



Australian War Memorial

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ORAL HISTORY RECORDING

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INTERVIEWEE: Doug Guthrie

INTERVIEWER: Alistair Thomson

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SUMMARY: Interview with Doug Guthrie Footscray on the 8th May 1983

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THOMSON: Could you tell me first of all Mr Guthrie where and when you were born?

GUTHRIE: I was born in Deloraine, Tasmania, 14th October 1901.

THOMSON: What were your parents doing in Deloraine?

GUTHRIE: My father was a ganger on the railways.

THOMSON: Where's Deloraine? What part of Tasmania is that?

GUTHRIE: Oh, it's up in the midlands.

THOMSON: Had he always worked on the railways?

GUTHRIE: Yes. He worked on the railways in Victoria and then the Tasmanian government asked him to come over the Tasmania. I don't know what year it was, and he laid the first line from Burnie to Ulverstone.

THOMSON: So was he a foreman or organising?

GUTHRIE: Yes, just foreman. In charge of the plate laying. Or construction of the railway.

THOMSON: Had he in Victoria Initially been a labourer working on the railways and then become a foreman?

GUTHRIE: That's right.

THOMSON: Your family lived in Deloraine, in the town of Deloraine?

GUTHRIE: No. My family lived at a place called, we lived originally at Denalwyn, and then we shifted from there when I was about five or six, to Ulverstone.

THOMSON: What was the name of the first place?

GUTHRIE: Deloraine.

THOMSON: Right. Can you remember the first house you were living in at Deloraine?

GUTHRIE: Yes.

THOMSON: Can you describe that house?

GUTHRIE: Well it was a country house. Just close to the railway line. Quite a bit house for those days, and only a small town. A small little village, actually. One shop. One post office that's about it.

THOMSON: How well off would you have said your parents were?

GUTHRIE: Err, struggling.

THOMSON: Struggling?

GUTHRIE: Struggling. Yes. In those days.

THOMSON: What are your memories of that life? What can you remember of the struggle?

GUTHRIE: Oh well, just That he worked hard, he worked long hours, and we just more or less lived on You know, from day to day.

THOMSON: How many brothers and sisters did you have?

GUTHRIE: I had two sisters and five brothers?

THOMSON: Where did you fit into that?

GUTHRIE: I was the youngest.

THOMSON: Of all?

GUTHRIE: The youngest of the family. The elder brother he was killed at Quinn's Post, in Gallipoli, in the First World War. My brother, my eldest sister died in St Kilda, with her first child. The second brother went through the ... right through the First World War, four and a half years he was away. The other one, he was working as a road contractor during that time. He joined up just at the end of the First World War, but he never went away. He was like me, at the Second World War.

THOMSON: How much older than you was your eldest brother?

GUTHRIE: Well, could you just wait on a second?

THOMSON: So your eldest brother was ten years older?

GUTHRIE: Yes.

THOMSON: He was born in 1891. Did you go to School in Tasmania, in Ulverstone?

GUTHRIE: Yes, I went to school at a place called North Molton.

THOMSON: Where was that?

GUTHRIE: We were living then. Ahh, five mile out of Ulverstone, which is on the coast between Burnie and Devonport.

THOMSON: Were any of your brothers and sisters at school with you or had they left?

GUTHRIE: Ahhh, one sister and one brother, went to school at the same time that I did.

THOMSON: Were you a keen student?

GUTHRIE: No, I left school at the age of ... well I left school from the fourth grade. I was in the fourth class as we used to call them in those days. I worked on the road contracting with my father, which was ... he was then a road contractor.

THOMSON: How old would you have been when you left school?

GUTHRIE: I suppose I would be sixteen. Yes, about sixteen.

THOMSON: Can you remember when you were at school, patriotic celebrations such as the Empire Day?

GUTHRIE: Yes. Arbour Day when we planted a tree at school. We used to salute the flag every morning. Raise the flag and salute it. Which is not done these days I believe.

THOMSON: Can you remember Empire Day?

GUTHRIE: Yes.

THOMSON: How was that celebrated?

GUTHRIE: Well it was only a small country place and there wasn't much celebration. It was only just the school, one store, the post office and a hall. That's all there was. It was really a farming area.

THOMSON: This is near Ulverstone?

GUTHRIE: Yes.

THOMSON: Were you in the cadets when you were at school?

GUTHRIE: No.

THOMSON: Did you have any military training?

GUTHRIE: No.

THOMSON: You said you joined the workforce when you were about sixteen?

GUTHRIE: Yes.

THOMSON: And you went to work with your father. His job, he'd moved out of the railways, had he?

GUTHRIE: That's right.

THOMSON: He was now a contractor? A road ...?

GUTHRIE: Farming and contracting. Road contracting.

THOMSON: Did he have his own farm?

GUTHRIE: Yes.

THOMSON: Where was that?

GUTHRIE: North Motton.

THOMSON: What type of farm was that?

GUTHRIE: Ahh, mostly potatoes. Potatoes and oats. Grazing. We had about fourteen sixteen cows, we used to graze.

THOMSON: Had he saved up to buy this farm?

GUTHRIE: Well, when he owned, when he originally got the farm, I don't know. But he owned it.

THOMSON: Would you say that you were still struggling, or were times a bit easier?

GUTHRIE: Oh no. We were living fairly comfortable, like. In those days. At that time of life.

THOMSON: You were working on the farm?

GUTHRIE: Working on the farm.

THOMSON: What was his road contracting job?

GUTHRIE: Oh, just making new roads, and repairing roads, for the council. The Ulverstone council.

THOMSON: Had your father been, in either of his jobs, a member of a union?

GUTHRIE: No.

THOMSON: Were you a member of any union?

GUTHRIE: No.

THOMSON: Can you tell me about some of the other activities of your family? Were you a church going family?

GUTHRIE: Yes. Very much so at that time.

THOMSON: What church was that?

GUTHRIE: Methodist. Methodist church.

THOMSON: How often would you attend a church service? What sort of other activities?

GUTHRIE: Well in those days every Sunday was Sunday school and a church service after.

THOMSON: What other activities would the church have encouraged?

GUTHRIE: Oh, not very much. There was one day, I just forget now what they called it, but it was the sale of

THOMSON: A bazaar?

GUTHRIE: Yes. Like a bazaar. Sale of vegetables and so forth. To raise funds for the church.

THOMSON: Both your parents were Methodists?

GUTHRIE: Yes.

THOMSON: Sunday school. Do you have vivid memories of Sunday school?

GUTHRIE: Yes I have.

THOMSON: What sort of memories?

GUTHRIE: Well, me teacher ... a Mr Chilcott, eventually later on in life, my sister married his son. They've all passed away now of course.

THOMSON: So would you say that the church was one of the most important social activities of your family?

GUTHRIE: Actually it was, yes.

THOMSON: What other ...?

GUTHRIE: There was no other entertainment of any kind. Except ... until the First World War, when the boys came back. There was always a welcome home for the locals. Which was always a big event. Big night.

THOMSON: I'll come back to that. Were your parents or any of your brothers and sisters members of any other improvement society or friendly society or any other clubs?

GUTHRIE: No.

THOMSON: Apart from Sunday school did the church have any other activities related to it? For instance, reading classes, debating or anything?

GUTHRIE: No. Not really.

THOMSON: How important was the entertainment part of the church?

GUTHRIE: Well there was ... there was very little entertainment. Apart from the Sunday service. Nothing else during the week.

THOMSON: How did you and other young people entertain yourselves then? Apart from going to church and apart from when you were working or at school?

GUTHRