you were a young man on the Brookton farm, what sort of work did you have to do? Did you work in the orchard, or shepherding?

No, well we used to do mostly - there'd be a lot of ringbarking done, and we used to do that - they all grew up in suckers again, and we used to put a long time in cutting suckers. And then doing fencing, and help clearing - do a good bit of the clearing ourselves. And then, of course, breaking up new land, there's roots and stones to pick - so there's plenty to do.

Did you do any shepherding?

Oh, we did when we were still very young, when we first got the sheep - then the dingos were bad. We used to camp on one of the blocks down there, a couple of miles - a mile and a half - from the house. Our block went over the Brookton-Corrigin Road, the other side of it. And we were getting, as the lambing came on - this was in June - we couldn't get the sheep in - we were getting short of feed up near the house, and we couldn't get all the sheep in there, so we shifted them down to this other block over the road, and built a little rush hut there. A couple of us used to just fill in the time there all day, and watch the sheep, and bring them into the yard every night.

Rabbits, they weren't in at that ... you hadn't got rabbits at that stage, had you?

No, no, no rabbits, no.

Did you hunt much as kids - hunt game?

No, we didn't. We used to just go up home and do a bit around the house, or something like that, then go back at night. In the afternoon we would yard the sheep.

But as kids, for pleasure, did you go hunting?

No, not much. We used to - I don't think we had a gun.

What sort of things did you do for entertainment? Did you have visitors, did you play games, or tennis?

No, we didn't. We ... I don't think we played ... we used to play ... a couple of John's boys used to come down, and they'd sometimes camp in with us, and then we'd play little games. We used to have one game called [tip-cat].

Did you play cricket, or any of those things?

No, no; you'd have to go away from the farm, to a club like Brookton or Nelya - we never took up that.

Did you ever go to any of the dances?

No - Ern did, but I never went to the dances - Ern did, after he grew up, but never did I do it.

Were there many other young people round, boys, girls - other families?

There were a good many other families. The [Holsworths], there were four or five boys there, and two or three girls. And later on, the [heat box] came along, and they were just joining our place. Ern used to like dancing, but I never took it on.

Were you shy?

Yes - and xxx too - neither of us took it on - Olive and Ern took it on. But anyhow, xxx, it wouldn't be any good to me because I was not musical and too darn clumsy.

Now, prior to the outbreak of the war, there was a peacetime reserve, or something like that, wasn't there?

There was what?

A peacetime reserve, or a training scheme for soldiers, or something?

It was just compulsory, they were all getting scared of our defences - we were weak, and a small population, so the Government introduced compulsory military training, for all young boys from 15 or 16 and up; they called it the Citizen Forces. And at the same time, they used to - that is, from Perth - they used to - the bigger country centres like Beverley and Narrogin, they had training centres there, and they had an official recruiting officer there. And they were training all those that were in the towns - of course, they got enough to make it worthwhile to put an instructor. And then, outside of that town limit, of course, they formed a voluntary organisation, the Light Horse. A lot of the Nalya boys, they formed a troop of the Light Horse at Nalya, and

the company headquarters were in Pingelly. So Ern, and I, and Selby, and some of the Holsworths joined this voluntary Light Horse, and so we used to go up and do a camp, go to Pingelly and go down xxx - we went as far as [Darina] to a camp once, with about a whole 500 men. And then they'd often have a small camp for about 100 men; then we had one at Pingelly.

So Ern and I, and Selby, that was from our family, and some of the Holsworths and different other fellows, all joined up in Nalya.

What about Neil?

Well, he was the oldest one; he didn't join up, Ern and I did. And, of course, during the war, they were testing everyone for being medically fit, or unfit, in case they had to conscript. So Neil failed, you see, his heart was xxx, so he didn't go. Ern and I went to the war, but Ern came along about fifteen months after me, or so. He came along, he joined our old battalion, but I was a prisoner of war.

That was the 16th?

Yes.

What Light Horse? What was the number of the unit?

That was before the war - Peacetime Light Horse, 25th Regiment - 25th Light Horse. Then, of course, when the war broke out, they reorganised the Light Horse and formed a troop - a regiment - in Western Australia, and two or three other states - they had thirteen regiments of Light Horse altogether.

And what regiment was formed from around the Brookton area?

Well, there was none of the Light Horse drawn from there. Most of these early volunteers, from the Light Horse in civilian times, of course they just rushed down and all got into the 1st Division from the Commonwealth of 20,000. And as soon as they'd finished recruiting 20,000, they started on a second contingent - 1,000 - and I got into the second one.

That became the 16th Battalion?

Yes, but the 2nd Division - of 2nd Contingent, they called it - was made up of a brigade of infantry, which was 4,000, and artillery, and other things. The 2nd Contingent, the Infantry Division, was 4,000 infantry troops. I got onto them.

You were in them?

They formed up - they didn't have enough men in Western Australia to form up, make a whole battalion, so five-eighths of the battalion was Western Australian, and three-eighths South Australian. So our original 16th was South and Western Australians.

Yes, that's right. When the war broke out, what made you enlist? What do you think would happen to Australia in that war?

Yes, well, we were in the Light Horse, as volunteers, and mum was away holidaying at the Williams, and one of the other boys went straight down - one of our Light Horse boys - I would be with them, but dad was very upset and he said, 'Wait till mum comes back'. So I waited a bit, and George Martin - he was a cousin, of course - he rode up and said that he was going, first chance, second contingent. And so I said, well, I'm going down straight away. But dad was very worried about it and he said, 'Wait till mum comes home'. So I just had to wait till mum come back from the Williams, and I went into the station to meet her on the train, and I said, 'I want to go to the war, and dad said I have to wait to see what you said'. And she said, 'Well, I wouldn't stop you'. So away I went.

Now, why did you go? Were you worried about Australia, or did you ... What made you rush on as fast as all that?

The offer of adventure, something different, to be away from it all, xxx travel - the desire to travel, I've always had that. And secondly, of course, duty to your country.

How could you see, in Australia, a duty to a European war?

Well, it was simply because if England went down, we went down. We were only secure because of the British Navy. You see, they ruled the waves at that time, so it was a matter of duty, but also a love of adventure, wanting to try something different - a chance to travel, that was my burning desire. I never regretted going to war.

What did your mother think about it?

Well, she said, well, she didn't want to make me go, but she said she wouldn't stop me.

What about granddad?

He was a bit worried, I think, but I still tore straight down to Perth as soon as he come down - as soon as she come back from Williams - and enlisted. And, of course, George was already in that new group, and I joined in the new group with him. So we were both put into the 16th Battalion.

What about your sisters? What did they think?

Oh, I don't think they thought anything. xxx was only a schoolgirl, and, of course, Olive, she was only young too.

What about your training? Where did that take place?

Mostly in Blackboy Hill, and we were camped in bell tents there, and trained there for about - probably a month or so - and then shipped over to Melbourne to join brigade training. You see, we were only about half a battalion, so that a brigade was 4,000 men. So we shipped over to Melbourne, and that was the first set of my adventures, I enjoyed every bit of that.

And General Monash was the first brigadier, and he became the most famous Australian general after that war. Monash was 4th Brigade, I was [the original] of that.

What about your training? What sort of training did they give you?

Oh, all kinds of marching, training, xxx, and rifle practice, charge, attack, formations - they had so many men behind, firing at the enemy, and the front section rushed forwards a hundred yards, and dropped down, and they fired, while the other section came up. That kind of training. Most of it was ordinary parade ground discipline.

What benefit would that have been in the war?

Oh, it would have been a lot because it gives you a sense of being part of a company, or a section, and so, of course, you are under the command of one officer from a section - whatever the process was - to go forward, or retreat, or whatever it was. You see, you trained as a section.

And you worked as a group, and you were, more or less, instantly obedient, I suppose.

Oh, yes, yes. You had to be obedient, and, of course, that's what you went away for. I enjoyed all that, I never regretted going to the war.

Now, from Melbourne, where then?

Well, we went to Melbourne, and we were training in Melbourne - out of Melbourne - Broadmeadows - probably a month or more - five or six weeks.

What date did you join up?

21 September 1914 - the month after the war broke out.

That's right. Now, you are in Melbourne, you trained at Broadmeadows; then what happened?

While we were at Broadmeadows training, we got news the Australian first contingent had sailed - we didn't know where to - and the news came through that they landed in Egypt. So while we were training there for four, five or six weeks or so, we were put on a troop ship just before Christmas in 1914. And we didn't know where we were going.

So you actually sailed from Melbourne, not from Western Australia?

Yes. And we left - that was just before Christmas - and we called in at Albany to assemble the rest of the troop ships - there was a convoy of about fifteen or sixteen troop ships - and we called in at Albany, assembled the troop ships, and we towed a submarine - one of our submarines. But just before that, of course, the Emden had been attacking the Cocos Island, so one of the escort cruisers from the first contingent set off for Cocos and destroyed the Emden.

Now, what ship was that?

The Sydney.

That's right, yes.

The Sydney destroyed the Emden, and so they evidently reckoned the water was clear for the second contingent - all xxx got was one submarine, being towed by one of the troop ships. If there had been any danger, of course, she'd have been cast off to meet the enemy.

Now, when you came back from Melbourne you assembled at Albany, and, of course, grandma wouldn't have seen you from the time you went to Melbourne.

No. From the time I left Brookton, she didn't see me again for four and a half years.

It would be hard on her.

Well, of course, eighteen months of that I was a prisoner of war, so I suppose they reckoned I'd come back.

Well, once you were a prisoner of war I suppose they felt that at least you might come back.

Yes.

Now, what about the conditions on the troop ships? How were they?

Oh, they were good, they were good - packed, like sardines, and we enjoyed that - I enjoyed that anyhow, it was quite an experience - landing in Egypt, I enjoyed that too.

How long did it take you, from Melbourne to Egypt?

Oh, about five weeks, I think.

And you were able to get a bit of exercise on the ship?

xxx

And you were reasonably well fed?

Had to do duties there, there would be training and that kind of thing - physical jerks and so on. And when we got to Egypt, of course, we must have xxx in Egypt.

Now, the majority of the men were happy on the ships, were they?

Oh, yes.

They weren't miserable?

No, no.

Now, you arrived, you'd go up through the Suez Canal?

Yes.

And what, did you disembark where?

No. When we went through the Suez Canal, just before that, the Turks had made an attack on

Suez. And so the ships bridges were xxx xxx up in case there were snipers. So we were two or three days going through the Canal, I think, stopping in the Bitter Lakes for a while. Then we went through and disembarked in Alexandria, and went straight up to Cairo by train. Then we were just outside of Cairo for probably a couple of months.

Egypt at that time was a British protectorate, wasn't it?

Oh, yes. And, of course, the Turks were our enemies then, and, of course, the Egyptians were Muslims, so we didn't expect too much sympathy from them.

No. Were they difficult?

Oh, they were out to make money and fleece the troops all they could, them selling oranges and other things. They couldn't be trusted.

What, from the point of view of hurting you, or taking your money, or what?

If the Turks had got over the Canal, you can bet your life all the Gyppos would have flared up.

And revolted?

And then helped the Turks.

But in the meantime your money was the most important thing to them?

Oh, yes, yes.

At that time, had you any idea where you would go into battle?

No. There was the first contingent, they were all camped out near the pyramids, and the second contingent came along and we were camped at Heliopolis - like a suburb of Cairo. And then, after three or four months training, both mobs were there together. And then they decided to attack Gallipoli, and so they sent the first mob - all Bob's lot - 1st and 2nd Divisions - to Mudros

Island - there was a big bay there where there was protection for hundreds of ships - and we were both the first position - at least the 1st Division and the 2nd Division. The first contingent was made up of one Australian division, and the second contingent was partly New Zealand - ANZ - our crowd was in the 2nd Division. And they were all assembled in this Mudros Harbour.

Where is that?

On Lemnos Island, about forty miles off Gallipoli. And, of course, there was about - oh, there must have been a hundred ships there, warships of all kinds, and transports of all kinds, and you could recognise some of the warships. And so both lots were there for a couple or three weeks. And then, one morning, they must have dispatched their landing parties, and it was made up of 1st Division, 3rd - 11th, 12th Battalions - and our lot - they were reinforcing them all day, you see - our lot didn't leave Lemnos till about midday.

On that first day?

First day. By the time we got over to Gallipoli the bombardment was all over. Our ship was lying off Gallipoli, and warships scattered all along the coast, bombarding, and we was having a great time looking at the bombardment. Reckon they started moving about, and they sent a destroyer out to the troop ship, and we all crowded onto the deck of the destroyer, like sardines, couldn't move. And this destroyer was moving about, and eventually she came under the Turkish shrapnel, and they were bursting up in the air, and whistling bullets past our destroyer. We were like sitting ducks. We just crouched down, with our packs to the enemy, on the deck; that's all we could do. We could hear the pellets from these shrapnel shells hitting the funnels and making a noise, and whistling, and you could feel the blast of the shells. And we couldn't do a thing, couldn't get under cover, couldn't hit back, couldn't do anything - sitting ducks. So that was a very unpleasant few moments.

Now, the Turks must have been well aware of this flotilla.

Oh, yes.

They must have known you were coming.

They did because the stupid blighters in the English authorities bombarded the thing for a month before the landing, and of course, they were all prepared. And three of our old type battleships - xxx - were sunk before the landing took place. Mines coming down from the Dardanelles. And so they might as well have sent them a letter and told them we'd be there.

Yes, that's right. Were many killed on the boats, on your particular destroyer, from shrapnel - anyone hurt?

No. I think out of our crowd there might have only been part of the battalion - there might have been only four or five hundred men - and I think four or five were hit with these pellets, so they wouldn't get ashore. I don't know whether they were killed, but they were hit anyway.

Were you anxious, or scared, at the oncoming bit?

Oh, dead scared, when you are like a sitting duck - these shrapnel shells were like a shotgun cartridge, and would explode about a hundred feet away. And you could feel the blast whistling past your ear, and the whistle of the bullets. We had big, heavy packs on our backs, so we presented them to the bullets. About four or five got hit.

How long were you there, within the range of fire, before you were ...

Not long - might have only been quarter of an hour - and the destroyer would have been moving about, and probably the warships might have spotted the guns and silenced them. But anyway, it didn't last all the time, but it was obvious (on) the destroyer for quite a while. And then it was just before sundown, the rowing boats, and little pinnaces - towing boats - come out to the destroyer.

How far off shore would the destroyer have been?

Oh, about a mile, I suppose - I don't know, it might have been more. But anyhow, we got towed into the shore, and by the time we got ashore it was about sundown. And we had to jump into

the water, of course, to pull the boats up to the beach, and jumped into the water, and then straight away up one of the valleys. Our boys were founding a bit of a front line, and straight up to that and dug straight in that night. Of course, the xxx fire never stopped all night, never stopped for a week.

From the Turks?

Yes - from both. And we were probably wasting a lot of our ammunition - but going up this valley, of course, the bullets would go over the top. And it came on longitudinally alongside to the front lines - and they were just digging the front lines when we got up there, we all had to take part in the digging.

How did most of the Australians take it?

They took it very cheerful. I know, after about three or four nights we were sleeping in the trenches - couldn't get any sleep. After about three or four nights we got relieved and had to go down to the bottom of the valley, lay down there and get some rest.

END OF TAPE FOUR - SIDE A

START OF TAPE FOUR - SIDE B

(Quality of recording poor)

It was that darn cold - I was lying alongside of a boat and was shivering all night - xxx. Next morning it was a bugger of a xxx to xxx. Keep awake all night - it was cold.

Did you sort of advance up the valley? After you'd dug in, were you able to go up?

We advanced up the valley, then you climbed this hill. That's where our boys were digging in the line; we immediately joined them, digging in the front line. Not an easy xxx xxx.

How far away were the Turks?

Well, it was undulating xxx - there was a bit of a valley, and there was scrub growing about. They might have only been a hundred yards away, xxx. But we didn't see much of them, you could only hear their bullets.

(Break in interview)

Can you tell me the year the Whittingtons first came out?

18 January 1830.

Who came, can you tell me that?

That would be Daniel, his wife, and James, the son - he was five - and there must have been one daughter - I don't know what her name was.

Were any children born here?

Oh, yes, there must have been at least two or three because one married George [Gursley] - one of the girls - and then there was a John Whittington - Johnny they called him, he was an old bachelor, he died an old bachelor, so he'd been a child of Daniel, born in Western Australia. And there must have been two girls; I know one was alive - Elizabeth - she became Elizabeth Gursley. But then I believe there was another one - it's a pity we haven't got the records from Judy [Jobson], she had another one mentioned - one was called Julia, I think.

We can find that out later and add to it. Now, what did he do for a living? Have you any idea?

Well, as far as I know - well, some of the early records say he came out as a servant to some people - what's the name of the ... [Sandleford]. We've not much information about that. That's later on - well, it must have been a long time, twenty years after, or so, his daughter was being married to George Gursley, and the occupation of the parent of the bridegroom, and the parents of the bridegroom and the bride were - their occupation was quoted - both as farmers, George

Gursley, and Daniel Whittington

He was supposed to have died at a great age.

No, that was ... dad's grandfather, Williams. They come out later, I believe, but Daniel Whittington come out in '13, and Williams - that would be dad's mother's people - came out in - must have been about the '40s, I think.

Which was the one that was supposed to have lived to 104?

That was grandfather Williams - dad's grandfather Williams, he'd be the opposite number to Grandfather Daniel Whittington. So Daniel Whittington, his son James married Grandfather Williams' daughter, Margaret Williams it was.

Now, James, that was one of the sons, took up Rosedale in 1870.

No, well, that would be grandfather James - the [child] James.

Yes, that's right. What do you know about that?

Not much, but I know my dad used to speak of how they only had about a hundred, or a couple of hundred, acres there, for a start. They must have brought sandalwood in from there because they used to - grandfather James, he was the owner of the teams, and the owner of the farm, and his son, John - dad's brother - he was driving the sandalwood team to Perth with the sandalwood from Beverley. Anyway, my dad, he didn't make much of an impression, but xxx out of debt. So dad took on the teams to work - he done that for a number of years, I think, but I don't know for how long.

What happened to the others of James' family?

The children?

No, not his children, his sisters and brothers?

James?

Yes.

Yes, well, his brother, as I said, the old bachelor, Johnny, and one sister, Elizabeth, she married George Gursley.

That's right.

Then there was two other girls - I think one married a [Towel] and one married a ...

Beasley?

Could be, but I'm not too sure of those figures, but Mrs Johnson - xxx Johnson - she'd have the records of who they married.

Yes, well, we can get that from the family tree. Now, who did James marry?

Alice Martin; that was mum's mother, who was Margaret Gursley, before she was married to Jessie Martin. So that mum's mother and father were xxx of Mr and Mrs Jessie Martin, and Mrs Jessie Martin, of course, was Margaret Gursley.

But James married Alice Martin?

Alice Martin, yes - that's my dad married Alice Martin.

No, your grandfather James.

Well, he married this girl Williams, Margaret Williams.

That's right, yes. And grandfather James had how many - great grandfather James had how many children? There was grandfather ...

He had four boys, John, James, Samuel and Henry, and one sister that married Andrew [Strange].

That's right.

But he mentioned, when I was a child once, he mentioned that there was another sister who'd cleared out, so I don't know what's happened to her. But xxx.

(That sister was Elizabeth.)

Where is great grandfather James buried?

Grandfather James - my father? He is buried in Giagering cemetery, New York - G-I-A-G-E-R-I-N-G.

He took up Rosedale.

That would be grandfather James.

Your grandfather?

Yes.

Now, who's got that now?

Uncle Henry had it until the time he retired, but he sold it all probably forty or fifty years ago, and retired to Beverley; so it went out of the family.

I thought he retired before World War I.

Yes, of course - no, during World War I perhaps, because when I came back from the war, he'd just retired and shifted into Beverley - he had a house in Beverley to retire. He was being driven

round the country to visit his relations, and he called on our place - that was just after I come home from the war. So he'd sold out by that time.

What age would he have been?

When he sold out? I don't know - that would be in our encyclopedia - when he was born, so you could work it out from that.

I thought it was in his fifties; he would have been in his fifties, I think, or forty-nine.

He wouldn't have been so old.

Forty-nine, something like that.

Yes. And xxx, of course, he wasn't married then - he was the youngest boy.

Your grandfather started the sandalwood planting, didn't he? - your grandfather.

Yes, that was dad's father.

With the boys.

Dad's father - the original James.

That's right. Now, how did they operate? Did they go out and camp out for a period of time?

I think they must have done. Dad used to speak of ... they had to cut the sandalwood in winter, and adze it all - they adzed the sapwood off and the bark off because that evidently had not much perfume in it, so they wanted the hardwood. So they used to cut in winter, put it in heaps, and then dress it all by adzing the bark off. And then, in the summer, they'd start carting it down to Fremantle.

Did all of grandfather's brothers help in it, or just James and John?

There would be grandfather James - the two little boys, Sam and Henry, they'd be too young, I think - and so John and dad were the eldest, and so they were the ones who did the carting. The others might have helped collecting the sandalwood, I don't know.

Did they camp away from home for weeks?

They must have done, I think.

Do you know what size they cut the sandalwood? Did they cut it as posts, or blocks, or what?

Of course, the thicker the logs, the better they were, but most of them would be about only about the same as [jam] stakes.

They'd cut them as big as they could?

Yes - they might have trimmed the bigger limbs too.

Now, what areas did they work mostly?

I think it would be around Beverley and out as far as probably [Uring] - I remember dad speaking of Uring. And there was an old settlement out at [Billbaron] - Waltons - and I think wherever there were patches of xxx country, the settlers selected that for sheep runs, you see, and that's where the sandalwood was.

Did they ship it direct, and sell it direct, or did they work through agents?

An agent. I remember dad used to say they used to sell it to a [Monger], i think it was - Monger - was a big business man in York.

Did they have orders to fill, of did they just collect it and then take it and get a price?

I think they used to just cart it down and get a price from the buyer. He was the agent who exported it to China.

Do you know how much a ton they got?

How much a ton?

Mm.

No, I couldn't say any more, I couldn't say just how much a ton.

And how long? For how many years did they do it, do you know?

Well, I don't know, but dad used to know all the old [stoping] places, going down on the Old York Road - they called them 'bating' places where they'd stop overnight - might have taken them a week to get down, or more.

Did they stop it when they took up land? Like when granddad took up land, say, at [Kelmscote]?

Yes. I think Uncle John might have got married first, and he became a baker. And then dad got married - I think, the second one, Uncle Henry. Anyhow, dad went down to Kelmscote because the Martins lived in Kelmscote, and the boys all went away to the goldfields. And so dad looked after Uncle Tom's place - that was the Martin's old home - and all grew up - we must have been ten years.

He had his own orchard, or was it Martin's orchard?

No. It was a mixed farm and they used to grow hay, and raise cattle, and dad even had some sheep taken from Beverley down there. They had to be shepherded round Uncle Tom's Kelmscote home. But they didn't have any orchard much at Martin's old place - that's where dad was living. Dad selected a hundred acres up in the top of the hills, at the head of a nice brook - a

nice xxx. So while dad was managing Martin's old place - Tom Martin's old place where Jessie Martin xxx - old place - well, he was paying labour to clear this swamp out, on top of the hill. And he eventually finished up by having cleared about five acres of it - that was the best for fruit - and planted the orchard. And then built a small house - a couple of rooms - and Uncle Tom, by that time, [made all the money], xxx, or lost all they had up on the goldfields - they came down, back to his farm, and, of course, we shifted up to the hills then. And then dad added a couple of more rooms onto that, but that must have been - I know we left Brookton - Kelmscote - in 1906, so we must have shifted up the orchard in about 1900.

(Break in interview)

Uncle John married first, and then it was grandfather - and Henry married?

Yes. Whether Henry was before or after dad, I wouldn't know, but anyhow, he had no children.

He married ...?

Julia Beasley.

Now, when John married, he became a baker?

Well, he might have been a baker before, I don't know.

The what about Henry, did he take up land?

No, he inherited ... before he got married, I think, grandfather - the original James - my grandfather James - he handed over Bald Hill, Beverley, to his two youngest sons - that was Sam and Henry - and he, himself, went up to xxx and selected another farm of his own - grandfather did. So Uncle Sam and Henry were together as partners for a good long while - I don't know exactly how long - and then Uncle Henry continued running the place and expanding it, and Uncle Sam selected a big lot of country out Brookton, where Harry is now.

Yes. Now, grandma, do you know when she came out? Was she born here, or was she

brought out as a little girl - Grandma [Whit] - Alice Martin?

Yeah, she came out at the age of three - that would be in about the 1870s, I think.

Her parents, the Martins, what did they do? Did they come to farm?

They came and they settled down at - mum used to call it Muddy Reach - it's near The Causeway now - vegetable growing. There was an old landholder, I think, they were vegetable growing for him. Then, of course, he was a mean old blighter, and it was a struggle to exist - there was no demand for the vegetables they grew.

So, from then on, they weren't the owners of this vegetable garden, they were just like tenant gardeners, I think. Anyway, they must have got a bit of money together because after a few years at Muddy Reach - they called this [Burwood Place] - they bought this old farm at [Right's Brook Kelmscote]. That was where I was born.

Yes, there. And were all of you children born up on Right's Brook, or not?

Yes, four of us were, and the last one - Ivy - was born when we were up on the hill farm, the orchard.

Yes, that's five. What do you remember about going to school?

Well, I started school, I suppose, at about six, and we used to walk over to that from the low place - Uncle Tom Martin's old home - and that was my old home until I was about six or seven, see. There was Neil and I, we used to walk to school. And then, when we shifted up onto the hills, of course, Ern came along then - he got of age, and Olive - and the three of us used to walk - four of us - used to walk to school. But Olive might have started a couple of years later than we did. But we used to walk from that old hill residence, down everyday to school.

How far?

I think it was a couple of miles - it was climbing the Darling Range - at least, it was the range

escarpment.

I remember grandmother telling me she bordered a teacher.

Yes, she did, and that teacher was a Miss [Carrick], and she later become Mrs Morgan. And Mrs Morgan's daughter still - she's with the historical society, and we'd been talking to her.

I also remember grandma telling me that she and Miss Carrick took you and Neil, or you and Ern, into Royal Perth for your smallpox vaccinations, on the front of the horse. Can you remember that?

I can't remember it, but I know she said she used to take a child, ride sidesaddle, and take a child into Perth.

How far would that be?

Fifteen miles - xxx, you see - I suppose they come home the same day.

I remember saying, she had you all vaccinated for smallpox.

I know I've still got the mark.

What do you remember about the Kelmscote town site at that time?

Oh, there was very little. There was a hotel over in the street, just near the station, and a post office, and a store; that's about all - a blacksmith.

Now, this schoolteacher, was she at the school that you went to? Did she go to school with you each day?

No, she xxx before my time - she'd be teaching xxx.

She would be when you were at Martin's?

Yes. When she was there none of us were old enough to go to school.

I see, yes. And by this time Grandfather Whit was not sandalwood cutting?

No, no, he was just managing this xxx inherited his father's old home - that's our old home - while he was on the goldfields, he might have been there ten years, you see. So dad was managing the place, and at the same time, selecting the block up on top of the hills - a hundred acres, I think it was - but he only cleared out five acres for orchard. So he had a full-time job doing that, and then, when we got up onto the orchard, it was too cramped on the orchard, he wanted to go up into the wheat belt again. So while he was there - at Kelmscote, on the hills, running the orchard - he'd selected this farm at Brookton.

Was it virgin bush?

Virgin bush, yes.

Did he used to go up there for any length of time, and then come back to the xxx?

He'd come back and do his work, and he'd go up there - I think he first selected about 300 acres, and he eventually built up to take a bit more till he got a couple of thousand acres.

What year would that have been, do you know?

Well, we shifted up there, and the farm was partly made then, in 1906. He must have selected somewhere about 1901-2.

And he operated the orchard at the same time?

Yes. He had fencing done up on Quinn's Hill - xxx Hill was covered with grass, that's where Ern is now.

That's what they call Oaklands now.

Oaklands, yes. Then he was to let contract for fencing, and for land clearing, and then he had a xxx with three horses, he used to go up and plough up some land and put a crop in, and then go back to Kelmscote again. He left his team of three horses up there.

He'd go up by spring cart?

Go up by train mostly.

Oh, the train was through?

Yes, because he'd walk out to Uncle John's - and Uncle John was only three miles away - so that he'd look after, keep an eye on the place while dad was down at the orchard.

Did he have sheep on it? Did he drove sheep?

He didn't have any sheep on the Oaklands farm until we went up, all shifted up from the orchard.

What that was what, 1906?

1906, we shifted from the orchard to Brookton.

Did he sell the orchard and move out?

Yes. We held the orchard for a couple of years - I think he used to go down during the busy season, send fruit away - and then he sold that and he got a bit more money to develop the farm.

Who built the house on Oaklands? Did he have it built?

Well, Uncle John was a bit of a bush builder, and he built three mud brick rooms for a start, and then the verandah done in behind - made another three. So that's the home we went to from Kelmscote.

Now, Henry and Samuel were already farming in the area?

No; Sam was, Henry was still in the old Avondale - Bald Hill.

Isn't that what they call Roselands?

Yes, that would be Rosedale or Roselands.

Or Rosedale. Granddad and John, did they sharefarm at all ...

No, they were just ...

... to help one another out?

They were just working, developing their blocks. Uncle John had a small block with us, and, of course, he used to have to work out.

For other people?

To earn his living. And he started a good orchard there, and he used to do a good bit of his work [on horses] xxx. Then, when dad went up to Brookton - of course, he used to work a bit with dad on the machinery and waggons, and that kind of thing. Uncle Sam, of course, he was a bachelor then, he was self-contained.

Did granddad work out, at all, for other people, or was he able to manage?

No, no, he never did any outside work. When he sold the orchard, that brought him a bit of money - you see, he had a really good manager. So after a couple of years at Brookton, with all the family, we bought sheep, bought a lot of sheep from the Dale and those places, and then we had paddock fences - at that time there were dingos there - so while the dingos were about, we used to have to yard the sheep at night. So we did that for a couple of years, and then we settled - oh, it started to get thick around, so the dingos disappeared.

How far from Brookton is Oaklands?

Seven miles.

Did you go to school in Brookton?

No; when I finished I went to the farm - I left school in 1906, one month before I was thirteen.

Heavens. And what about the younger ones?

There was no school, and then the settlers got round and they applied for a school, and they got a school going a couple of years after we got there, to Brookton, and they used to drive Ern and I, and Uncle John's kids, we used to drive to this little school called Ashfield.

How far?

Oh, about six miles.

Goodness.

Then I didn't go to school at all because, I suppose, I reckoned I was too old.

And you all stayed on the farm with granddad until the war?

Yes. Well, that would be from 1906 to 1914, and developing a couple of thousand acres, you see; we couldn't develop it on our own, we were kids and we used to xxx let contract clearers and so on. But there was plenty of work for all the three boys.

Anyhow, as soon as the war broke out in '14 - see, I'd just turned twenty-one, so away I went.

(Break in interview)

On one of your trips to Brookton with your father, when you were staying at McGee's ...

Yes.

What happened?

Well, we were driving from Kelmscote - dad had a bit of xxx to take xxx the harvest - and, of course, it was the Christmas holiday, and I jumped at the chance to get a drive through the bush. So we drove - left Kelmscote early in the morning, and drove up and got as far as the Sand Springs - that's on the Brookton-Corrigin Road - and camped the night there. Then went further on to see dad's cousin, Mrs McGee - and Mrs McGee, her father was the original George Gursley, and he was a very old man. She also had dad's uncle, Johnny, because he'd be uncle to her as well. So he was ... there was two old - very old - men living with Mrs McGee and her husband.

And so we pulled up there for the night - that was the second night out - and there'd been a big bushfire raging - there was a number of other men there - and they were sitting down having tea at the end of the day, after they'd finished the fire. And this very old man, Uncle George Gursley - that was Ellie McGee's father - he was sitting down on the other side of the table, and dad's uncle, Johnny, he was sitting the other side. And I was sitting down low, and I could just see over the top of the table, and I saw this pair of eyes and I could have sworn it was dad. I was nearly going to speak to him, but dad was over here. There was that much of this old Uncle Johnny's eyes and head, he was exactly like dad. So I could have xxx easy. He died afterwards - just a few years afterwards - but he was a pretty old man then because he was dad's Uncle Johnny.

That's right. And he was the bachelor?

He was the bachelor. And the other uncle, George Gursley, he was dad's uncle by marriage because he married Eliza Whittington.

Yes.

(Break in interview)

The McGees had a farm there at that time, didn't they?

Yes, well, the original farm where George Gursley - that was xxx McGee's father - he had an old farm called [Euchering], that was just on the Dale River, just down from our road when we go to Corrigin. Mum used to go up there ...

END OF TAPE FOUR - SIDE B

START OF TAPE FIVE - SIDE A

Tell me about the food, how they supplied it, what it was like?

Well, when we landed we had what they called iron rations; that was some Oxo cubes, and some hard biscuits - terrible hard things, you couldn't chew them - a tin of beef or so. And, of course, that's what's called iron rations - that would do for twenty-four hours, say, on that, and then after that time, if you'd eaten them all, food would come ashore - that would be still biscuits and tea, if you could get it.

What about water?

Well, water was very bad, they had to cart water there.

Where did they get it?

Oh, I suppose from Lemnos Island - I don't know where they'd get it. That was the first landing, but we might have been able to - I don't know how it got there, but we used to get it.

Did people bring it up to you in the front line, or did you pick it up when you went back for a rest?

No, it would be brought up, and the same with the food, I suppose, it would be brought up and

just served out along the line.

Was it cooked, or did you simply open up your own little packet of biscuits?

Yeah, we used to have mess tins, and, of course, you could - these biscuits were issued out in bulk - big hard things. You were really craving for something like bread, but you'd have to pound - I'd have to pound mine up anyway, in an old shell case.

You had false teeth then, didn't you?

Yes, you couldn't have bit the darn biscuits.

What about the leadership, your commanding officers, at that stage?

Oh, I think they ... old Birdwood, I think he was quite a fatherly old fellow, but I don't think he knew much about soldiering. And the other divisional commander, Bridges, he was killed that first week, I think. And General Godley, he was the commander of my division, and I think he was alright. But, oh, it was a very difficult job; see, they couldn't see the enemy, and didn't know - it was hilly and rough country - didn't know the strength of the enemy. But they knew the deadly accuracy of his snipers.

And somehow or other you were landed on the wrong beaches, the Australian contingent.

That's what we heard since. But I believe they landed a little bit nearer Cape [Helly] than we were - they landed into an impossible position, probably a fortified point, right down to the sea, called Gaba Tepe.

And what about your opinion of the Turks?

Oh, they were deadly fighters, and deadly snipers - their rifle fire was deadly, and they were brave men, there is no doubt about that. They believed, see, they were in the hands of Allah. So they were brave men, and, of course - we came to find out later on - after I left they assaulted the

Turkish lines during another big landing - Suvla Bay landing - and the Turks were well entrenched. But our fellows, we weren't so well entrenched, it was too much like hard work - very hard digging. But they must have ... they were like the Germans, they put in much more work to their defences than we did.

Because they were there longer?

No, they were made to work, I suppose.

I suppose they'd have got a bullet if they didn't.

Probably would have done.

How long were you there before you were actually wounded?

Seven days.

What happened? What time of the day?

(Break in interview)

Seven days, and the whole time it was just a continual rattle of rifle fire. Most of it was caused by our boys, I suppose. But it never letup, day and night. After, say, about three days - that's what I was telling you about - they gave us a rest down in the valley - I wasn't very much complemented on being a sleeping partner. Then, after that, we'd go back onto the line, and go down, have our rest period. It only xxx course of seven days.

Were you with the same men all the time? You were part of a small group - platoon?

Yes, the same.

You got to know one another pretty well?

The same section, we knew all each one of us - they called them platoons then, about fifty men in a platoon. But a few of them had got killed off by the end of the week. Then, the following Sunday night, our general decided to make an attack on an unoccupied hill between two sections of our line. This was to be a night attack so that ships and what artillery we had on shore bombarded this hill, and then we went up in the dark. Of course, when we got to the top of the hill we started to dig a line on top of the hill. But, of course, we were well under the Turkish fire by that time - we couldn't see them, but the bullets kept whistling past us, and we'd scatter a few bullets into the bush in front of us, and go on digging like billyo.

Now, I'd got in up to about here, my waist, and just before I got hit, a little fellow - Charlie Ellis, along side me, digging in his particular hole - he said, 'xxx is hit' - that was one of the other boys - and so I don't know what happened to him. And after a while he said, 'Sandy is dead', and that was the sergeant in charge, just on the xxx. And after a while I felt this terrific bang on the back of the shoulder. All the time the bullets were going past, whistling - they'd go pss! - pss! - pss! - whistling past us.

And I felt this terrific bang, it was like if I'd been hit with half a shell [on my] shoulder.

You were hit from the back?

No, from the front, but it felt as if I'd been hit by a big piece of shell and it took the back of my shoulder off.

That would be all the bone?

Yes, it felt terrific, it gave me an instant panic for a split second, then I recovered and found out my shoulder was still there. And I could feel warm water running down my back, so I put my hand like this, and I brought it back and it was all dark, in the night light and the flashes. I couldn't use my arm at all. So I said to Charlie Ellis, this cobber of mine, I said, 'I'm hit', 'Oh,' he said, 'you'd better get out of it then'. So I couldn't do anything else but just throw off my equipment and crawl over the back, and down the hill. And got down the hill about fifty yards, I suppose, and there was some ambulance men there with a lantern, and they were dressing the wounds.

Well, they asked me where I was hit, and I just told them, at the back of the shoulder. They just got a pair of scissors and went straight up my shirt, xxx it like that at the collar. And, of course, it all fell away. I went to look behind to see if I could see what was happening behind my shoulder, and I saw the little spot there with blood on it. So I realised then that I'd been hit from the front.

Of course, the big damage would have come with the bone being pushed.

Yes. It was the bullet hitting the bone and expanding. You see, we used to pick them up some time in the trenches, afterwards, where they were like a long bullet, like that, but it seems that the outer edge was copper, and the filling was lead. So I don't know - when they make a dumb-dumb they file the end, you see, and when it hits something hard, and the copper stops and the lead flies out and makes a kind of a mushroom. So whether - I couldn't tell what it was, but we'd picked them up like that. You'd feel a sting with a bullet, and just mushroom - was lead in front.

So you think it was a dumb-dumb?

The effect was the same, but, of course, you couldn't prove it. But it was against international law to use them, but still, they don't always observe that.

Anyway, when I got dressed at the dressing station, they motioned me to go down the hill - I had to nurse my arm like this, you see, going down the hill. When I got down to the bottom of the valley - into the valley - there was Simpson and his donkey there, and there were strangers - stretcher bearers there, carrying fellows back on the stretcher, down to the beach. And so they put me on this donkey - I had to hold my arm like this all the time. He might have been supporting me, or not, but I wouldn't have had far to fall because I could kick the ground.

Could you touch the ground?

Touch the ground - he might have had a bit of a path - but I could touch the ground - they are tiny little things.

Anyway, I got down to the beach eventually.

How far from the beach would the front line have been?

About a mile, I suppose - it's through this valley, reeling about. And every time the valley came at right angles to the front line - where the Turk's line was - of course, the bullets would be whistling over; and when it went parallel to it, of course, there was no danger. But anyway, the old donkey driver, or leader, he'd hurry the donkey up to go through these places where there was bullets, until we got down to the beach and the dressing station there - there was a lot of fellows getting tied up, wounded - and those ambulance men, they gave us a drink of coffee and that kind of thing - pull off all the bandages again and stuck some more on. Had to wait there then for a couple of hours till the boats come in from the hospital ship. And this was getting late at night, it was as cold as billyo - of course, they only just pinned my tunic up, and it was just frozen, going out to the hospital ship. And when we got out there, of course, it was wonderful. Got up the gangway and into the warm lit-up ship. You see, they recognised hospital ships because they were all lit up with bright lights and red crosses.

Anyway, they pulled all the bandages off again, and put a tube in the back, and dressing, and gave me a shot of - injection of something - and put me to bed. And oh, I was in paradise - no feeling, no ... beautiful sensation.

They must have given you morphine or something, I think.

And then by the time the morning came, they come round dressing the patients, and I couldn't get up. The nurse put her hand behind my head, like that, and pulled me up, and I looked behind and all the pillow was soaked with blood - I was bleeding all night. But that didn't concern them much, I suppose it was normal.

Then, after the hospital ship - I think it was full after a few days - they sailed for Egypt.

And you were in Egypt recuperating?

Yes, for about four months.

I remember you telling me something about deciding you wanted to go back, or deciding you were fit, or what?

Yes. Well, when we were in Egypt, after I came out of the hospital, they put us into a convalescent hospital then to fatten us up, ready for the front again. And so while we were there - oh, there was a couple of other fellows and I - we were cooling off under the shade of a nice tree. Every time they'd call the role, about ten o'clock or so, we had to be at the xxx. We said we don't want to do that, they'd dismiss us straight away, no good going down; so we didn't bother to go down.

Anyway, the sergeant come up and demanded that we go down - told us to get down first, and we took no notice of him; then he demanded we go down, so we went down. And they pumped up a charge - non compliance of an order for an NCO, and absent from parade. And, of course, an old English doctor - I believe he'd been a civilian doctor practising in Cairo, and they gave him a job as a military commander in the hospital - and he went out and he questioned - I was still being massaged. He stuck three of us into the clink, where they tame lions, for about eight days, we got - for that. So I was that disgusted, after we got out of the clink and went back to what they called the base xxx - detail camps - they were the base details they called them - they must have been short of men on Gallipoli, they pulled out everyone from xxx who had been recovering, and put them all on the draft for Gallipoli.

So, before going to Gallipoli, of course, you all went before the medical officer again. And I was that disgusted that I decided I'd get back to the boys - I'd had enough of Cairo. And so each one would go before the doctor - 'How are you?' - oh, if he had a crook back, or a sore toe, or something, he'd say so - some of them had no excuse, they were going. When I come through I couldn't lift my hand out like that - 'How are you?' - I said, 'Okay, I'm alright' - and that's how I got back to Gallipoli.

And how long were you at Gallipoli the second time?

Oh, only about three weeks, I think it was, and they relieved the battalion and sent them back to

the island of Lemnos for a rest. And, of course, there was a lot of dead on Gallipoli, unburied, and there was fever and dysentery were rife there - a lot of patients came down. So after we went for this rest on Lemnos Island, I was only there about two or three days and had another sick parade.

And before they do anything, ask you any questions, one of the orderlies sticks a thermometer in your mouth. And so when it come to me - the doctor to question me - he didn't question me, just stand to one side. They'd read the thermometer, evidently it was high. And old xxx John was the same, he said when they asked him what was wrong with him, was there anything wrong with him, he couldn't explain.

After that, what happened?

Well, I was in a tent hospital for, oh, four or five weeks, and a big hospital ship came into Mudros Bay, on Lemnos, and it was the Mauritania. And so they piled all their sick and wounded on the Mauritania and dispatched them to England. So we finished up in Portsmouth, England, and into hospital in Portsmouth.

How long were you there?

Oh, two or three months, I think - under observation, and tests, and then we were let out - all those that had fever - for Christmas. Then after Christmas we went back to camp again - had to be still under observation for another three or four months, to see if we were carriers. So I was on Salisbury Plain then, just training with the rest of the sick and wounded, for two or three months.

When did you get sent to France?

Oh, it must have been just after the Battle of the Somme opened - that opened in about June, I think, or July, and we were in France in about August, I think.

Did you have any leave?

No.

In between being in hospital and going to France?

Oh, yes, we had leave after coming out of the first observation for enteric fever; they gave us about five or six week's leave, I think.

Where did you go?

Up to Scotland, and over to Ireland. Of course, you got a ticket from where you reported, in London, or in Portsmouth - where we reported - they'd give you a free ticket to where your people were. And so most of the boys said, oh, they wanted to go to London, and so I said I wanted to go to Killarney, so I went to Killarney.

Was that the time you were invited to the garden party at Buckingham Palace?

Oh, no, that was after the war.

How did you get to France?

After that?

Yes.

We had our leave, and then we were in camp again, and they kept sending of drafts of reinforcements to France, and so we just were put on the train and sent across to Calais, and over the Boulogne, in France, and then we ...

What did they send you on - a small ship?

Yes, small ships - I forget what they were - it's only a short run.

Now, when you arrived, where did you go?

We, after arriving in France - Boulogne, I think it was - and we went down to a big military base called Etaples, and we were there for two or three weeks - and we could hear the front line guns banging away at night, so we must have only been forty or fifty miles from the front line.

When you were in that camp, were you training, or were you just waiting to be called up?

You had to be trained every day, see, you had to have exercise.

What sort of things did they do?

Oh, just route marches, and physical jerks, and that kind of thing.

What were the conditions like?

Oh, they were good, it was behind the line, you see - quite good.

What, did you sleep in sort of tents?

Tents, yes.

Was it winter or summer?

Summer - hot.

When did you move up to the front line? Which part?

Up to the battlefield of the Somme, near the old - the Battle of the Somme opened some big mines exploded under the German trenches. One was at La Boisselle - the village of La Boisselle. We went straight up to La Boisselle, and just in front of La Boisselle was one of the old French villages, called [Monteville] - that's where we got the name from.

For your farm?

Mm. And so we joined the front line there - joined the Battalion there.

What were you? Were you an ordinary infantryman?

Yes, ordinary infantryman, a private, because I'd been disabled so many times - a tragedy. Anyhow, we went to an attack there - we were there a few months, I think. Then I got a bad attack of flu, and this was just before Christmas, and so - I wasn't that sick, but they decided they'd clear the hospitals out for Christmas and send us all back, xxx back to England. I wasn't really sick, but I had the high temperature with flu. So I was in England for that Christmas. And then as soon as that - I got out of hospital there, had Christmas, and was sent back to France again.

And whereabouts were you then - in the same area?

No, because they were all up in Flanders - Ypres, that's in Belgium. We was there for a few more months. Then we moved back to the Somme again, and the Germans withdrew their lines from the Somme back to what they called the new prepared line, the Hindenburg Line.

Now, what about the conditions in the lines at this time; can you describe them?

It was terrible because, where they had duckboards on the bottom of the trenches, you could walk, even if it was in the mud; but where there was no duckboards, and it rained, well, you'd bog down nearly up to your knees.

In mud ...

In mud.

... in the trenches?

Thick mud. xxx a hand, when you were - that was to get out of a line and be relieved, you see.

Often you would get stuck in the ... and a fellow would poke his rifle down and you'd grab it, and he'd help you out. It was that sticky. But that was only in some patches.

When you were in the line at that time, what were you doing? Taking pot-shots at the Germans in the front line?

Well, not unless there was an offensive. You'd just occupy the line - and you had to be on duty, of course, twenty-four hours a day - and if there was any attack, you'd have to be there to repel it. But when they were going to make an attack, of course, there would be a heavy bombardment and you'd have to go forward.

But otherwise you'd just sort of ...

Hold the line.

... xxx in the line and looked across at the Germans?

Yes - well, you didn't look too much, you would be a good target.

What about food?

Oh, the food was brought up from the support lines further back - there would be kitchens, and there would be buckets of stew sent up. When there was an active front, like the Somme, you might only be there three or four days, and then you'd be pulled out and sent back ten miles to be in reserve. You weren't in the line all the time. But when it was quiet, and there was no activity, well, you might be there some weeks.

It would be a bit boring, wouldn't it, at times?

Oh, no - the morale of the troops was pretty high - we were quite sure we would win.

What about your leadership? Talk about your leaders?

Oh, yes, well, there was none of them any good.

Carry on.

Old women - anything they knew they learned from the Germans.

Who, in particular?

Well, Birdwood was our commander, but he was only a corps commander - like, his higher command - higher generals - they'd be lieutenant generals and generals. Our army commander, I think, was [Gough]; he had no brains, either - none of them did. I believe, later on, old Monash was the brainy man. The old English generals, they lived in the time of the Boer War and wouldn't know any better.

Well, we looked at the lines in that square mile, and it just seemed silly to be able to send men over to xxx front.

Yes, but you see, the Germans were in a deep valley, and their deep underground trenches, while we were out in the open with shallow trenches. Our fellows never put in the work in the lines that the Germans did. Of course, they had better workers, I suppose, than the Englishmen.

Did you get any leave in France?

No, no. You'd be taken back from the line, and, of course, you could have a rest. France was a long way - more of a holiday than Gallipoli was.

Was it?

Oh, yes. Gallipoli it was starvation, and you always - only you couldn't get back.

France was a holiday. Did you go from the line, back to England any time, for leave?

No, not for leave, only when I had the flu that time; that's the only time I went back.

When were you suppose to go to Princess Royal's garden party?

That was after the war, and the peace had been signed then, and they come around one day, to Horseferry Road - that was our headquarters - Australian headquarters - and they said there's a party going to Windsor Castle to meet Princess Royal, or some princess. Anyone could go who wanted to, but I wasn't interested, I just xxx - I wasn't interested in royalty.

Alright. That was the reason you got on the list, just because you happened to be there?

Yes, we happened to be there, that was it.

We'd better go back to France. When was the battle in which you were captured?

That was at Bullecourt.

I thought it was Passchendaele, I don't know why.

No, it was Bullecourt - Passchendaele was in Germany - in Belgium - but I wasn't there then. Bullecourt, after the Battles of the Somme, all the front lines were blown about that much, the Germans withdrew to a more strongly fortified line called the Hindenburg Line. When we went to - the Germans withdrew, so we followed them up, and then once they got into the Hindenburg Line - of course, that was strongly fortified - our crowd decided to attack the Hindenburg Line. Of course, they were too cocksure of success - we had the tanks there for a start - crude kind of tanks - the Germans heard their engines going about ten miles off. We went to attack one morning, and the tanks got in position, and they could be advertised all over the front lines, you see, the noise they made. And then something happened and they called off the attack and waited till the next day. And so they sent the tanks over again, and the infantry behind them, and, of course, the tanks got knocked out. The infantry got through to the front German line and took that, and then they seemed to abandon us from behind - we got no further artillery support. And the Germans counter-attacked heavily and, of course, our fellows had run out of bombs and ammunition by that time. I don't know whether the officers were killed or what, but it was everyone for themselves, we had to get out.

I ran across - a lot of them running across no-man's-land - it was deep shell holes - and I got out and threw everything away to get back to my own lines, and got into a deep shell hole, and I said, well, it will do me till dark. And there was a bit of a lull, and I looked up and there was Germans all around me. They had went over their lines and into our lines, and so we couldn't do anything, we was just captured - because we threw everything away to get back.

And from there you were taken where?

Into Germany - the first place was called [Imden], I think. There was a lot of other prisoners there, and it was a most depressing period of the war for me.

What, being in prison?

Prisoner - there was no future, no hope xxx. And I found out while there that there had been some escapes made, and fellows had got through to England, so I decided then and there that that was my ambition, to get out. Of course, after a while we were sent down to working party down near Dusseldorf - there was about eighty men there, mostly Frenchmen, five Canadians, me, and two Englishmen - about eighty altogether.

Now, what did you do? What sort of preparations did you make? When you thought about escaping, what did you do?

Well, I first had to get some information about the frontier - and if you could, you couldn't get much - and then get hold of some civilian clothes - old coat and old cap, and pants - because our own uniforms - prisoners' uniforms, they were sent by the Red Cross - they were all branded.

END OF TAPE FIVE - SIDE A

START OF TAPE FIVE - SIDE B

How did you get this stuff? How did you get these things?

The Red Cross, well, the Germans had a good many prisoners in England and France, of their own, so they evidently permitted parcels to go through to their enemy prisoners, and so the English Red Cross used to send over parcels once they found out the address of a prisoner, and they'd send over the parcels to where he was working, and you'd get about three parcels a fortnight, I think.

What sort of things in the parcels?

Oh, there'd be biscuits, and tins of fat, sardines - anything like that - dripping was the main thing that was much in demand.

Now why?

Because there was no fats in Germany - they had no fats and no meat, you see, so they'd do anything to get hold of some dripping. And so that, together with biscuits - army kind of biscuits xxx purpose of bread - and so once the Red Cross found us we got out parcels, we were always well fed then.

How long was it before you got parcels?

About three months - that was about the worst three months of my life - starvation.

And what sort of food did you have then, when you were starving?

Oh, just boil up big pots of vegetable matter - sauerkraut - that was minced up.

(Break in interview)

And turnips, and what else?

And a couple of slices of black bread - dark bread - and that would be the days' rations. You see, you'd get soup twice a day, I think, and you had black coffee and this bit of bread for breakfast.

No meat of cheese?

No, no - apparently there would be a bit of meat in the soup.

How did you get your coats and your compasses, and whatever?

Well, you see, we had more than enough to eat with the Red Cross parcels - there was a lot of Belgians interned in Germany and made to work like slaves because their country was occupied. So they were like free men in an enemy country, and so you'd offer them a tin of meat, or something like that, and you'd get hold of an old coat, or an old pair of pants - you'd get a compass, but they were very hard to come by - you couldn't get a map, and so you had to just trust on you luck. If you knew Holland was away west of you, you'd go west, but you wouldn't know when you were there.

Did you have to walk from the front line, where you were captured, to the prison camp?

Oh, no. After being captured we were herded together in some old sheds - there was two or three hundred captured, I think - herded together for a day, and then put on a train for Germany. Those who were fit - some of them who were fit were kept working close behind the lines, but I had sore trench feet at the time, so they put me off into Germany.

What's trench feet?

Well, it's continual wet and cold, and your feet swelled up - swollen feet.

Now, your prison warders, they were Belgians, were they, or Germans?

What?

The warders, the guards?

Oh, no, they were all Germans.

What were they like?

Oh, in the working party, well, of course, it was fairly loose -there was about three soldiers and a couple of civilians in charge of this camp - a big shed-like place. These eighty prisoners might have been divided into twenty different jobs, and a foreman from the works would come along and he'd escort three or four prisoners, and a policeman would come along and escort a few more.

What sort of work did you do?

I was with helping - working with bricklayers - they were building a new wing of a munitions factory, and so I had to just throw bricks and mix mortar, and stuff like that.

Now, you learnt to navigate by the stars, didn't you?

Yes.

Who taught you?

Well, that was after I got caught - a couple of times - I got sent back to the big prisoners' base camp, and that's when I was put into hospital - I was coughing blood.

I think we'll leave that now and go back to your first escape; can you tell me about that?

Oh, yes. It was just after I got to this Ohligs commando - that's what they called it - Ohligs was the place. One of the Canadians, he took me into his confidence and said he was going to make a go of it escaping. So he escaped just about a few weeks after I got there. And he was away a couple of days, and his mates said, oh, he's just about made it now; and, of course, he landed back, he was caught.

And what was the punishment?

Fourteen days' gaol, and the gaol was on half rations all the time - just bread and water for two

days, and on the third day you got a bowl of soup and half the amount of bread. It would have been starvation, only the Canadians there - they all were well fed with parcels, they'd been longer there than I had - and so they'd bribed the sentry who used to have to take them from the base commando, just to take the food - bowl of soup and a slice of bread - up to the prisoner in the gaol - the local town gaol. And so they'd bribe the sentry with biscuits or something - and they were all short of food, the German civilians. And so they'd take the food up to this fellow who was in the clink, and he was well fed. But, of course, he only got fed because the Red Cross parcels had enabled his friends to bribe the sentry.

Your first escape, tell me what you did and how you got caught.

Well, this same Canadian told me - I got all the information from him - I told him I was going to have a go - and I said I could see a loop hole out in our yard. We used to be caged up every night at about nine o'clock - a couple of hours after dark - and just before the doors were locked we were paraded out in the yard and a count taken - that would be about eighty men. And then the sentries would walk inside their office and let us stop outside for a few minutes to have our final drink of water, or whatever we wanted, and then they'd lock the doors.

Well, during that final ten minutes, this Canadian - I told him what my plan xxx - find a couple of hooks - and this outside exercise yard was, oh, about a dozen strands of barbed wire, and up into the air. They'd been there that long, and nobody had tried them, and so they were fairly loose. So he said to me, 'You would have a couple of hooks, you could bring a couple of hooks down and separate these wires quite loose'. And as soon as the sentries went inside, he put the hooks in the wire and I picked up my little xxx I had packed and went straight out and through the wire, and he pulled the hooks away after, so they wouldn't know where I got away. Anyhow, I was free, and I was out for about two nights, that's all.

Where did you go? What did you do?

I was going north, keeping away from the River Rhine. I put a couple of nights walking, and on the third night - I'd lay up in the bush, pine forest or something like that, in the daytime. And the third night I was walking along a road in the dark and I heard footsteps coming. And so I nicked off the side of the road into a meadow that was there, and then got down, after I got about fifty

yards, and these fellows had a dog with them. And I don't know who they were, but they must have heard me and this dog came sniffing round, and they come round and found me. I could do nothing, I was just laying down hoping they hadn't seen me.

Well, that was my mistake, I didn't know enough, didn't know any better. But later on I wouldn't have done that.

Who were these people?

I don't know - I don't know who they were, whether they were policemen, or soldiers, or civilians, or what, but they took me up to the local gaol and they caged me up there for the next day. Then one of the sentries from the working party - commando - he come up by train and he asked me when I got away - he come to collect me out of the clink - and I said ten o'clock, or nine o'clock. And he called me a Schweinehund and a few other things. So I had to be humble and go with him. And we got on the train, and when we got on the train there was only him and I in the compartment, and he asked me again when I got away, and I said it was nine o'clock or so, and he said, 'No, you say twelve o'clock'. I said, 'Yes, yes, I understand'. And so I said, 'When the corporal asks me when I got away I'll say twelve o'clock' - 'Yes, good'. He was the fellow who used to take the provisions up to the other fellow when he was in the clink, so I couldn't antagonise him.

So when we got back to base camp - or the work commando party - the old civilian there, who was not on duty at the time, but he asked me as soon as I got in what time I got away, and I told him twelve o'clock. And he put his hands like that - 'Gaol for you'.

And how long did they keep you in gaol?

Fourteen days.

And then what?

I was sent back to the same party and worked there for another few months.

Did they confiscate all your clothes and things? I suppose they did.

They probably did, I'd forgotten about that. But anyhow, I was there for a few more months. There was one Frenchman while I was in the clink, he tried to get away, but he was an old hand at it, he'd been caught about six times before. And he made another attempt, and anyway, he got caught again before he got too far, so the other Frenchmen believed that one of the Frenchmen inmates had given him away. Anyway, so him and another Frenchman planned to - got in real thick with one of these Belgians, and the Belgian said he could get them out of the country and they'd all go by bus into Dusseldorf, catch the train and go into Holland - all sounds simple. Anyway, after feeding this Belgian up with all kinds of delicacies from our parcels, he pulled out, he wouldn't go, he was dead scared. And so the two Frenchmen, they were getting desperate by that time, and they said, 'We are going whether the Belgian comes or not, because,' the Frenchmen said, 'we can do it the same as he did - we are going to'. And they said to me - oh, they were good cobbers of mine - they knew I was going with them - they said, 'Now it's a bigger risk, you needn't come unless you want to', I said, 'Yes, I'm going with you'.

So we all arranged to get out of the camp, and we located one of the gates out of the exercise yard, had a chain on it, and the chain was fastened to a post, around the gate, and back again, locked, clamped over the chain like that. So we discovered that if you could pull the staple out of the chain holding the gate - it wasn't through the link - and you could pull the chain through. So we got out. And there was our accomplice, this Canadian who'd tried before, he replaced the chain and so forth, and they wouldn't know.

Anyhow, we got out of the camp and went about a mile down through the - away from the main road - and went to the tram stop - they knew where it was - and we all got on the tram. The Frenchman, he knew a bit more German than I did - we all three got on the tram - and there was a lot of civilians there as well - and the Frenchman said, 'Drei, Dusseldorf' - that's 'three for Dusseldorf'. And so we got on a tram, everything went well, so we got about half way in. And we didn't know that we had to change trams to get to Dusseldorf, so all the people got out except us three. I had to pretend that I wasn't with them mob, they would go, the two Frenchmen go ahead, and I'd trail along behind so that we wouldn't look conspicuous.

Anyhow, we were there long enough, after everybody else got out - the Frenchmen, they

decided to get out, and I just trailed along behind - but we'd been spotted. Evidently the conductor spotted we were something different. The Frenchmen were going ahead of me - this was in the dark, of course - and I see one of them look round like that, and they took off like streaks. And just at that same moment a xxx xxx from behind me, and a German soldier chased them, ran right past me chasing these Frenchmen, you see. If I'd have looked round, I'd have been caught, but I had to pretend I wasn't in the party, you see, so I took no notice. And I could hear them tearing down the street - frozen street it was - hop, hop, hop, and this bloke yelling 'halt!' behind them. I ducked down a side street - they weren't very well lit - and I just walked - never got out of a walk - walked down this side street. While the chase was going on, I got out of the way down the side street.

And so I kept going there - I still had a good way to go to Dusseldorf - I had to walk into Dusseldorf.

Yes, well, what happened then?

Well, I got into Dusseldorf and I saw one of the big bridges, and there was a bit of a park at the end of the bridge on the Dusseldorf - east side, east side of the Rhine - and I sat down there and wondered what I was going to do. I thought if I take off, trying to get over the bridge, there'll be a sentry on it, I'll be caught. So I waited in this park for a couple of hours and didn't know what to do. Then I thought, well, I might as well be caught at night as in the daytime, so I set out and walked over. And I saw the sentry box from one end and one of these xxx rails, and a pedestrian walked one side, and there was no sentry in it. So I waked on, right over the bridge, over the Rhine, and got to the other end and felt sure I'd be caught the other end - it was empty. So they probably removed the sentries at midnight - probably a toll to pay, I don't know. Anyhow, I got over the Rhine without any obstacle, and I still had a few hours of darkness. I walked on, and on, and on, till it was getting near daylight, then laid up in a pine wood. And I laid up a couple of nights, and on the third night I was on the frontier and didn't know it - and just bowling along a road going west, and, of course, run bang into a sentry again. But if I'd have known I was on the frontier, I'd have been a bit more careful, but I didn't know.

Did you have a compass at this time?

I did, but it was one of those straight needle compasses - you had to light a match - but I wasn't even needing the compass because I thought I was so far off the frontier, I'd made better progress than I thought.

What about food? Did you take food with you?

Oh, yes, always had food. One time I was out six or seven nights, and I had food all the time.

How did you get caught that time?

Oh, well ...

When you got to the frontier and found the sentry?

Oh, that was the second time, when I got away with the Frenchmen. Oh, I almost trod on this sentry, you see - he balled out 'halt!' when I was right against him in the dark - couldn't see the sentry box - and on a road. Of course, I couldn't do anything else, but I had to sit down.

Then, if I had that compass in my pocket, and I only had a bit of brown paper with some pencil lines drawn on it - nobody could have understood it - and I threw that away, but the compass had me worried a bit. So I was going along - this was still in the dark, back to the frontier barracks, where the sentry was - I just put my hand in my pocket and walked along - chucked the compass out one side into the grass. If you got caught with a compass on you, you might have got bashed about and made to tell where you got it. So I never got caught with one.

And then, of course, you'd go back into gaol for a while.

Yes, I went back, and into the same camp again, but I was kept in the base camp at Friedrichsfeld, where there was thousands of prisoners kept there, for a while, and tried, and put in the prisoners' camp there, in gaol, for fourteen days, and then sent back to this old place, Ohligs.

Did you get back onto work parties again?

Yes.

What were you doing then?

Oh, they shifted me off the brickworks and made me at the disposal of the town council, and you'd be cleaning up rubbish, or shovelling sand, or doing something like that the council wanted done.

What about the civilians - the German civilians - did they take any notice of you?

No, they had a lot of prisoners there and they didn't take notice - and they had thousands of Belgians there, working for them - and so they didn't take much notice.

You didn't come in for any abuse?

No - they might have done - some of the places, the sentries were bad and they'd send the men into coal mines, and they'd get bashed about if they didn't work. But I was lucky with that, they didn't punish me more. Then the third time I escaped from that place was when I was away for seven days, and after I got caught, that's when I was trying - I was amongst the sentries, and I heard one go past - I heard the footprints coming down the road.

Just a minute. How did you get out the third time?

Well, I arranged with these two Frenchmen, they were going to help me.

The same two?

No, different - one was the same, and the other was a different one. I had to get - I told these two Frenchmen how I was going to go, cut through the window, barbed wires, and then they would come along and throw along one of our rungs, over the barbed wire, and I would get out, and they would haul another rug to let me hang onto till I got down - it was about seven or eight feet down to the street. And so I'd cut the wires.

Did you get some pliers?

The other Frenchman - he was a friend too - but he said he could get some - he worked at a butcher's shop, I think, he said he could get me some pliers. So I got the ... he got me the pliers - and he was dead scared, every time ... he was giving me these pliers, his eyes were rolling about to see that he wasn't being spotted.

Anyway, after I'd cut my way through, I put the pliers back where he could find them, then touched these other two Frenchmen who were going to help me - and I'd got the wire folded up, and xxx the rug over, and I slipped out. They held one other rug while I got down, and then handed me my little case of provisions, and shut the window - I was gone, and they went back to bed. But they were good, these two Frenchmen - I've got their photos still at home.

Oh, yes. Now, you were out; you were still how far from the frontier?

Oh, I wouldn't attempt to get over the Rhine again, so I went north - it must have been, I reckon, about eighty or ninety miles. And so it took me seven days anyhow. Then, when I got up near the frontier, I knew I was near the frontier.

How did you know?

Well, because by the little map I had - it wasn't very good, but it was near enough - and I was sneaking along through little short meadows and the hedges, and so on, and I heard footsteps coming along a bit of a path.

This is at night?

Yes. And so I stood quiet and I looked down, and I saw the figure of this man go by - I know he was a sentry because they carried bayonets - you'd see the bayonet flopping on his leg. So as soon as he went by I got over the road behind him, and I was still puzzled; I knew if was a sentry so I couldn't light a match - and it was cloudy. So I was desperate, didn't know what to do, and I was sneaking along a bit of a track - because I didn't know which direction to go.

Anyhow, I just about trod on a sentry on the frontier. He yelled 'halt!', and that's it - he made me sit down. And that time I had a compass in my pocket, and I was dead scared that if I tried to throw it away he'd hear it. So I squatted on the ground like this, and he was standing over me with a rifle, and I put my hand in my pocket to get the compass. He said, 'What have you got there - a revolver?', I said, 'No, my handkerchief'. I pulled out my handkerchief and I had the compass there, like this. I put my hands down like this and I started scratching like this - it was a pine forest, you see, it wasn't bad - scratched a little hole without shifting my hands and dropped the compass in and covered it up - right under his nose, but he could see me when he seen me putting my hand in my pocket, but he didn't know what I had. So I put the handkerchief back instead of the compass.

And anyway, that was the big problem, I was scared of getting caught with a compass. But it was such a useless compass that I couldn't read it in the dark.

Then, I suppose, back to more prison.

Yes. Didn't go back to Ohligs again because after that time I was really sick, I started to cough blood.

And you had TB then?

Yes - and I didn't know. They put me in the hospital for a while, and then after that, after I got over it, they put me in the gaol for fourteen days again, but I had friends then who could supply me with food.

How long do you reckon you were in hospital?

Oh, probably only ... might have only been three or four weeks. But then, after that, they gave me light duties - I suppose they knew I had TB, I didn't.

What was the hospital like? Was the food reasonable?

No, it was only a prisoners' hospital, you see. It was a big, long, open shed, and there was a

place, and oh, there was a lot of beds there - some of them were pretty crook. So that first treatment after coughing blood was put ice bags on my chest and then wet sheets over my body. But that was done by prisoners.

What, to treat tuberculosis?

Yes. Well, it was to stop the bleeding.

Oh, I see, yes.

And so after they'd stopped that, well, I didn't know I'd had it. But I was kept on these light duties then for three or four months, I suppose.

What did they call light duties? What sort of things?

Oh, you'd have to go down - there was this hospital, prisoners' hospital, and they had thirty or forty patients in it - you'd have to go down and bring back the bucket of stew, or whatever it was, the provisions. And so do a bit of sweeping up and that kind of thing.

You were still getting Red Cross parcels?

Yes. So it was quite a good break for me, and, of course, I recovered. By the time that I'd been there - it might have been five or six months - that's when I heard of the last big battle of the Somme, the last big German offensive. They took 200,000 British prisoners in no time. And so it was one of those recent prisoners who'd been taken, and had been sent to this - had tried to escape past this place where I got away - and he told me that three of them had tried to escape, and they all got caught on the frontier, and one of them had got sick - they got sent back to their base camp where there was 20,000 men or so. And he told me that one of their cobbers - his cobbers - had got sick and he couldn't go back. So then I hopped up to the Red Cross distributor and said there's only two blokes going back to this commando, get me put on it, if you can - and he did. So I was only there a week. And working a week, and after a week's work this other young bloke - he was only seventeen - him and I broke out.

Hang on a minute. He and you broke out, but somewhere along the line someone taught you to navigate by the stars; now, tell me about him?

Well, that was when I was in this big - what they called, the base camp - Friedrichsfeld - that was when I met Major. And we all had to - oh, there might have been 20,000 prisoners there, big huts, might have been 80 or 100 men in a hut - and every night there would be a German sentry told off to count the members of that hut. And so we'd all be lined up outside the hut, waiting to be counted, and I got alongside of Major one night - I didn't know him before - and he was looking up at the stars and saying, 'Sirius is very brilliant to night', or something like that, and I started to get interested straight away. And gosh, I used to stand alongside him and - he was sick - stand alongside of him every night we had to be counted. And he was pointing out all the constellations, and he taught me a lot. I was the only one who'd listen to him, strange to say, none of the other blokes were interested. And I lapped it up, every bit I could get. And so I found it was easy to navigate if it was clear weather, but if it was cloudy weather, and a dark-needled compass, you couldn't navigate without a match - you had to keep lighting matches. But with a luminous point you didn't want any matches, and if you could see the stars you didn't want any compass.

Was that before you escaped the third time, or the fourth time?

Fourth time - it was after I was sick, when on these convalescent duties, and that's when I used to stand alongside of this bloke - he was sick, I don't know how long he'd been sick, but anyway, he used to come up to the convalescent duties wherever they were and we used to have some great old yarns there. He was a brilliant man, and he had a senior book on second stage mathematics, and elementary astronomy, chemistry, [history] - 'Conquest of Mexico' - no, 'Conquest of Peru', he had that there. Then after I came home I bought 'The Conquest of Mexico'.

END OF TAPE FIVE - SIDE B

START OF TAPE SIX - SIDE A

Then, when there was only an ordinary season, of course, the waggons were driving around with

xxx and one xxx. I did all the harvesting and xxx the waggon.

Yes, I remember old Jock [Kidd].

Yes, he was on the waggon some of the time, but he wasn't with us very long.

I remember him wanting to drink thick milk - mum used to save him the sour milk. What made you decide to go out to Corrigin from [Norning]?

Well, I'd been at Norning for four years, and one year was very wet there - flooded out, it was a bit too wet for growing good wheat - and I'd been out to Corrigin at that time, and I was struck by their beautiful crops out round Corrigin, round Kurrenkutten. You see, it just suited them, wonderful views there, and it was too wet in xxx. So I decided I'd go out there then. And this other place - Brookton - of a wet year was just too wet, so that was the reason I went out there, and I got the other extreme, just too dry there. But every year we grew some wheat. Good years, of course, we'd grow much more than we could in Brookton.

When you took up [Monteban] was there any stock on it?

No.

Did any stock go with it?

There was no stock on it, but it had Robins's sheep - I think they had a shepherd shepherding sheep there.

But what about the cow? - you had a cow.

No, well, that cow belonged to old - the owner of the farm - Jolly, because his daughter had a cow, and they had the cow for that. So when I bought the place from him - there was a crop on it - but I think the crop was still in his name, he had to have the crop, I think, and I did the harvesting for him - the wheat was his, as far as I know, as far as I remember. And then the cow - he only had one cow - and about six horses. Well, I took over the stock - I had an evaluation -

old [Dolly], the old saddle horse, was one of them. So that was seven horses and a cow I bought from him - and the crop, as I said, was his, but I took it xxx harvesting.

Did he pay you?

Oh, he had to pay me for the harvesting and the carting - I forget the arrangement we made, but I know I took over his horses and the cow.

And what did you do with the cow?

I think she might have been [over the office], I don't know. She might have looked after, I forget about that. I know when you were a baby, we nearly starved, and then we got [Bluebell] over and you started to get fat.

Do you think the tractors and clover, and modern methods, have improved the yields of that Norning area?

Oh, yes, they've improved the yields a lot out at Kurrenkutten and out of sight down at [Galaring]. You see, we had clover and trace elements, made more difference there than the tractor. But the tractor, of course, would have made a lot more difference out at Kurrenkutten. The Kurrenkutten soil was already rich, but the sand plains down at Galaring were very poor.

(Break in interview)

Your cousin, Claud, came out and put a crop in on Jack Marshall's place. Tell me about that.

He had to drive out about sixty miles, you see, bringing his horses and machinery out about sixty miles. He'd come out and he followed it one year, and the next year come out and - the next six months he come out and seeded it. He had a very good year - it was very successful for him anyhow - a terrific fellow at work. They he gave his own land in Brookton a spell, so I suppose that would be a big help, and grew a lot of wheat out at Marshall's place. Then that's all he had, one crop there, I think, then he got on his feet back in Brookton.

When Jack Marshall bought it, he had a tractor and no horses.

Yes, he didn't have horses.

What sort of a tractor, can you remember?

[Halt], I think, a Halt crawler.

And did he get good result with that tractor?

Oh, yes, he straight away plunged into fallowing up, and making a xxx, and a lot of people thought, oh, he didn't know much about it, but he knew a darn sight more about wheat growing than we did; he was a very capable wheat grower, and we learnt quite a lot from him and his methods. But we didn't have any tractor while we were there. You see, we were there with horses, three or four years after Jack Marshall was putting his in with tractors. And then when we went down to [Manaroo], of course, the war was on so you couldn't get tractors.

When you were first at Monteban, before you had a car, did you go back to Brookton at all?

We lived practically all the time in Corrigin, at least at Monteban.

How did you get back to Brookton?

Oh, go back sometimes on the train. I know once I drove in there to get the waggon repaired, the tyres cut, and so on, and drove in in a spring cart and a waggon - took them up to the blacksmith's shop at Pingelly. Then other times when I'd go in, of course, I'd just go in on the train.

Now when you went on the train, how did you get to the train?

Well, either one of the men took me, or I went in with Albert or Olive. And they could meet the

train when I come back.

Well, when mum was first there, you didn't have a car then, did you?

No, we only had a sulky, we used to go to Corrigin once a month - or once every three weeks, or something like that. But we used to go into the siding xxx there to get our stores, and mail, and then Atkinson, the butcher, he used to have a weekly round and we'd get the bread and meat from him.

And you had to go over to Uncle Albert's each week to get it from there?

Yes.

Twice a week, yes. And you didn't kill your own meat?

We did when we got sheep. Albert had sheep years before we did.

How did you keep your meat twice a week in the summer?

You'd have to salt it, that's what we did, because we had no fridge - we had to just salt it. Once Albert got sheep, you see, well, we'd get meat from him, and then I think we used to work in with him - meat - because we killed sheep afterwards.

When did they start putting their railway lines through? Were the railway lines put through after World War I, or before?

No. In 1914 the Brookton-Corrigin line was under construction, and it was about half way to Corrigin, I think, when the war broke out. So then Albert [Reid] was working on that, some of the time, on the Corrigin-Brookton line, I think. See, I went away while it was just half constructed, and when I came back, well, of course, it was functioning out to Corrigin. Just before I enlisted - that's when the line was under construction - there was a rush of developing farms all the way to Corrigin and nearly all the land was being selected.

Well, the line that goes from Corrigin down to Narrogin, when was that built?

That was put in just a bit before, because this other one was only a connecting line. And the other one was the [Wickerpon]-Merredin line, they called it - must have went out to Wickerpon for a start, and then Wickerpon-Merredin went through Corrigin. When that was complete - it was well under construction - I was just interested in getting a block out somewhere east of [Bullyee]. Dad and I went out for a few days, looking around. That's just about the time the war started. We applied for one block we liked the look of, but it was gone. And so then they were calling for volunteers to form the expeditionary force from Australia, so I just promptly went down and joined that.

Now, Uncle Albert bought his farm after the war, did he?

Yes, after the war. Blocks were taken up and abandoned during the war, you see, and his block had been taken up, and a bit of clearing done on it, and then it had grown up again - xxx was allotted thousand acre block - a good block - for return soldiers, and that was the size of them at that time. He had to go and make that block, but he got agricultural bank assistance, that was the same as the repat, and developed his block. He soon got on his feet there; it was good land, and we had a good run of seasons. You see, while he was getting ... finding it so easy to farm there - and the weeds problem wasn't much like we had down in Brookton - and so that's what made me go out there, to see good, heavy land. We lived alongside of old Alec Dunn - there was a dam of Dunn's right alongside of Alex Howard's house, and Albert put one down of his own, so it was a good catch. He didn't have the same water problems as we had. xxx it was a wet year and our dam was filled, we'd have no problem.

It's just that it wasn't a good run-off country.

No, it was just [crab hole] country xxx all round the house, you couldn't get the water to run. We put one dam down up at the top fence, and that was a bit of hard [jam] land, and Dick [Pig] had had a dam just in front of it, but from [Piggard's] Hills it would be quite a good flow of water. That was our best dam, but the others were very uncertain. We had one down in front of the house.

That was a good one, wasn't it?

Yes, but it had to have heavy rain to make them fill. That was the problem, you could get it probably a good year for crops, and the dams wouldn't fill. So on the whole we grew quite a lot of wheat at Monteban. The last year there was the worst - only got four bushels that year.

Yes, I remember that. How many men ... Did you always have men working for you?

Oh, yes, mostly we had two - we had a lot of root picking, and stone picking, to do - in front of our big shed, you know, running up towards Pighams - it was a terrific lot of stone we had to cart out - stony ground. Then we had two teams going for the seeding, one on the cultivating, and one on the drilling.

How many horses would you have in a team?

Oh, then we had about eight horses on the plough, and about six on the combine.

And they'd go out - the horses would work for how many hours before they were fed?

Oh, we'd bring them in for dinner, then take them out - after you'd feed them - an hour, hour and a half or so, for dinner - then take them out again. The same as we did at Galaring, it did two shifts. Some people would only do one shift a day, but I felt that was a bit too hard on the horses, so we'd do - the weather was reasonable, like planting or harvesting, you could come home for dinner, and then go out in the afternoon - for harvesting. Seeding was the same, only when it was wet we just couldn't go out.

How many hours in an average seeding day would a horse work?

Oh, about seven or eight.

When did you first start having health problems after the war?

What problems?

Health problems. I remember you not being very well when I was young.

Oh, yes. I had a haemorrhage of the stomach there when we were out on Monteban and you must have been about five or six. I felt short of wind, I think, and I wondered what it was. I could see my motions were black, and so we drove into Corrigin, saw the doctor - I don't think we had a car, did we mum?

Yes, we did, because I can remember Bill Horner, I think, driving you, or something.

Anyway, the doctor said straight away that's blood. So they sent me down to Perth. I must have went down to Perth by car, and got into the Perth ...

I think you went by train.

Public hospital there.

Yes, you went by train, I can remember it still.

Going by train from Brookton?

Corrigin.

Did I?

Mm.

I don't know how I got there. I know I was there a while, and they kept me there about a month, I think, and, of course, the ulcers that were bleeding soon cleared up, the same as they did this time.

If you had two or three men working for you, what did each of them do? You would drive a team.

Yes. There was two teams driving - I'd drive one team - and then, of course, there'd be all this chaff cutting, and that kind of thing - and you'd see men, they'd be root picking, and stone picking, and hay stacking, hay stooking - took a lot of labour. Albert only had a thousand acres, and Teddy George a thousand, they each had one man. So a thousand acres then were keeping two men - a thousand acres now wouldn't keep one.

That's right. What about ... the dispute over the wheat that came up later on? - the dispute of selling the wheat.

Yes.

You tell me about that.

Well, it was, I think - I don't think there was a pool then, but the price of wheat, offered by the buyers, I think it was, was too low, and a lot of the people - farmers there - only had a little bit of wheat, and they decided they wouldn't deliver their wheat, they were going to stop everyone delivering wheat until the government did something about it.

Can you remember how much they were offering for wheat?

No, I don't know what it was, but it wasn't ... they reckon it wasn't enough. I don't know what their conditions were, but the ones who were going to fight against delivering wheat, they were the ones that didn't have much to handle. So if they refused to deliver their wheat, and had it standing in the paddock, they wouldn't have much to lose; but the other fellows who'd got a big lot of wheat standing in the paddock, it was ridiculous to try and hold it up because it would only rot in the paddock.

So they were going to stop the others - stop everyone from delivering wheat, till the government did something about it. So that's what the trouble started with. The people who had a lot of wheat and wanted to deliver it, well, of course, they weren't going to be dictated to by the people who wanted to stop them. So that's what started a bit of a brawl.

So you took your own wheat in?

Yes.

Or went in in groups to ...

And they were going to stop us, see. So they - I don't know whether they did actually stop anyone - they threatened to - they might have stopped some at the [Bilbaron] siding, but then the police force sent up police to all the stations, see, to make sure they could open it. That blew over then because someone would deliver wheat, and some didn't. Anyhow, the police were there and that held up wheat deliveries for a while, then the police saw that they weren't allowed to deliver. Bob Barklay and some of the others reckoned that was the greatest mistake the government ever made, to send the police there, but, of course, it wasn't a mistake at all. So others said the proper way to get better conditions for the wheat growers was not to grow any. Some said that was no good, others said, well, if you grow it and can't get rid of it, that was no good either. So it was a stupid business to try, at harvest time, to try and refuse the wheat to receive the wheat, and it lay in the paddock there to rot, and nothing would have happened.

When did they eventually solve the problem? How did they solve it?

I don't know, I think they just ... I don't know what happened. I think probably a good many of the farmers probably cleared out, I don't know - sold out. There was no trouble the next year; I don't know whether the price was better or what it was.

The problem of the depression.

The depression, that was the worst of the lot, when wheat went down to such a very low price.

One and ninepence, mum says.

Yes. A lot of the people sold wheat - buyers bought wheat to put in their big stacks on the siding. And they might have drawn - the owners of the wheat - had drawn three shillings a bushel on it, say, and when it fell down to one and ninepence, of course these fellows had no

equity in their wheat at all, but the big firms were demanding that they return that money that they borrowed on it. And, of course, they couldn't, they couldn't get blood out of a stone, they had no money to pay. That was a bit of a tragedy, I don't know how they eventually got on. But I wasn't amongst them because I hadn't sold any - or drawn any money - on wheat - that was like warehousing wheat and drawing on it. I sold mine straight out and didn't owe any money back. A few good many - I don't think Albert - we was the same as most of them round our place, and they hadn't drawn money on it.

Now, during the depression you fared reasonably well, didn't you?

Yes. I know one year, when prices were so depressed, well, we had the biggest crop we ever had - we had over 4,000 bags. So that helped us through because it was an extra good year, and twenty-eight bushels, I think we had, an average of it.

And that's a lot, isn't it?

That was a lot at those times. So that helped us - that was the start of the depression, I think - might have been half-way through it. But then when the Second War broke out, well, we were out of it then, back here in Galaring. The trouble then was that they limited the acreage here that could be grown, you see, because under war conditions they couldn't get rid of the wheat.

And they couldn't get the superphosphate either.

No, they couldn't get the superphosphate. And then we had a quota, how much to put in. So that wasn't worth growing, that was a struggle, what we did then. Mum raised poultry and milked cows, and so on, so we had a pretty hard struggle that time.

That was in the '40s?

Yes - no, before the war started, in '39, it was all leading up to then, and even after the war started - about '35 to '45, I think - the war was raging after '40, and, of course, the government had money then, they had none before.

At the end of Monteban you were milking cows for cream, weren't you?

Yes, that was it, and we were doing it at ...

Is that when they had quotas?

Well, no, the quota only occurred after we got to [Madikin] - at least Galaring. They put the quotas on, and we couldn't get super. But, you see, we moved to Galaring - old [Manaroo] then, we moved there in 1940, I think - the end of 1940 - you see, but the war had been going a year then. That's when we were told not to grow wheat.

Because of the lack of shipping?

Yes, well, they could grow it - they had thousands of bags, I think, stored in the big sidings. And so that was the worst part of the depression, was when we couldn't grow wheat, and then we could only get low grade super.

So that really your worst time was after the war began?

Yes, yes, after the war began was the worst time because we were growing good crops at Manaroo - not at Manaroo, at Monteban.

You were running Manaroo and Monteban together at that time?

Yes, and then I leased it - leased it to Uncle Albert for five years - four years or five, I don't know which it was - but anyhow, I leased it to him a year longer than I'd xxx - meat by Murphy's after five years, so I could only lease old Monteban for four years because I couldn't pay for Murphy's - hadn't sold it, you see, so I made sure I had a year to spare. And by the time we were due to buy Murphy's, you see, we'd sold Monteban.

Yes, that's right.

So we had to pay the trustees for it, the perpetual trustees, I think, were administering Mrs

Murphy's affairs.

Now, during the depression I remember quite a few tramps and things coming, and people looking for work. Did you have any people that you more or less just gave a job to, to feed them?

No, only one, Jim Flanagan - of course, he had worked for us before, before the war. He came to work for us for nothing when we were still out at old Monteban, didn't he?

I don't remember him.

So the depression was in before the war started.

It was in '32 and '33, but it didn't worry you very much then?

No, not then. When it hurt us the most was after we got to Galaring, it was xxx then.

And so Jim Flanagan worked for you for nothing?

Yes, for a while, and then he said he couldn't go on, and we gave him something, I think, but it was very little.

Ten shilling?

He had to have some money because he couldn't keep himself clothed. Don't forget that we didn't have any money to spend - might have been ten bob a week, or something.

And what were the normal wages in the '30s, before the war?

Oh, about thirty-five shillings, I think - thirty-five bob xxx. And during the worst of the depression it got less than that, about twenty-five. It was a most annoying thing because there was no money available anywhere, and as soon as the war broke out there was millions of xxx. So it looks as if it was a bit of high finance corruption.

Could well have been, couldn't it?

Mm.

(Break in interview)

Going back to Monteban, can you tell me what sort of yields you had? What did you call a good yield?

At Monteban, oh, a good yield would be fifteen bushels.

Fifteen bushels, what, five bags an acre?

Yes.

And an average yield, or a fair one?

An average yield over the time I was there, I suppose would have been twelve bushels.

And then anything below that was poor?

Yes.

How many acres did you plant, generally?

Mostly 400 for harvesting.

Before World War II, were the farmers into pasture species like [wimera] and that sort of thing?

Before World War II?

Yes.

We were on Monteban then. Oh, well, yes, we all introduced wimera.

Was there much development out east of you when you first went to Monteban?

Yes, there was development because it was developed right out east of [Conburn] out to Hyden.

(Break in interview)

... went out in a spring cart, with a couple of horses, and a little fellow who was working for me, Ernie Munns, and we decided to go out as far as we could. And we went out - called at Albert's going out - then went on to Hyden, and the Humps, and by that time we were just about running out of horse provisions and our own provisions, so we came back again. But we'd seen all the country from, say, Brookton right out to Hyden. That was before I left [Morning Spring].

So it was a spring cart and you had to take your camping, and food, and horse provisions?

Yes - and water.

What, one or two horses?

Two horses.

One working and one being led?

One in the shafts and one in the outrigger.

I see, yes. Was there anything taken up out there at that time?

Oh, yes, they were surveying out round Hyden - surveyors were camped at Hyden, and it was all being surveyed round Hyden, then out to the Humps.

Would that have been the mid 1920s?

Er ...

Must have been.

Must have been 1922.

Yes.

END OF TAPE SIX - SIDE A

START OF TAPE SIX - SIDE B

Let's go back to shearing now, having covered that. When did you first put sheep on Monteban?

Went out to Monteban in 1923, and it was not till a couple of years later that I took sheep to Monteban.

What were they, wool sheep?

Yes.

You weren't considering meat?

No.

Meat production?

Merino sheep. The second year I was there, Robins' had sheep and an old shepherd looked after them, so they had the grazing them at old Monteban, and after that, well, dingo problems

seemed to disappear so we took sheep from Corrigin - Brookton.

I remember, when I must have been seven or eight, sitting on Old Dolly out in the paddock, shepherding the sheep one year because you had a crop up one end? Can you remember that?

No, I can't.

I remember lying on her back reading a book while these jolly sheep were down the other end of the paddock. I also remember blade shearing.

Yes.

Were they mostly blade shorn?

Yes, well, we had fixed up a few yards round the shed that we'd build - I know Enid was about two years old then - and we had some natives doing the blade shearing.

(Break in interview)

I did not know when I was on the frontier because I didn't quite know what it consisted of, but I kept going west after I got into the pine forrest - kept going west, and kept going, until I come up to this broad River [Mars]. And once I recognised it as a broad river I just knew I was then two miles inside the frontier, in Holland. And so I lay down against the River Mars, on the bank of the Mars, and waited for daylight.

How long did you wait? What time do you think you arrived?

Oh, it was just before - probably - I don't know what time the sun was rising, must have been about four o'clock, I think. I lay down there and waited for sunrise, and then I walked down the river till I come to a Dutch village called [Eferton]. I saw a fellow in uniform riding a bike in the street, and I stopped him - only a small village - and made him to understand I was a prisoner. He could understand a bit of German, and I could speak a little bit, but not much - I told him I

was English. And then he took me up to the house of a priest - Dutch priest - who could speak English, and he then told me the war was over. And so the priest in his turn took me up to the Dutch military barracks, and they put me on a train and sent me down to Maastricht, southern Holland, where there was a British Naval division, or brigade, interned for four years there - captured - they'd crossed the Dutch frontier from Antwerp, in Belgium, to escape being encircled. So either they'd been encircled and surrendered, or crossed into neutral country - Holland was neutral.

(Break in interview)

I was sent down to Maastricht where I met two or three other Australians who had also escaped, and we were sent with a naval brigade straight to Rotterdam. We were put on a ship for England, and we landed in Hull the Sunday morning after the Armistice. Then they took long statements from us, and sent us back down to Australian Headquarters in Horseferry Road, London, and we all got leave. But we belonged to three different working parties, you see, and it just happened that we all were sent down to the same place. Then we all got leave for a couple, or three, weeks and we had a bit of back pay due to us, so we had a good holiday.

We went back at the end of about three weeks - to Headquarters we had to report back - and we decided amongst ourselves, these three other blokes and me, we'd like a bit more leave. So we asked the official at the counter at Headquarters, told him we wanted a bit more leave. 'Oh,' he said, 'you can't get any'. And we said, we are escapees, we ought to get some. And so he went in behind xxx, through a door, to his superiors I suppose, and he come back and said, 'How much do you want?'. We said three or four weeks, whatever it was, so away we went again - we went in different directions, of course. And I went up to Scotland, and that's where I met [Herman Brun], he was from the 16th, and as soon as I xxx xxx I stopped at a soldiers' club in Aberdeen - or Perth - Perth, I think. And so we went into the office to pay for my bed at the soldier's club and a fellow said, 'I know you, [Tim]', and it was Herman Brun from Brookton.

Was he an escapee?

He was on leave in England. See, I'd just escaped, but his unit, the 16th - that was my old unit - he must have got leave to go to England. So he happened to be having a bit of a trip round too.

Did they take the units ... Did the men stay at the front line long after the Armistice?

Oh, I think they stayed in France for probably - I don't know how long - but the main portion weren't returned for about three or four months after, I think. How long, I just wouldn't know, but after we'd had all our - I'd had that extra leave, they sent me back to Plymouth then - or to Salisbury - xxx - anyhow, we made a detachment to go back to Australia on a military transport. So we came back on the old Blue Funnel liner Ulysses. I think we landed in Fremantle about March.

So you would be one of the first back?

Yes, before the main body. But when we got back, of course, the Spanish flu was raging all over Europe, and I think we were in quarantine down at [Woodmans] Point, Fremantle - kept there for a couple of weeks before we could go home. And so then we got a trip back xxx xxx home.

Did they make a bit of a fuss of you in Brookton when you got home?

Oh, everyone was asking a lot of questions. I suppose I was the first one back after the war, probably. Oh, yes, everyone - we were treated well wherever we went.

But you'd be the first back.

Yes. And, of course, it had just been reported, I think, in the papers that four people had escaped - four different prisoners - arrived - give their names - arrived in Hull after having escaped from Germany.

Did grandma hear from the ... she'd heard before you got back?

Yes, they knew because I heard ... Olive said afterwards that she was in Brookton - this must have been taken from the paper - and someone said to her, 'I see your brother's escaped from Germany after all'.

Were you able to write to them?

I was able to write and tell them we were doing all right in Germany, to stop worrying them. Mum must have mentioned that I'd had a vain attempt to escape and got caught, and put in gaol for a couple of weeks. I must have mentioned it two or three times because [Edith Pond] was in Brookton this time, and she said she heard mum saying - mum said to them, they were friends of ours - 'I wish he wouldn't keep trying to escape'. So I must have told them I had three terms of escape and put in three times, fourteen days' gaol. And so that's all they knew, but they knew before I got back, you see, that I was free.

That was good. While you were a prisoner, did you keep getting pay into your pay account?

Yes.

Did they keep paying you?

They still paid us all the time. But, of course, it all accumulated - while we were at the war we could only draw one and six a day, I think, and the rest was put in what they called deferred pay. So I had a fair bit - £150, I think, when I got back.

That would be quite a lot of money.

At that time, yes. And then, a bit after that, the government decided to give all the soldiers a gratuity, but they didn't have enough cash to pay the gratuity so they gave you bonds of some kind, and they [balloted] over four of five years before it matured.

How much were they?

About £120.

Was that gratuity on the number of years, so much a year?

Yes, so much a day for four years. So altogether I had back pay, and deferred pay - they called it - and gratuity, about £480, I think.

That would be a good start.

Quite a good little sum. I promptly started looking round for a farm - I knew the repat was helping the soldier settlers with a bit of cheap money - small interest. So I stopped home for about three months - it was seeding time, you see, just after - put the crop in, and by the time - before the seeding had finished, I'd found [Norning]. I paid a deposit on Norning and then got the loan through from the bank from the Repatriation Department.

What did Norning cost?

£1,800. The owner of Norning - that was mum's uncle - I think he only got about seven or eight hundred out of it, the rest would be - he was mortgaged, so he had to sell it.

Now, when did you hear that they decided to give you a Military Medal?

Oh, they took a lot of information - took a lot of long statements from us when we first arrived in Hull - the four of us - and each one gave a long statement about their treatment, where they were captured, and when, and how, and all that, and how we were treated - xxx tried to escape, and all that kind of thing. I mentioned that I'd tried three times, got caught, and got away the last time. And so then - after that, after I got home - they wrote and asked me to mention some of the fellows who I knew at the war, who were at the place where I escaped from. So there was five Canadians there, and the five and me, we were all gave each other our addresses so that if one got knocked over, the others could report to their people. And so I heard from one of the Canadians only, but this one that replied, he said the other two - [Gainer and Crow] - they had died in Germany with the Spanish flu, and the other two, I never, ever heard from them. But this one who was in Saskatchewan - that was his address - he wrote back to me and said he'd had some questions to answer from the Australian military authorities. And so I didn't know what he answered, but anyway, he just told me about these other two dying in Germany. So I might have died there too if I hadn't been out of it - I had been out of it seven or eight months, and that's when I had the TB. There were a lot of prisoners died there, mostly Russians, because they were

badly fed. But I was quite surprised to hear that these two young, strong Canadians had died - it was very vicious form of flu. I believe it killed more than the war did - civilians and all.

Must have been very bad.

But I evidently missed out on that because I must have been at this place, Ohligs, where the working camp was, I must have been up in the convalescent barracks at the big camp - base camp.

With your TB?

Yes. Well, I got over that, and I must have got right out of that - I didn't know it was TB, but they put me on light duties in a barracks - prisoners' barracks - hospital barracks. Of course, I was pretty crook with this bleeding, but it seemed to disappear and I must have still had the effects of it when I came home.

Did they send you the Military Medal, or did you have to go up and have it presented by someone?

No, they wrote me and told me that I'd been awarded the Military Medal - and that was also in the papers too because Helen, the cook, said she saw it in Victoria.

This is before you got back?

After I was back a long time. See, they'd evidently sifted through all the records and [met] what I'd told them after the escape. And that's all, I didn't think any more about that, but they must have got that information and decided then that they'd make some award. But when they told me I could have it presented publicly, well, I said I wouldn't have it presented publicly, I said they could post it to me. And then they had the other medals posted too. So that we didn't go and collect those medals - they were the ordinary war medals - they sent them all.

(Break in interview)

The five Canadians, they'd been taken prisoner a year or so before I was taken, and then, after the war, when they gave the authorities the addresses of the fellows who were in the camp with me, they - this one that wrote and replied, who was the only survivor that I heard of - he mentioned that two of them had died with the Spanish flu - that must have been at the place we were - Ohligs - and the other two, I'd mentioned their names and given their addresses, but I never heard any more of them. There was only one that wrote to me afterwards.

When you got out, did you have their addresses written down?

Oh, yes.

Or were you carrying them in your head?

No, no, I had them written down. But, of course, they wouldn't convey much if we'd been searched - caught and searched. I gave them mine. We used to do the same thing in France before I was taken prisoner. There was four of us - I have a photo of them at home now - Taffy Johns, and Ernie Skinner, and Charlie Hines - and we all went in over the front, over the top, at the attack on Bullecourt. I was with the scouts at the time, and the others were in the old company, but we were not together, but we knocked about together when we were behind the lines. That day we went over the top, all four of us became casualties; two were wounded, one was killed, and I was prisoner. So out of a party of four, all disappeared in one day.

That's terrible, isn't it?

Anyhow, the fellow who was killed, he came from near xxx, he was an Englishman. He had a farm near xxx where he enlisted. I saw a good bit of him when he was with us in France, but when we were on leave in England I happened to be with him then. But he was as game as a bull ant. He was a very nice fellow, but anyhow, we knew he was killed. His parents wrote to me and they asked for some information about him - because that's what we'd agreed to do - and I heard, after being taken prisoner, that Taffy Johns was killed also. So I wrote and told Taff's people that he'd been killed on Bullecourt. And when I was a prisoner of war in Germany I got a letter from Taff saying he was still alive. But he showed me that letter I wrote, telling them that the last I had heard of him he was killed in Bullecourt.

That must have been a bit bad for them.

Yes. But then, of course - he was wounded there probably - had him in England at the time. The other one, Charlie Hines, and his people, I told them and they wrote to me, thanking me, and just asked what I could tell them about his death. Of course, I couldn't tell them anything because I'd only heard he'd been killed. But they knew he was killed, and they wanted a tinny little bit about his last moments, I suppose - I couldn't give them any. But it was rather strange that I told Taffy John's people that he was killed.

When did Uncle Ern go to the war?

Well, I was a prisoner when he joined up our battalion, but when he enlisted, I wouldn't know.

Did he go overseas?

Yes, he was in France for a while, and then he got this [synovitis] in the knee and he xxx on his knee and so they sent him home. He was being sent home with the invalided soldiers, and they were torpedoed in the Bay of Biscay, I think it was.

Were they?

They were in the water, and the destroyer picked them up, but the ship sank. He said their morale was terrific, they were singing 'Pull for the shore, boys' or something like that when they were in the water. I don't know whether they had life jackets on, or what, but they were picked up by a destroyer.

Well, that's amazing, isn't it?

Yes. Only a few years before his death they had a reunion of those who were sunken on that transport returning to Australia. He attended one reunion, but he didn't follow the reunions much - battalion - but that's the one he did follow - there was a photo in the paper of him, survivors of that torpedoing.

Was that towards the end of the war?

Well, it must have been - the war wasn't over, but it must have been towards the end of it.

Did you buy Norning on your own?

No.

Or did Neil go into partnership with you?

No. I bought it on my own, but I went out and there was a returned soldiers' board inspecting properties that came up before them, and they had to approve it before the government would lend the money. So there was a local committee in Brookton come out and had a look at Norning, and they approved it, and so xxx went through, you see, and I was able to pay off the owner, and the bank took it over. So now I got a good bit of assistance from home as well. And I was there four years.

Was the little old cottage, where Jeffersons used to live, was that there when you ...?

Yeah, that was there.

Old man Jefferson.

Oh, no, that wasn't - the old man - they built that afterwards, but there was just a galvanized iron, four-roomed place, where the former owner lived - that was mum's uncle. I lived in that while I was there, but after I sold the place, Neil took it over. Actually, Neil xxx was running the old Oakland farm between them - dad had retired and I was at Norning. And then I had a fancy for going further east to Corrigin because it was better land, and so we arranged between us; Neil would take my place, and I would go to Corrigin, and Ern would take the old place, so that we each had three different places. Ern had the biggest quantity - the old place - and then Neil had Norning - that was only 1,100 acres - and I went out and took Kurrenkutten - that was 1,800. So that's how it came about. The three of us ... none of us were married then.

Did grandpa help you sort your finances out, or did you buy from one another? How did you work it all out?

Well, Ern had to pay grandfather Neil's section of the old place that Neil was working. They worked - the two of them worked - Oaklands together - that was 2,200 acres. Well, Ern bought Neil out, and Neil bought me out; and, of course, then dad helped me a good bit as well because, you see, to buy a new place was a bit more money than we had at the time, but that was the arrangement.

But then, after that, well, when Neil died, of course, that's when it was left to mum and dad - Norning - so they wanted to get Ivy onto it, so they put Ivy onto it - eventually it was a gift to Ivy, I think, and so then there was a bit of family disturbance and Ern - I don't know whether Ern and his wife, or what - but they didn't like - Ern ran it for a year after Neil's death, and then he would have liked to have kept it, I think, and he didn't have a very high opinion of Jeffersons at the time, so that led to a good bit of family trouble. Anyhow, eventually mum and dad, Olive and I, we decided that we'd buy mum and dad to transfer it over to Ivy.

(Whistling sound)

Was Auntie Olive married to Uncle Albert at this time?

Oh, yes; she was married when Neil died - she married before Neil died.

And they had already taken up land at ...

Yes, where it is now.

They'd taken up land at [Billbaron]?

Yes. They were there in Billbaron, that's why I went out there because the old mob again was quite close - three miles or so - and that was really a nice block of land. But the water was the problem. I was there seventeen years at Monteban. Then we got fed up with carting water - it

was a big problem - and so that's why we went to [Baling].

When you went out to look at Monteban and visit Auntie Ollie, you would have ...

(Whistling sound)

Did you go out on the train because you didn't have a car?

That's it. Anyway, I went out. After they were married a year or so, a young kid I had working for me, him and I went out for a trip east to Corrigin - we went out as far as the Humps.

This was from Norning?

Yes. We drove out in a horse and cart - we were away a couple of weeks, I think. We were looking around - we stopped at Albert's, of course, and he was telling me about this place, and Albert and I went and had a look at it - that was owned by Jolly at the time. I liked the look of it so I decided I'd go out there, and then that's when we decided to xxx buy xxx out and he'd buy me out, and got another place in between us.

When you first took up Norning, it was fenced, and it was being farmed.

Yes. It was 1,100 acres, but there was only about 500 cleared. So I was there four years, and I had another couple of hundred acres cleared, so it was much more improved when Neil took it over than when I did.

And when you went to Monteban, that was all fenced and being farmed too, wasn't it?

Yes, it wasn't being farmed. Apparently the old fellow, he didn't do much with it at all. He used to lease paddocks, I think. He was just starting to farm, the first - he had his son-in-law come up with him the last six months he was there, or so, and they put in a crop. Now, that was the first crop it had in for years, so it was only about half cleared then. So I had a lot more clearing done on that, and I was there seventeen years.

When you went out there, did you have sheep, or a cow, or did you just grow wheat, or what?

When we were first there we only grew wheat for about four or five years, I think - five or six years - and then I was married there, and that's when you were born there, and we had Barry there too, all you kids were born when we were at Monteban. We only had wheat for about five or six years, and then we got into sheep. But when we first went out there you couldn't run sheep because of the dingos. And so Robins's occasionally paddocked sheep on our place - it was our place - because they'd have a shepherd. That was at the time old man Jolly was there. But we never had any sheep for five or six years after that. And then we had them probably for three or four years - five or six years perhaps - and we had to cart water for them - we had no water - and so I sold most of the sheep, only kept about a hundred because of the water carting.

But you didn't have to cart water many years, did you?

Oh, nearly everywhere. You see, the dam at the house wouldn't be much good, we'd have to cart from the dam further up the paddock. We'd have to cart water down to the stable because only some years the house dam would have been good enough to water the horses from.

END OF TAPE SIX - SIDE B

START OF TAPE SEVEN - SIDE A

How many sheep a day would your xxx shearers do?

Forty or fifty.

Did they cut them at all much?

Oh, no, they were just as good as Wright's shearers.

Where did you have these people sleep when they ...

I think they slept in the shed - they might have slept in the men's camp.

What you took them over to [Halots], would you have walked them over?

Yes.

And walked them back.

It was like contract shearing, and I think Jack [Cabouli] did the same thing. And in shearing, got a price on the shearing, xxx shearing.

How many sheep would you shear about that time?

Oh, about probably four hundred.

How many shearers would you have?

Black shearers?

Black or machine shearers.

I think there must have been four black shearers.

And when you had machine shearers, what would there be?

Oh ... about the same number of sheep, but, you see, the machines shearers were contractors, they'd come in, there'd be two of them, and they'd have their own plant. So they'd come and camp there and we fed them, and they'd shear in the temporary shearing shed we'd arranged at the big shed.

Now, the natives, did you feed them, or did they feed themselves?

I think they fed themselves, I'm not sure, but I think they fed themselves - they wouldn't come

into the house - most would feed themselves.

Were they on contract, or on a weekly wage?

It was contract because they got so much a sheep, for shearing the sheep.

I remember you having a court case with a wool buyer in Bruce Rocks.

Yes.

What was that about?

Well, he'd agreed to take my wool at, say, eightpence halfpenny, or something like that, and then also, if it went up in the meantime, before he paid, he would make the difference. When it came to it he wouldn't pay the difference, and so I put it in the hands of a solicitor, and he said he was going to defend the case. Of course, I got a bit scared about it, so I went up to Bruce Rock to meet the court case, but he came along, just before we went into court, and agreed to pay the difference. It wasn't disputed, he just agreed to pay the difference to the solicitor.

That's right, settled out of court.

Settled out of court.

Back to the shearing for a moment; you supplied the shed hands yourself, out of your own men, did you?

Yes.

(Break in interview)

I seem to remember you walking sheep into Corrigin, and out; how long did it take?

Well, I don't know, I suppose they might have done two and a half mile an hour.

So it would be all day?

Yes.

You'd get them there in the day?

Yes.

The twenty-one miles?

Yes.

What would happen, would mum back up with the car and bring you food, or what?

Yes.

A horse or something? Did you do it on horse or foot?

I think we were on foot - we might have had a horse. But I don't think we stopped half way, I think we did it all in one day.

I remember you being a little bit anxious about box poison somewhere, not far from Corrigin, and hurrying them through.

Yes, there was some box poison near [Bramnas] too.

Anything else about the sheep that you think is interesting from that time?

No. Well, we didn't dip them at home, but we used to take them, after Halots came there, they had a community dip, and we used to go down, Georges, and Rieds, and ourselves, and help each other with the facilities of Halot's dip. They had a dip and a big water supply.

Did you pay Halots, or did you just help them with their dipping?

I don't think we paid them, they might have just gave it to us as a friendly gesture.

Who were your immediate neighbours round you at Monteban?

I suppose the closest resident would be [Piggins] - Bert Beatie had a block just joining us, he was he closest; and after a while he sold it to Clarkes, and they were the closest neighbours, they joined our fence.

Didn't Harrold Sprig own it?

Yes, he came onto it after, after he bought it from Clarkes.

And then Reg bought it from Harrold?

No, I think Jack Marshall bought it from Harold.

Oh, yes. I remember Bert Beatie making wheat beer; can you remember that?

No, I don't.

It was very powerful, according to you, from what I can remember.

I don't remember what quality it was.

When did you build your tennis courts? Did you and Uncle Albert, and George - Georges - build them all at the same time?

I think we did, all at the same time, and we stuck up - ours was rather a bad course, it was crumbly rather, and we put one up - I don't know who was the first one, might have been Albert. And then we built one, and then Georges built one. We used to do it alternate through the summer - we always looked forward to the game. And then, in the winter, Tom [O'Neil] fixed

up, set out a small golf course, and we all used to go over there in the winter for golf, including Tom O'Neil himself.

You didn't go to [Bilburn] or anywhere else to play tennis, did you?

No.

I remember there being a lot of young, unmarried men round.

Yes. When you were a kid, Bert Beatie, Jack Marshall, and Reg [McMeekan] were all bachelors, and they used to call it [Aberdeen Avenue], I think, where the three bachelors were.

And then there were the Malcolm boys.

Yes, they used to come over visiting, but they never played tennis, I don't think.

We used to get a lot of pleasure out of persuading these poor bachelors to give us swings on the swings - poor men. One thing, the Christmas trees. In Bilbaron, do you know who ran those?

I suppose it was the local community in Bilbaron - I don't know whether it was the Roads Board, I don't suppose it was - I suppose it was the people of Bilbaron - might have been the Committee of the Hall or something like that.

I remember looking forward to them a great deal, and one year - the wheat dispute year - you wouldn't let us go because you said they were going to slash car tyres. Do you remember that?

No. There might have been a threat, but I don't remember it.

Apparently someone did get their tyres cut.

I don't remember that.

(Break in interview)

I remember we went most years for holidays; tell me about those.

Yes, well, we used to finish harvest and leave a man in charge, and then we'd go to [Bunbury] - that was our favourite place - we went a number of years to Bunbury. And then we went one or two years to [Bustleton] - it was either Bunbury or Bustleton we used to go, after harvest, for a couple of weeks or so.

Once we came to Albany, that was when Grandfather Grey died, I think, that year, wasn't it?

Yes.

But otherwise it seemed to be always Bunbury and Bustleton. How many times a year would you go to Perth?

Oh, I don't know, probably two or three times - a couple of times. And when the Second World War started, I don't think we went once a year even.

I can remember leaving the farm at daybreak on this trip to Perth. We seemed to take a very long time. Do you remember how long it used to take?

No - there was not much bitumen, so I suppose it took longer.

How did you get your food and mail at Monteban?

Well, we used to go in once a week to Bilbaron - the store - and then, of course, if Albert went in, he'd bring it out.

This was in the sulky, or when you had the car?

In the sulky. When we had the car, of course, we used to go in more frequently, and we'd go into Corrigin.

Did you go to Corrigin in the sulky?

Yes, we used to do that about every once in three weeks, I think.

How long would it take you?

To drive into Corrigin? We used to do it in about three hours, have dinner in there, and come back in the afternoon. It was a day out - one horse did it - it would be forty miles.

Would that just be you and mum, or would you take one of the men?

Oh, no. We'd be just mum and I, and the men used to - after a while we used to lend them - after we had the car - lend them the sulky and they'd drive to [Babikin] for the weekend, and they had their sports in Babikin.

So until you got the car, the men really didn't get out?

No, they didn't get out much at all.

It must have been hard on them.

Oh, it would be pretty hard alright - hard conditions.

Because the men's camp wasn't very great by today's standards, was it?

No, no, no - it was very rough, and, of course, everybody's standard was not much good either.

I seem to remember thinking that our men man's camp was much better than some that were around.

Yes, they were certainly poor accommodation - well, of course, the farmers themselves had poor accommodation - but I think our men, we might have let them have, sometimes - some Sundays, probably - they might have had the sulky - a horse and sulky.

To go out.

A horse and spring cart.

Yes, spring cart. There used to be a delivery to Uncle Albert's, and we'd get meat and bread.

Yes.

What, twice a week?

Oh, no, once a week, I think - a delivery from Corrigin - and they'd get meat and bread, and that kind of thing. Once or twice the storekeeper would start a round, but it didn't last long. Ex Bilbaron storekeeper, Harry Low, he started a business in [Bilaricky], and he used to deliver stores. And we had some clearers on at that time, and of course they used to get all their stores they wanted from this week's delivery.

And I remember Mr Toby.

Yes.

Didn't he deliver?

I don't think he did, but the fellow before him, I think, did, found it didn't pay, so he didn't continue.

When did you get your car?

First car we bough was when you were a baby, and that would be ...

1927.

I suppose it was '27.

It was an [Oldsmobile]; do you remember how much it cost you?

£280, I think.

£280. Who taught you to drive it?

Oh, well, I suppose the agent would give you a few lessons, and of course, that's all, you went on from there.

Did you have to take a licence at that time, or much later?

Oh, yes, you'd have to take one - go into the police station and take a licence. Of course, you'd lean to handle it at home, and then ...

I can remember the roads being terrible, and it used to take us about an hour to drive to Corrigin, didn't it?

Yes.

In the winter.

With the car?

Yes.

Oh, yes, well, it might have been in the winter.

And there were ruts, and corrugations.

Oh, yes, it wasn't quick transport. See, well, if we got the car then, in '27, well, there couldn't have been much time when we had men and they couldn't go out because we'd take them to Corrigin very often. And then, of course, later on, when they'd have the sulky to go to Babikin for their tennis.

I remember you hanging a bag down the front of the car for water, to stop water getting in the engine. Can you remember that?

Oh, yes, yes. I don't know - I suppose we did it, but I know that was a practice. Of course, the engine - you might have took the bag away after you got through the water, because it would have got too hot, I think. But that's what we'd have to do when there was a lot of water.

Over by Malcolm's, I remember.

Might only have been three or four inches deep, but you could go through it and have the bag there.

And chains, you used to use chains, didn't you?

Yes, we used to use chains, they were efficient enough, but they wore out. I know we used to use them when it was so slippery because once we got on the road - more traffic road - there was no more slippery xxx - but it was very slippery between the main roads and our house. You couldn't go up past Piggins because when that was wet, that was impossible, because that was unmade road - crab hole, sticky country.

You'd slip all off the road?

Oh, yes.

What did you do for parts and things when your machinery broke, before you had a car, and before you had a telephone?

Oh, well, we used to just have to - before we had a car, that wasn't for many years - but we'd just have to go into the siding for parts.

And if they didn't have them you'd have to ...

They'd have to get them.

And that could be up to a week, could it?

Oh, no, a few days - there was a better railway service then than there is now - and they'd telephone for parts.

The school - Pine Hill - that I went to; do you remember when that was open? Was that there when you first went there?

No, no - you might have been one of the first pupils - I suppose you were - when it was opened. So it must have been opened when you were about seven or eight.

Yes, probably. Who arranged it, did the local people ask for it?

Yes.

Do you remember having to send a deputation or anything?

Yes, they must have asked their member of parliament, I suppose, the local people - that would be [Fairs], Georges, and us, and Piggins, and [Colourtons], I suppose.

Yes, I remember that well. And they had to find someone to board the teacher, didn't they?

Yes.

Used to be [Biggles], didn't it?

Yes, old Johny White over there.

I was thinking about the aboriginals, in Brookton in particular. I don't remember any aboriginals much round Corrigin, except at [Babikin].

There were some in Babikin, I think.

Had they all gone when you first went out there?

Oh, yes, I think they had. There was one family of half-castes, I think, there, and they used to do work round Babikin, and live there, and that's the ones who used to come doing the shearing.

So the district would have been opened up before World War I, would it?

It was just being opened up, yes, because there was Robins's and Caboulis, and those were out there before the war started. And then the railway was built from Brookton to Corrigin, and that's when ... that was the Narrogin-Corrigin-Merridin line before the Brookton line. So that's when a lot of settlers selected land out there, it was all selected long before the First World War broke out.

I wonder what they were charged an acre for it?

About ten shillings was first-class, I think, and they didn't select xxx, they selected all the heavy country. Well, that must have been about 1912, I think.

I wonder if there were natives there then.

Oh, I don't think - there was a few very old settlements out there.

They must have scared the natives off, do you think?

Probably the natives went further out - I don't think they ever probably never, ever lived there

much.

And yet Barry's got a gnamma hole out on [Acabar], hasn't he?

Yes.

So they must have been there, and they must have just been scared away.

Yes, they probably shifted.

When you went to The Humps, did you see any natives round at that time?

No, there was no natives living there - there was a gnamma hole at The Humps, and some of those places - old Kurrenkutten soak was a permanent watering hole, and it was just a soak. I don't know whether the natives lived there, but there used to be an old goldfields track go past that Kurrenkutten soak, and then out to [Cuminin] - there would be soaks near the rocks, or below the rocks. There was no resident natives round there when we went out.

I remember an old native called [Candy Anne] visiting grandmother.

In Brookton, yes.

And other natives. Did they just visit to talk always? I know sometimes they bought fruit, but I don't think it was always.

No, they'd come to do a bit of begging, I think - they'd just live in huts just outside of Brookton. And, of course, it was against their nature to work, and the men folk wouldn't take jobs. They'd mainly live on hunting, I think, and shooting kangaroos, and living on possums, and living in huts.

I remember grandmother was seen to be quite friendly with them.

Yes.

And think quite a lot of them - especially old Candy Anne.

Yes.

What do you remember about her?

She was one - that's all I remember about her - she used to - dad being an old identity from around The Dale and those parts, he knew of her and her people.

She was a tribal leader's daughter, or something.

She must have been, yes.

I know she used to always want to see me when she visited, and I was scared stiff of her; I'd always run away and cry. Do you remember any trouble at all with the natives, any confrontations?

No, no trouble whatever, they were law abiding citizens, all of them. In the early days, when the first settlements started, of course, they shot a few white settlers along the Avon Valley, and then, of course, the retaliation by the whites was that severe, I suppose they scared the others stiff.

I remember Jumbo [Mguire] used to be in Corrigin; was he from Brookton?

No - he was from Brookton, but he was really a north-west native, I think. Old Billy Robinson took an interest in all those stories - people did - and so I think they practically adopted Jumbo Robinson as a little black boy.

He was a good man, wasn't he?

Oh, yes. He went away to the Second World War - he'd be too young for the First War.

(Break in interview)

When we first went up to Brookton, there was one block of land between our place and Brookton Siding, and it was owned by a native, Fred [Pindam]. And Fred Pindam had some horses, and he used to grow a bit of crop, I think, and do some shearing. He was there for probably ten years or so after we got to Brookton, and then eventually he died, or he sold his farm, to some other person - Langleys, I think. But what happened to him, I don't know, but I remember driving into Brookton, we'd drive past his paddock and he had some very nice horses there.

Would he have taken up that land, selected it?

He would have done, yes - persuaded or directed by someone, some of the whites he'd worked for.

Encouraged him to do his own?

Yes. And I know, we used to go down to Uncle Sam's before we had any sheep - just after we got to Brookton - and helped with the shearing. And, of course, Fred Pindam was always amongst the shearers there.

How far away was Uncle Sam's?

Four miles from our place.

Only from Oaklands? - four miles?

Yes.

Only?

Yes - because we used to often walk down to Uncle Sam's if he wanted a hand for tailing and that kind of thing.

So really the Whittingtons must have owned a fair belt of land, right through there.

Yes, well, Uncle Sam finished up holding about 2,000-odd acres - Harry would know - but before that - before there was any settlement much - Uncle Sam settled there early, and he had a pastoral lease, a rented pastoral lease from the government. He fenced in about 10,000 acres, I think, and then put some fencing on it. And, of course, anyone who came along after and selected it would have to pay for that improvement.

Barry said in the Avondale Research Station he was looking at some old land records there, and they seemed to go from Beverley just about down to [Morombine] at one stage.

Yes, well, I think Grandfather Whittington, when he owned Bald Hill, he passed it over to Uncle Sam and Uncle Henry, and then selected another one at Morombine. Well, I think dad probably was interested in that until he got married, and then he went to Kelmscote and married Alice Martin. And then the Martin boys, Tom and Jessie, went to the goldfields, prospecting for some years, and dad stopped at Kelmscote managing that farm - it was on Wright's Brook.

Yes, I think we talked about that earlier. Let's go back to Corrigin. Did you ever get involved in any of the civic affairs, or any of the farmer's unions, or any of those things?

No, never did.

Why, do you know?

Oh, well, of course none of us went into ... dad - Uncle Sam and Henry, belonged to the Beverley Show Committee, I think, but we never did, and dad never was interested in public affairs. The only thing, if there came an election for a Road Board candidate - or political candidate - of course, we always had a vote - dad always had a vote - of course, we kids didn't have.

But you, yourself, when you were at Monteban, you would vote then too.

Oh, yes, but I never got involved in any - I was never a member of the Road Board, or anything like that.

Why?

Oh, I just didn't like it.

Too shy?

Yes, I suppose so.

At times, I remember in the past, that you seemed to be involved with being an executor to some person or another. You must have done a number of estates, did you?

Oh, yes, well, I had no say in it. You see, when Flo's father made his will, I witnessed the will, and he'd appointed me executor. Well, I didn't know. So when he died, of course I handled - everything had to go through the executor, so I just handled that for a year or two, and I could see, well, Ted wasn't going to do any good on it, so I just passed it - that was the girls, and the mother - the survivors - asked them would they rather take it over themselves because I could see he was going to make a muddle of it, so I didn't want to be held responsible. So they said that would suit them, they knew all about it. So I just went down to the solicitor and told them that I was going to hand over the executor - trustee business - to themselves, and they went ahead from that.

And then, later on - xxx - at the William's - he'd made a will and appointed Neil - my brother Neil - and me executors. So when Uncle Jess died, of course Neil had already died, so Uncle Jess substituted Jack [McGra] - he'd be another nephew - and me to be executors, but he didn't add that xxx to the will - wasn't drawn up properly, so it simply meant that I was the sole executor of Uncle Jess's. Well, there was no trouble there, and I just put it through the hands of the solicitor. Well, the solicitors would communicate with the members of the family - that would be Lionel - and they'd just - I may have had to sign a few papers, or something like that.

Jack McGra you say was a nephew; where did his connection come?

Aunt Jane was a Potts, and Aunt Jane's sister married McGra.

Aunt Jane, she was a Martin.

No, she was a Potts.

Potts?

And Jessie Martin married, again, Potts.

That's right.

And then Jane Potts, her other sister, married John McGra senior so that she was - John McGra was a blood relation to Aunt Jane - Uncle Jessie's wife - so that [Leet] and Lionel were full cousins of John - John John McGra.

You weren't executor for grandfather, were you?

Our dad?

Yes.

No - might have been.

Yes, I think you would.

I was executor for Neil - his brother Neil - Ern and I were executors.

Who was the executor for Henry?

Oh ...

It wasn't you?

No, I think it was some of the Smiths, old friends of his, but by the time he died the executors were dead. So that then we arranged, between most of the beneficiaries, to hand it over to Selby. He became the managing director, trustee, of Uncle Henry's will. And there was a bit of jealousy and antagonism amongst the family for that.

Who, for instance?

Oh, well, some of the members wanted to - objected to Selby and Elsie - Selby's wife - having the management of his affairs. There was - I don't know what it was, but there was some jewellery and that kind of thing - one wanted, and another wanted it - started trouble. And anyway, Glady - she was Selby's sister - she was wanting more, or objecting to the way Selby and Elsie were running it, and she stirred up a bit of trouble. Actually, it didn't affect us, but they still had a very poor opinion of Glady, and Glady had a very poor opinion of them, so we wouldn't know who was right or wrong. But anyway, that was a dispute that didn't concern our family.

All his nephews and nieces - that were Whittingtons - got a share. The estate was to be divided up amongst them all. But there was one other, his sister - Uncle Henry's sister, Lizzie - married [Strange] - and I don't know whether he forgot to mention the Strangers, but he should have done, he should have mentioned them because they were all nieces and nephews of him. So they didn't get included. So I don't know what must have been - I think it must have been a mistake in his wording of - all the Whittingtons must have noticed - and, of course, Aunt Lizzie was a Whittington, so that in the law, according to law, I suppose the Strangers didn't come into it. So it was wrong, they should have all been included.

He must have sold his farm out well to have - and made a lot of money - to have been retired for as long as he was, and still leave the sum of money that he did.

He was retired.

Because there was inflation, even then, wasn't there?

Oh, yes - not much, but there was, and he must have sold it well and lived on the interest. Actually, I don't know how much he got, but he was worth a lot of money when he - because each one of us - I don't know how many there were - there'd be - when he made his will there might have been three of our boys - five or six boys and girls got it - and only one of Sam's - that was Harry - and John had about eight - they all got it, except those who were deceased. Their share should have been divided amongst the deceased. See, it was worth about £1,600, it was quite a lot of money then. Well, Claud had died just before Uncle Henry, so his children - five or six of them - by rights they should have got what their father was entitled to.

But they didn't?

No. So very often I think it's the solicitors drew the thing up wrong. All the other members of Uncle John's family - about seven of them - were entitled to the same share, the girls and boys as well.

It must have been because, you see, when Aunt Julia died it would have been subject to estate and probate duty too. And when Henry died it would have been subjected to it again, so it must have been quite considerable.

Yes. I just don't know whether he had everything in his name, or not, I don't know. But it was a lot of money in those times.

Was it a big farm?

Oh, about two and a half thousand acres, I think, when he took xxx.

Which would have been big at that time, would it?

Oh, yes - it was mainly grazing - very hilly country. Mum and I come past it the other day - we wanted to come a different way to see old Bald Hill - that's the highest point round there - it was very hilly country there, and it was mainly grazing - used to grow some wheat.

But he'd run what, how many sheep? Would you have any idea?

I think it was a couple of thousand.

That would be a big flock.

Yes.

For then, wouldn't it?

It would be, but he didn't do much cropping.

No.

But it was right on the Dale River, and the old homestead, where dad was a boy, would be there.

That would be Rosedale.

Rosedale.

Do you know who bought it?

Yes, it was a fellow called Humphrey, I think, bought it - Humphreys of Brookton bought it. And then later on it was sold again - I believe it belongs to [Leonards] now.

When we were at Monteban, I remember World War II breaking out, and we had two men, Jack Sage and Norm someone or another.

Er ... Jack Sage - I think we only had about one then.

No, there was Norm because I remember going ... there were two and they were both lost during the war - Norm someone who was a Corrigin boy.

Well, he must have only been temporary, I don't remember him. I remember old Jack.

They both went off pretty well immediately, didn't they?

Yes, well, of course, as soon as they went off, I shifted to [Bolaring] at that time.

Yes. Did you get men in the place at Monteban? I don't remember any men after them.

No, well, see, we left just during that war, and we went down - when Jack Sage enlisted, I don't think I had any men then - and then we went down to Bolaring, and Manaroo, and Jack visited us while he was in camp.

That's right. Now, Manaroo, did you hear of that - how did you come to think of going there?

Well, when I was in Monteban we had a very bad, dry year; we had to sell all our sheep, and we had to cart water, and this place - we were itching to get out because we had no water. So this place of Murphy's c for sale - executor's sale - so there was no money about, no-one bid for it. I went to the sale and they sold all the goods and chattels - a few horses and things. So I asked the auctioneer after the sale, would they consider leasing the place. And I thought, well, we could lease it and get some water - the old soak was wonderful. And they said, well - tried to fix up a lease, but it was administered by the trustee company, and so Dick [Rene], he was the agent, he said, 'Make them an offer and we'll forward it to them and see what they say' - the trustees. Well, I made them an offer.

Can you remember what it was?

I forget what it was, but it was so much an acre, and then - no, so much an acre to lease it - and then the right of purchase at the end of five years. Well, the trustees wouldn't come at that, they said that would be a straight out sale. But then I could still have the terms to finalise it after five years. So I had Monteban on hand, and so I thought, well, by the time five years is up I could sell Monteban and pay them off. And that's exactly what happened. But I had a bit of a problem

with Monteban - leasing it - Albert leased it, and oh, it was very unsatisfactory.

You ran a married couple for a year or so, didn't you?

Yes, yes. Then after that married couple left, I leased it to Albert, and it was very unsatisfactory because just at that time we were told not to grow wheat, and they compensated us for some of the land that we used to grow wheat on. It amounted to about £90 a year, I think. And so Albert made his offer before this other came through - he had to pay two hundred a year - and then, of course, this £90 a year come up and it went to him, not me. So, generally speaking, it was a stupid arrangement, but, see, me having the right in five years to buy Manaroo, I was just assuming that I could sell it. Well, if they hadn't been starting soldier settlements, I might have had difficulty in selling it, but I offered it to the soldier settlement board - Manaroo - Monteban - and they accepted it, after a while. We didn't know how it was gong to go for a while, but they approved it, and, of course, they took it over and paid cash for it. So it enabled me to pay Murphy's off.

What did you get from Monteban per acre, can you remember?

£3 an acre.

That's right.

£3 an acre.

And what did you pay for Manaroo?

I think we paid about two because it was a bit bigger - about £2, I think - that was our right of purchase, at £2 - it wasn't a right of purchase, it was a sale, I was committed.

You were committed from the time we moved?

Yes. So if I couldn't have sold Monteban, I would have been in a bad state. I would have had to default on the final payment on Manaroo.

Had you been making payments throughout the five years?

Only interest.

Interest?

Yes - like a rental.

Rental?

But it was interest, that's right - only interest.

Now, did that go to Mrs Murphy, or did it go to the perpetual trustees?

It went to the perpetual trustees.

Did they pay her anything?

They paid her what - see, I suppose Jack's estate must have been left to her, but the trustees were handling it. So I had to pay the trustees, and they'd pay her - I don't know how much they paid her, but probably not much.

No, I think it was pretty hard for her.

It was hard for her. So anyway, she used to get money for living from the trustees, and that would be the rental I paid for it, up to the time I bought it. After the time I'd bought it, after selling Monteban, well, she might have got a lump sum, I don't know what happened then.

She left then.

She had a pretty hard time.

Yes. You had to buy extra horses and plant when you went down there, when you tried to run the two of them, didn't you?

Yes, I had to buy some extra horses. And so Chapman, he was running it one year. Afterwards I rented it to Albert.

Yes. Now, when we moved, how did you move all the stuff from Manaroo - to Manaroo?

Well, from Manaroo I didn't have any sheep - I'd sold all them, I think - because I had no water. And then we just drove our horses down - I don't think we had any cattle then - we might have done - drove them down.

Yes, I think we had cattle.

So I must have drove them down, then started buying up sheep.

Yes - the waggon - I think I remember the waggon and some of the machinery, and I think you borrowed - would it be Jack Jefferson's truck?

Jack Jefferson's truck, yes. I borrowed that and that carted some of the machinery and household goods down. Yes, I know Jack offered me the truck, so I accepted it.

And then did you help Mrs Murphy move over to [Colstone's] old house?

Er ... no, I think her brother must have done.

Billy?

I think Billy must have shifted her because Billy knew the place would have been sold. Although I hadn't paid for it, it was sold and I had to pay for it ...

END OF TAPE SEVEN - SIDE A

START OF TAPE SEVEN - SIDE B

Oh, they went quite average - average crop - xxx xxx right up to the time, after the war, when we bought a tractor.

Did the tractor make much difference to your yields?

Made a good bit of difference.

What would it be, two bags, one bag?

Oh, well, no, depending on the season, but couldn't say exactly what difference it made, but it enabled us to get our crop in quicker, and we could work at night if we wanted to. So that enabled us to - might have been the first year after we got the tractor - or the second year - we had a terrific big crop of twenty-eight bushels, the biggest crop we'd had on Manaroo.

What sort of a tractor was it?

International Crawler.

Can you remember how much it cost?

Oh, about £1,250.

Yes, I seem to remember that figure. It's still there, isn't it?

Oh, yes - Barry's turned it into a bulldozer - little bulldozer - fitted with a blade.

You didn't bring any sheep from Monteban, you sold them all?

I think I did, I'm not too sure about it - I think I sold a lot - then I bought some in Corrigin at a sale. I figured they'd soon pick up, being a few of them, but they were too old and they didn't go

much good. I'd been used to them getting fairly early grass out at Monteban, but it was not much value, the place had been starved for super. So they didn't do too good for three or four years.

And when the super improved - that didn't really improve until after the war, did it?

No. Well, we were limited to the amount, and the quality was low, so that we didn't do any good with super until after the war finished. We got more of it, and better quality, so it made a huge difference to our feed.

Did you start top dressings soon after the war?

No, no - I don't know - did a bit, I think, but I don't remember what we did for top dressing. I think we used to do three or four hundred acres. When Barry came there - of course, when we went over and Barry took over - well, of course, he used to top dress nearly everything. But I think we used not to top dress xxx - top dress the grass - and then, of course, the stubble had already top dressing and super the year before.

They were difficult times at first, and I think you said somewhere that grandfather helped you with money. Was it at Manaroo, or was it at Monteban?

Monteban. When I went out there Neil took over my place, and then took over Neil's share of the old Oaklands farm. Then, of course, things went a bit bad for me. Grandfather got in a bond - he had some money in government bonds - put in a bond with about £1,000 - helped me off. I thought he'd given me more than the others, and he said, no, he hasn't, he said they had more than you, because Ern took over the farm and Neil had the other half.

I wondered if it was at this difficult time in Manaroo, but it wasn't.

No, it was at old Monteban.

I remember you saying to us once, oh, well, we'll sink or swim in the next six months. It must have been a pretty bad time.

Oh, it was a bad time because after we finished with the - the fist year on xxx I ran it with the assistance of Chapman - and then I leased it to Albert for five years, and that wasn't at all satisfactory. And then I took it over again, and then Harry [Piggots] and I, he put the crop in on shares. But I could see straight away he was out to make it a failure - he had that in view. And so anyway, that was the time I had to sink or swim, it was bad, we didn't get much out of the Manaroo share with Harry.

The Monteban share?

Yes, the Monteban share - and Manaroo - our own - I think might have been too wet too - one was a very wet year there. So probably we didn't have much good either way.

I remember mum did a lot to help with her turkeys.

Oh, yes, and raising chickens, and milking cows, and raising cockerels for sale, and selling eggs and cream.

And turkeys too.

She did a terrific lot to help in that time - well, we only had, a good bit of the time, we only had old Tom - he wasn't getting much money. But I had to do all the outside work, mum did all the inside work, and she kept a boarder as well. That helped us a lot.

And then, soon as the war finished, I had offered old Monteban to sale for repat, and that was where we had to wait about six or eight months for it to go through.

I can remember going into - I think it was [Justin Seaward] - was he handling it?

Yes.

And sort of reminding him that he'd had it in his hands for quite a long time.

Mm.

You asked me to.

Yes.

Must have been a bit funny, this young girl going in and ...

I didn't know - anyway, he told me it was alright. And, of course, it had to be inspected by the repats. But the strange thing about it, Harry Piggins was telling me it was no good, the repat - forget about it - it was too poor - he had something in view - and he actually locked the gates so that if an inspector came along to look at it - when the inspector did come along to look at it, and he had to walk over it. I didn't tell Harry what happened, and he kept telling me, How are they going? - 'Oh,' I'd say, 'I don't know, I don't know anything about it, what they are doing'. Of course, I knew all the time. And then Harry said, 'Forget about it, it's no good, they wont touch it' - he kept telling me this. And all of a sudden we got the information first - we kept saying we knew nothing about it - and mum and I went down to Perth and collected the money. So we come back and told Harry - went up, he had a few things to shift - I told - Harry wasn't home, but his wife was. I forget her name, she was a very funny bird too. I said, 'Well, you can tell Harry when he comes home that he'll have to apply to the repat if he xxx' - and she said, 'Oh, he wasn't to'. So he kept telling me he wouldn't touch it - he was crooked.

I remember you saying that, but it was a pretty un-neighbourly thing to do, wasn't it?

Oh, yes, but Harry was two-faced - I don't want to be too outspoken about that.

Oh, no - but he left, he sold out any rate, didn't he?

Yes, he did, after a while. He went down to York, and he's still there. And his first wife, she was a tough old ... not much xxx anyway, I don't think. He had a divorce and married again.

Yes, they were funny people. Old Mrs Piggins was Uncle Albert's sister, wasn't she?

Yes. She was a really good woman - excitable, but very kind hearted woman - nice woman.

Now when you went down to Manaroo, did you find it hard to fit into the district?

No, we didn't - I didn't go into Bolaring much, and, of course, I remember one, Mrs Collins, saying once, 'We haven't seen much of you people since you've been here'.

Were they easy people to meet?

Oh, yes, they were easy, and Bill Simons was good - it was the old man xxx. But they were easy people to fit in with. The only thing we did have a bit of ill feeling; Dick Murphy used to run pigs and keep about three or four kangaroo dogs, and they got into our sheep and killed a dozen sheep or so, and a lot of lambs. Of course, I promptly put poison down. They would never argue that their dogs would do anything, but the next day there was two dead dogs near the sheep, and a fox.

Did you miss having your other people, like Auntie Ollie and Uncle Albert nearby?

Oh, no, we didn't, there were good neighbours there.

I think mum must have missed Auntie Ollie though.

Oh, she would. And I think Auntie Ollie missed us. She said they didn't like going over to ...

[Healey]?

No - past the old place and seeing no-one there.

No. When you started to get on your feet at Manaroo, you did a lot of improvements, didn't you?

Oh, yes. See, we did no improvements till after we'd got rid of Monteban.

Except that I think mum did line the kitchen.

Oh, yes, I mean, mum did that work, but I did no paddock clearing. There was about 1,300 acres cleared, I think, on Manaroo, then we promptly put on three xxx and tanks - old Jack xxx bits so we finished up clearing another 700 acres or so. And, of course, that's when we got on our feet because we had good land and new land - a lot of good land on that place.

Now, the new land, does that grow good corps, better crops than the old land?

The new land with sand plain, before we had much in the way of trace elements, the first crop would be good. Then after that you'd get nine or ten bushels, but you might get five bags the first crop on sand plain fallow; but when you got heavy forest country, well, you could get seven or eight bags; and the second crop you got a good crop too. Those good fields would always grow good crops. But we had to clear most of those, that heavy forest out of it.

How much is left in timber on Manaroo now, do you think?

Probably 300 acres - it would be about 2,200 acres cleared and be 300 acres patches of bush - some quite big patches. And xxx clear any more.

No, that's good.

So there would be twelve or thirteen per cent in bush.

You didn't put the water on to the house from the soak straight away, did you?

No - when we had the prisoner's wall there - him and I did it - it was a hard thing to get pipes - xxx clearing - 'Yes, I'll get them for you' - xxx - three quarters of a mile of piping, lots of taps ...

Joiners?

Joints, socket unions, and that kind of thing. And the Italian fellow - we called him [Morrey] - he was a Calabrian from the south - xxx tempered sort of a fellow, but he was a good worker. So he put this pipeline down, and I'd taken the level of it, and when we put it down old Tom

was there - he was keeping quiet about it, he reckoned it wouldn't flow - he wanted creek flow. He was surprised when it came down with a good pressure.

How did you take your level?

Oh, I suppose I put a spirit level on a stand - compass stand or something - and see where it hit the ...

Horizon?

No, where it hit the next part, going up to the soak. The soak to the house, I suppose, must be twenty-odd feet fall.

Would be more I would think.

Could be. Anyway, I knew it would fill alright.

Now, you put in dams and all sort of things, didn't you?

Yes. The first year we were there, I think, we paid a - the house dam, one fellow had that cleared out - but after that we didn't put any dams in until Jack [Tate] come along. And then he cleaned out the home dam, and deepened it, and got another one in front of it - then I think we got them filled. Then a couple of years later he put down a big one up on [Perrin's] clearing, so we put down - and then we put one down - after Barry took over - so he put down a lot of dams.

You put the orchard in fairly early, didn't you?

Yes, because we felt quite sure we could grow fruit. And we went to a good bit of trouble, but old Tom used to do the weeding, and we grew quite a lot of fruit there - the birds worried us too much, so after we built the new house we let it go.

Granddad used to send fruit out, when we were kids, to Monteban, didn't he?

Oh, yes, he did. And he'd send out a couple of cases, one for Olive and one for us.

Yes, we always had plenty. The sand plain pasture and sand plain farming; when did you get on top of that, and get that going properly?

Oh, well, the first couple of years we were there we didn't do much good on it. Then afterwards we had an experiment the Lands Department carried out on [Bebingtons] to correct copper deficiency, so that after we found out that we could buy super and copper - xxx we had to buy the copper separate and mix it in ourselves - the superphosphate xxx didn't make anything like a job of it. So after we got copper and the super, we never had any more trouble with copper deficiency, and, of course, it was better for the feed too. And instead of doing about sixty pounds of fertilizer, we used to give a hundred and twenty. So we got good crops on the sand plain.

That was good, and that was actually better farming in dryer years, wasn't it?

Oh, yes. Sometimes, of course, a really wet year the sand plains could get boggy too. So you got better result on below average rainfall than we did on above average.

And then, after a while, you were able to build sheds ...

Oh, yes.

... and all sorts of extra things round the place, weren't you?

I remember the water scheme going - they were going to put it down the road in front of the house, and it didn't happen.

Yes, that was ... I hoped that it would go past our place - and they'd surveyed it actually to the east of our place, and up on the top of [Alby Langford's] - yes, Alby Langford had a block out there - no, it was [Len Pollock] - on top of his hill was to be the centre for reticulation.

Anyway, it came to Bolaring, and had to come then from Narrogin - no, from Bruce Rock way -

and Narrogin came eventually to Bolaring, but that left us out.

Why was that?

Well, of course, I don't know why. Some of them opposed it who didn't want it - [Beginton] for one didn't want it, and Harry [Vivian] didn't want it, they reckoned it would cost too much. And, of course, they objected to paying the water rates. Anyhow, we were looking for it all the time and it never, ever come to us. We'd still get it if it would come because it's good domestic water - the dams are no good for domestic use.

Did you build a new house before you bought [Armidale], or after?

...

I can't remember. I think it was after.

Might have been - I don't know xxx call it - I think it must have been after.

Yes, I think so.

Because we were on our feet to be able to do that, and we on our feet to buy Armidale. So then, after we sold Armidale, well, we sold it [in your name] - half of it - and gave you the money. That went into xxx helping xxx house.

Well, I put it into shares and that paid for half of our farm.

Did it? That was good.

(Break in interview)

Off you go.

Once we got Monteban off our hands, well, we had no further worries. You see, we only had to

finish our overdraught - pay our overdraught to the bank - and what we could use, and that was quite a simple matter because we had several good years and we grew a lot of wheat, and also, double the number of sheep. So we were going well, and I suppose that was when we bought Armidale.

What would your overdraught have been at its worst?

Well, it was fifteen hundred out at Monteban when we left, and then, you see, when we'd committed to buy Murphy's, that was about four and a half thousand, I think. So it would have been six thousand.

Which was a lot of money.

Six or seven thousand - a big lot of money I had to pay interest on. And, of course, when I leased it to Albert, that was two hundred a year, was the lease on it, and then he got compensation for the wheat he didn't grow, and so it only cost him a hundred and ten - and he could have bought the place for two dollars - twelve and six - two pounds twelve and six - and he wouldn't touch it. He didn't say he wouldn't, he was waiting for me to ask him, I think, but I said nothing. And as soon as the time limit come up and he hadn't closed it, well, I just offered it straight away to the repat for three pounds.

That two pounds twelve and six was in his lease, was it?

Two pound twelve and six, he had the right to purchase. He was waiting for me to speak, I know that used to be his idea - don't let a bloke know you want it. So I said nothing, and Harry kept asking me what am I doing about it, and told him I didn't know what they were doing.

When you started to do well, how many acres - like when Manaroo had the extra clearing - how many acres a year would you crop?

Oh, we'd have about 400 to strip, after we had any extra clearing done, and I know one year - it was just a mild year - we had a lot of February rain when we were away on holiday, and Barry was home, and it was flooded out everywhere. So that year it was a late opening, but the ground

had got such a saturation in February that we put in 400 acres, and that was the best crop we ever had. See, it became a mild winter after this heavy burst - we had over 4,000 bags of wheat - a big thing - one year at Bilbaron I had 4,000 bags - but mostly it would be only about 2,000.

Yes, that must have been a lot. What average, though, would you consider to be a good average, a fair amount from year to year - seven bags, six bags?

Oh, no, no - about from year to year, thirteen to fourteen - wouldn't be five bags.

What does Barry average generally now?

Well, last year it was ...

Apart from last year, which was exceptional.

Since he'd been on it I suppose he'd average about twenty bushels, I think. And then last year, what he stripped - six bushels was a lot - he didn't strip, he xxx average xxx. So on the area he planted last year I think he'd only get four bushels.

But that was exceptional.

It was exceptional for the state.

Yes. We went for a number of holidays, while you were there until we left - I think we went to [Cotterslough] one year ...

Yes.

... and a caravan trip up to Geraldton one year, didn't we?

Yes, yes, that was two, I know.

And then I remember mum went east, I think, with Auntie Mabel.

Yes, you were teaching then, weren't you?

Yes, and I think I came home during the holidays.

Yes.

That was mum's first trip over east.

First trip east, yes, I know. xxx xxx but mum evidently heard Olive or Mabel, when she used to go away, shouldn't have left xxx on his own, I think - xxx mum, you see, but xxx said to me, I told her that both you and I, and all the family, asked mum to - told her she should go. And so that was a good break for her, but since then, of course, we've had a number of big trips.

Yes, well, I'll go over those. You went up to Darwin in the [Culinda], didn't you?

Yes, that was the fist big trip we had to the eastern states, since mum had that [operation].

Well, you went up to Darwin, didn't you, on the Culinda?

Yes, and then we come down by bus to Alice Springs - that was a thousand miles, or so, and that took a couple of days.

And then where did you go?

By train ...

To?

Port Augusta - and then into Adelaide, then came home by the [trans train].

And then I remember you drove over east in the second Chev, didn't you, because Enid was over there and I remember ...

Yes, yes, that's right - that was right, we picked Enid up and ...

How far did you go that time?

Well, we picked Enid up at - outside of [Glenel] - outside of Adelaide - and she'd just finished her term - so we went on then - must have xxx.

That must have been about thirty years ago - oh, you got the second Chev in 1951, I think it was, so it must have been - it must have been 1951 or '52 - it must have been in the early '50s.

Well, Barry was xxx left anyway, because he came back - we sent him back from Adelaide, I think, and we come back later.

That's right. And how far did you go? Did you go up to Queensland that time?

Yes, we must have - went as far as Melbourne, I think, after picking up Enid - and Sydney. I don't think we went - I think we came back from Sydney because I said we want to see the interior - I wanted to see the River Darling, so we went from Sydney to Wilcannia on the Darling. And then down to the [Barossa] Valley.

Did you go to Broken Hill?

No, we missed out that.

And then Barry got his Holden and I think you did around-Australia trip in that, didn't you?

Yes, we did that, yes.

And I think you've done another one since then, haven't you, in your Holden?

In our Holden - just once we went in our Holden, and we put the Holden on the train at Coolgardie and went to Port Pirie, wherever it was, for a couple of days, and then put the car on the train again to Alice Spring. We got to Alice Springs in about July, I think - scorching frost at Alice Springs, and old Peter [Dylan] was there ahead of us, and he knew we were coming, so he met the train. And he was xxx a couple more days in Alice Springs, so we drove round a couple of days with Peter. Then he came home by train - I don't know if he was with a party or not - but we left our car in Alice Springs and went out to Ayers Rock with old Bill [Harney]. But the time we came down from Darwin first, by bus, we stopped three or four days in Darwin, then we went out to Palm Valley - xxx at Palm Valley, and Stanley Chasm, and those places.

That was out at Alice Springs?

Yes. And then - xxx we had no car there - we come back to Alice Springs and went on the xxx down to Adelaide.

xxx finished now, isn't it?

Yes, I think they still run the train.

But not as a passenger train.

I don't know whether they do or not.

No.

Anyhow, they changed the line.

They were going to put in a wide gauge, weren't they?

They put it in as far as Leigh Creek, the coal mines.

That's right, they shifted it out - it's part of Quorn, remember?

Doesn't go through Quorn now at all.

No.

But they car enormous loads of coal - we saw a huge train - a couple of locomotives - about a mile long.

Eighty-eight trucks - we counted them, remember?

Was it?

Yes. That was last couple of years ago.

It was '88 perhaps, yes. And you see, we came through Quorn then, and we stayed in Quorn.

One night.

One night.

Yes, but that was a train from Leigh Creek. I want to go back to Europe. When was it you went to Europe - about twenty years ago, I think, wasn't it?

Oh, yes, I'd forgotten all about it.

You went over on the Greek [Putress], didn't you?

Yes. June 3rd, 1961.

Yes, that's twenty years.

Yes, that's right.

How many months were you away?

Seven, I think.

I remember one of the things that you - meant the most to you, was that trip to the Somme and the crossing of the Dutch border.

Oh, yes.

Will you tell me about that?

That's when we - that trip in 1961?

Yes.

Well, we'd hired a car in England, and then we paid for it to go across the Channel, and took the same car. And then we - I wanted to go and see the old Somme battlefields, so we went over there and went to the old destroyed town of Albert. And there was a huge crater - mine crater - built under the line, dug under the German lines, and blew up, and we saw it when we were over there, just a month or two after it blew up. I just estimated then, it would be quite easy to stick 1,000 men in there comfortably - that's a battalion of men - and that's still there as a relic of the Great War, I think.

I suppose it would be grassed over?

Oh, yes, all the dirt that was blown out of it - about 100 feet deep - was blown, scattered away. I didn't go down to it, in the bottom, but I remember Reg [McCretan] saying, he couldn't make it out in his mind just what happened to all the dirt - it was scattered far and wide.

Did you go to the Canadian Square Mile?

Yes, we went to that, and we didn't have - that was the best reserved part of the Somme battlefield we saw because all ours had been overgrown, but I believe the Canadian Government bought a square mile, and that was most interesting to see, the old front-line trenches.

We went into a wood not very far from there, and there were still sort of great holes and ...

Shell holes.

... shell holes, and bits of trenches and things, still in this wood.

Did you go under your own steam there?

Yes.

Oh, did you? And you saw the old front lines?

Yes.

Well, that would be the same as us, I suppose.

Yes, it was.

If it was the Square Mile.

The other thing that horrified me was the enormous cemeteries; they were beautifully kept, and it was such a stupid way to waste life, wasn't it?

Oh, yes, yes. It was a question, once the war started, you had to win or lose, because if you'd have lost, we wouldn't have been here.

But those silly old generals, putting men up against bullets; what a hopeless way to try and fight a war.

The pompous old blighters never risked anything themselves.

No, they didn't go over the top, did they?

No.

Now, you went looking for where you crossed into Holland?

Yes.

How did you know where to look?

That was after the war, and after we'd just ... that was the next trip.

That was the same trip, yes.

Same trip, yes. So we went into ... from the old Somme battlefields we went down to [Nancy], and crossed over into Switzerland, and had a look through Switzerland, and went down past Milan, into near Venice - Rome, I think, was the place - and saw an old Roman amphitheatre. And then from there we went straight north again, up through the Italian Alps and into Germany - Austria - Austria, near Insbruk - and then across to [Carlsroom], I think, in Germany. Then onto the Rhine - motored on - xxx - we didn't go on our own boat - and back - when we got up as far as Cologne - had a look at Cologne - think we might have stopped somewhere there that night. And then I said, 'We are going up past Dusseldorf, and into Holland where I entered it'.

So we went up to - I picked the old track - I had the old map, but I knew where this map that I had to escape from - was running parallel - there was a road running parallel to the frontier, about a couple of miles in. But the little fellow I'd escaped with, he knew where they got caught and he said, 'We went through a little village called [Vies]'. And he said, 'We went through Vies, and then ...

(Break in interview)

... turn west to go towards Holland, the frontier. And he said that we were sailing along there, him and two others, when they ran bang into a sentry. But he said if we'd only known there was

some thick wood on the north side, we'd have been in that and we might have got through. So that's the point I aimed for, and I went through this little village, crossed over xxx about half a mile, then crossed into the bush - pine wood - and then I kept going straight, dead west, until I came to a big, broad river, just before daylight; and that was the [Muse] and I knew I was two miles inside the frontier then.

Now, did you have any trouble finding that later?

No, no, not ever. See, it sticks in my memory, where it was, and getting the description from this little Pommy fellow. I knew where to go, but, you see, the question was, in escaping, was to know when you were on the frontier. You see, you didn't know what to avoid, or where it was. You see, you couldn't get any maps or any information.

What did it look like in daylight?

Oh, it looked marvellous, to think I lay down near the river and woke up in Holland - marvellous sensation.

I mean, what did it look like when you went this time, in 1961?

Oh, just ... we went down the ridge of the same road where these Pommies got caught, and I pointed out to mum, and we got into Holland, and then we went up to this little Dutch village of [Basserton]. We could see the river down there about half a mile away. I said, 'Mum, go down there, I want to see that', but she wouldn't go nowhere - xxx xxx got off to [Afferton]. So I wanted to go down and lay down on the banks of the xxx.

And she wouldn't let you?

No, she wouldn't go - sometimes she'd go nearly to a place she wanted to see, and then decide not to go.

She says your just as bad sometimes. That was a shame, wasn't it?

It was. Anyway, we could see it in the distance.

I remember you saying that they'd cut the pine wood down.

Oh, I don't know whether they had there, but I know when we first went - were taken prisoners - they cut a lot of pines down, and that was part of the work they gave us, chopping the twigs of the end of them. But the pine wood must have been still there, but, you see, we couldn't go through the bush, we went on this road, after leaving the Dutch village, it didn't go dead west, it went a little bit south-west, you see. When I crossed I went dead west because I got into the bush.

Now, when you came back from that trip you did that bus trip from Calais to Colombo.

Yes, on the old xxx from London - from London to Colombo it was. Of course, he had to put his bus on the ferry, and we landed at Calais or so, and then we went as far as Brussels, and we had about a day in Brussels.

How long was that actually, from London to Colombo, can you remember?

Nine weeks. We were not far from Waterloo, and I would have loved to have seen the old battlefield. I believe there was monuments there, but, of course, this silly galoot, he wasn't interested in anything like that so we didn't see it.

No. We didn't go near Waterloo, but we were very short of time by then.

I'd have liked to have seen it, I believe they've got monuments there.

What was the best part of that overland trip? What was the most interesting bit?

Old Istanbul, I think, because there was the old Byzantine wall around the old city, and high, built-up aqueducts where they evidently used to run the water in open drains. And the old city wall where the Turks had bombarded it with huge twenty-inch guns, but shooting big stone balls. And eventually, after the seige of Constantinople - might have lasted several months -

anyway, they eventually got through - I don't know whether somebody had left the gate open or what, but most of the inhabitants seem to have crowded into St Sophia Cathedral, and they'd be saved, I suppose. And the Turks were a bit more broad-minded than the Spaniards. When the Turks conquered that they just built a couple of minarets and called them mosques - beautiful old cathedrals - but the Spaniards in Seville, where they kicked out the Moors, they had a huge mosque there covering acres of ground, and the Spaniard pulled down most of it and blessed the soil, and put up a cathedral. The best part of the Moorish relics is in Grenada, I think. We went to see that.

Yes, I didn't get down there, I'd have liked to have. What did you think of Yugoslavia as you went through there?

Well, we thought the people were quite good. See, Belgrade was a most interesting place. The Turks, when they overran most of the southern part of Europe, they eventually took - I think they took Vienna - they might have missed out the seige of Vienna first - but they occupied Serbia because it was at the junction of two rivers - the Danube and some other one - and they built a beautiful old fortification there, the Turks did.

It's still there?

It's still there. And, of course, all the Turkish conquests in Europe, they lasted three or four hundred years, and they just kept garrisons at everywhere - every town of importance - and built these forts.

Did you - so you did see a bit of Turkey on that trip, didn't you?

Yes, we stopped at Adrianople - they call it - I've forgotten what they call it now - not Adrianople anyhow - [Adunover] - we stopped there for lunch, and we popped into a Turkish cafe and we all enjoyed it xxx - nine passengers. And then, close by, the finest mosque in European Turkey, at Adrianople - a huge thing - beautiful thing - and so we went into that

That was good.

It was beautiful that mosque, standing out for miles, you see, the big domes and minarets - beautiful skyline. And then, when you get to Istanbul, of course, you can see the domes and minarets everywhere.

Now, you went from there through Iran - you went into the city of Esfahan, didn't you?

Yes, but we went from Istanbul - a couple of days there - across the Bosporus, and then went up to Samsun on the coast, and then inland to [Ankara], and then from Ankara - no, over then to Ankara from Istanbul, I think. Then we went into the coast at Samsun - and the Turks had monuments there, and there's where xxx xxx escaped from Constantinople and assembled his forces with Samsun, and marched back towards Ankara and cleaned up the Greeks.

But he was xxx Turk, wasn't he?

Yes. And all his monuments - his uniforms and everything else - were [stolen] ...

Samsun?

Not Samsun.

Ankara?

Ankara. There was a huge mausoleum there for him.

And then you went from Turkey to Iran, didn't you?

Yes. We went from Ankara to Samsun on the coast, and then along the Black Sea to the next little point, Trebizond, and then from Trebizond we went inland to the old city, Erzurum. And at Erzurum it was as cold as anything, we bought a huge Turkish blanket - we've still got it - Erzurum - and then from there we went to within sight of Mount ...

Ararat?

Ararat - and crossed the frontier there, and then from there into Iran - Tabriz - and from Tabriz down to Tehran, and from Tehran down to [Islahan], and from Islahan back to [Comat] and some of those other ... eventually into Afghanistan - not Afghanistan, Baluchistan.

But wasn't it in Islahan that you weren't allowed to photograph the Mosques?

No, in Tehran - no, before we got there, the holy city of Qom. We weren't allowed photographs - two of the fellows in front of me, they were snapping - and I just watched them getting interviewed, and I took mine - so we got a snap of the mosque Qom - Q-O-M - Qom.

They call it Qom now, that's where Ayatollah Khomenini is, isn't it?

Yes, it's a holy city.

I thought Islahan was?

No, it's a very much more ancient, before the time of Mahomet, I think.

That would be Xerxes and Darius, wouldn't it?

The old Persepolis ...

Persepolis, yes.

... was the old Persian capital - Persepolis.

Now, you went through Baluchistan and Afghanistan; what was that like?

No, we didn't go through Afghanistan - we could see the frontier.

Well, where was it that you had to keep going because of the bandits?

That was in ... frontier of Afghanistan and Iran, I think - the road went along inside, and [Col

Fix] said you want to keep going, they'd have a shot at you from the distance. And then once we got into Baluchistan proper - Quetta - it was entirely in Pakistan then.

Yes, and that was alright.

Yes.

After that trip you came by - how did you get from Colombo home?

Well, we had to fly because we were to meet our ship at Colombo - we booked from England - and the darn thing ...

END OF TAPE SEVEN - SIDE B

START OF TAPE EIGHT - SIDE A

It started with Grandfather Daniel Whittington who arrived out in the Swan River colony, January 30th 1830. He had a son and a daughter, I think, xxx about two. And after settling near Gilford, he had more children; one was a Eliza. And when Eliza grew up - she married at seventeen, married George Gursley of [Brookton] - that was Uncle George Gursley - and so all their children - George Gursley and Eliza Whittington - were born in [Nookering], and they were Ellen, Betsy and George.

Well, Betsy later on, when she grew up, married Henry [Bartrom], and so Henry Bartrom's children were all connected with both the Whittingtons and the Gursleys, and their second daughter, Betsy, married Henry Bartrom - old xxx said - but Betsy and Henry had about eight children. And so that's the foundation of the [Dumbleyoung] Bartroms, their connection with the Gursleys and the Whittingtons.

Continue telling us.

Well, then, I don't know what ...

Go on right through the Gursley family, and Martin family.

There was ... Betsy Gursley and Henry Bartrom had eight children. Well, they are in the Dumbleyoung branch - well, they don't come into it any more. But you wanted the Martin side of it.

Well, when Grandfather Martin came out - the 1860s or so.

'69, I think it was.

Anyway, his wife - Grandmother Martin - was a Gursley, so that brings in the Martins and the Gursleys, all connected, because Grandmother Martin, being the sister of George Gursley senior, that made George Gursley and Eliza uncle and aunt to the Martins - and they were already uncle and aunt to the Whittingtons. Yet when my father married Alice Martin - see, they were not related, but they were both related to the Gursleys.

What boat did Daniel Whittington come out on? Do you know the name?

The [Wanstead].

How do you spell that?

W-A-N-S-T-E-A-D.

xxx, wasn't it, the Martin family, xxx.

(Break in interview)

George Gursley senior was the one that married Eliza Whittington. Uncle George Gursley xxx cousin George.

So in actual fact there were three George Gursleys, were there?

Well, I think his father in England, but actually, out here, there were only two - Uncle George Gursley, and his son, Cousin George Gursley. But then there was no other George Gursleys.

Here it's mentioned just George Gursley and his son George.

Yes. We referred to them as Uncle George - dad - Uncle George Gursley - dad and mum - and his son George was Cousin George. And then it was Cousin George's family married completely out.

Which is the one - Wheatfield - at Dumbleyoung?

Oh, yes, they are descendants of the Bartroms - Wheatfield. See, they are descendants of Betsy Gursley and Henry Bartrom.

That was built by George Gursley - Wheatfield House.

That's the one down by the lake.

Probably owned by George Gursley, but xxx.

Yes, they did own it, didn't they. It says it was built ...

(Confusing multitude of voices)

Where does Barry Gursley come from? He was [young George's son]?

Yes.

Now, which one got lost on the lake - old George or the young George?

That was Jessie Martin, wasn't it?

It was young George - the old man xxx - he selected Dumbleyoung, but then his son took over -

Dumbleyoung was owned in young George's name - but then the people who own Dumbleyoung now - Wheatfields - I think Henry Barton was managing that, George Gursley junior, you see. And so I think George Gursley junior had all the assets, all the securities, and Henry was only the manage, I think.

I remember them talking about that.

Yes. The Whittington part of the family, they were rather disgusted with young George because the old farm, Nookering on the Dale, was left to him. xxx looking at Nookering earlier than Harry McGee, and then when young George sold Nookering, they shifted to Harry McGees block, Clearlands. And the Whittingtons were all a bit disgusted to think that it was left to George instead of Harry, and Ellen was looking after her father. When I was a kid we called past their place - xxx - and there was old Uncle George, and Ellen, they made a great fuss of dad, and me, going past. That's the only time I saw him - xxx bit later than that, after that, he shifted to Dumbleyoung and he died in Dumbleyoung. But that was the sore point, it was left to young George and Ellen was looking after her father.

None of them are buried where he is either, up there; he is up at the top end.

Well, at Dumbleyoung there is both of them, Uncle George and young George - Cousin George. And Uncle George's wife, she was originally Eliza Whittington, she's buried in Germany - she died young and was buried in Germany. Her brother - that was dad's father - he's also buried in Germany too.

Was that Betsy Gursley, was she buried xxx?

I think she was - I'm sure she was buried in xxx.

xxx xxx - did she die young?

Betsy?

Yeah.

No, she was old. And I remember my mother, and Eli, and Lionel - Lionel Martin - [to tell you the truth, her name was Betsy Gursley] - Betsy Martin, not Betsy Gursley - at Dumbleyoung. And mum and Harry were disgusted with descendants of George Gursley, xxx - Cousin George - and they wouldn't go into the church - they were Catholics.

Barry told me that, because xxx wanted to be buried with his mother.

There were some strong ... and this Judy Johnson, a friend of ours, she wants to get the diaries of Uncle George Gursley. Oh, she got told off by this friend.

I'd have liked to have gone to see Mary and see if she had any photographs.

She was very indignant.

If you started talking family she wouldn't take any interest.

They were that type of family thought.

They kept too much to themselves, really.

I'll tell you a story about xxx - he was coaching people to learn to swim - telling us kids - before you could swim. He was shooting ducks on Dumbleyoung Lake when it was full, and walking along, and suddenly come to a depression - he was out of his depth - and he said he overexcited himself. But if he hadn't been able to swim he'd have been lost. That was Grandpa Martin - Jessie Martin.

(Break in interview)

In 1830?

Yes.

I believe he came out as a farm labourer - only six months after the country was founded - and they settled in Upper Swan somewhere, but we can't trace where, what happened to him.

Was he farming up there, or just working?

Well, I don't know - I think he must have been - it might have been share farming with someone, because he put down as farmer.

Grandfather - both grandfathers - it was Daniel Whittington, but his son, James, came out with him, and that's in 1813, and he was a child of five. This child of five, later on - of course, I remember him because he was my grandfather.

What did he do when he left school?

Mm?

What did he do? I presume he went to school?

Well, he ...

Or some form of education.

Grandfather, I don't think he had any education. He was born on the Upper Swan, and then they must have shifted to Bald Hill.

(Break in interview)

How many years they were at Gilford, but they shifted selectively to Bald Hill, Beverley - that might have been James - the child James - who did it, I don't know.

You've no idea of the age?

No. xxx was taken when Bald Hill was selected.

(Break in interview)

[Moorumbine], he had a farm there, about 640 acres, so that he handed over Bald Hill to Sam and Henry Whittington - the two big boys - and he went to Moorumbine and was working - my dad had a pastoral lease at Moorumbine with him - but then later on my dad met mum - xxx Martin - and he married her, and Tom and Jess, George, went to the Goldfields.

What year was that?

Oh, it must have been '97 or '98, I think - no, earlier than that - might have been '90, I think.

Dad was born in 1900.

Must have been '90.

They were married in 1899.

Because he came here - originally it was supposed to be 1880 - Jessie - leased the place for a while, got an orchard established, after a while, and then had the old chap looking after it, and he shot through with his brother to the goldfields.

Yes.

You don't know the exact year they went?

No, I don't.

That's what we are trying to find out.

I don't know the year - I know ...

(Break in interview)

... causeway in Perth.

Wasn't xxx mixed up in it somewhere? Didn't they go to xxx for a while?

No.

Where xxx is, xxx.

I think where all those parks are, this side of Canning Bridge - Causeway - that was market garden.

That's where they were, its it?

Market gardening - at Muddy Ridge - mum spoke of - that was in the early days where the Martin's settled, and then when they came to [Kelmscote], they must have bought Kelmscote - old homestead - it was fields there. And then the boys went - they had waggons and they were carting timber, I think, and they used to grow hay at the old place. When they went to the fields - xxx - dad must have married mum at about that time, and he managed their farm while they were at the goldfields - it went to Uncle Tom eventually. So I must have been born there because I remember living there when I first started school, down on the old Martin homestead.

This Muddy Reach that you talk about - when they first came out - that's on the south foreshore?

Yes.

Well, that's xxx - that's in the middle xxx - south Victoria Park there.

And that's all parkland now, as far as I can make out.

Yes.

Vegetable gardens, and it was very poor living because, you see, they could grow vegetables, but there was no-one to buy them. So they had a hard struggle.

Now, from there they went to John's xxx, and from there, Granddad Jessie was ...

xxx garden.

Oh, long before that. Wasn't he supposed to be driving a horse called xxx - when he was about ten or so.

What?

Driving a horse called - at [Geridale] or somewhere?

Well, that would be right because I remember they had a whole waggon - remains of old waggons - the boys were doing carting. They sold the old waggons, but I didn't know how many of them. But they were doing that carting, evidently before they went to the fields.

Well, dad mentioned something about ... the story that I sort of got was that he must have been xxx in the north, and they had these wooden railway lines.

Yes.

And that waggons sort of ran on this ... these wooden railway lines, because he mentioned that one day lightning hit the line, or something, and that gave him a hell of a fright.

I think they used to ...

Said he was only about ten, or not much older.

He was ten when he arrived.

Oh, he'd have to be a bit older than that.

They must have ...

He was only about twenty when he was on [Sandalwood Siding].

When he took this place he'd only be twenty-one or twenty-three.

They must have been carting down to the Canning Ferry; the boats used to come ...

From Sandalwood?

From Canning.

From Dumbleyoung to ...

No - when they were carting logs - the xxx - I think they carted down to Canning, to the Canning Bridge.

(Break in interview)

When he went onto Sandalwood - this was Granddad Jessie - he was carting from where to where?

Well, I don't know where, whether it was from Dumbleyoung or where it was. But I remember him telling us a funny story about George. George was xxx on the waggon cart, and he said every time they pass by the settlement there were old waggons on the road, and George would be out there talking xxx to another bloke. And as soon as they got past the settlement, George was [sorry] - he was only just bluffing the other fellow while there was someone looking on. He was always full of devilment.

Now, where did they cart the sandalwood to?

Well, it would be to xxx. But I think my dad, when he was carting sandalwood, they'd cart down to Fremantle. They used to have a depot in York - [Monger's Depot], I think, for sandalwood. But dad, I know he used to - on the waggons - he'd cart right through to Fremantle.

That was one reason he took this farm up, to act as a resting place for his horses, and to grow a bit of feed for them. So xxx roughly the half-way mark.

I believe he married Auntie xxx - do you know where Granddad Jessie was xxx from? Was it Dumbleyoung?

Yes.

I thought they used to camp where the first town hall was, if I remember it - used to camp down there when they reached Perth. I could be wrong about that, but I know father used to mention it to me, about this xxx.

I think they used to gather it in the winter, and cart it in the summer.

Yes, in Perth - he used to mention where the Perth town hall is now, there was a camping ground.

Could have been.

It was on the way to Fremantle that way probably.

Well, the shortest way would be from Armidale to xxx - Fremantle through xxx - unless they put it on barges.

There is some mention of that.

(General cacophony of voices makes transcription difficult)

... around the area, wouldn't they.

xxx trucks.

END OF TAPE EIGHT - SIDE A - END OF INTERVIEW

5/97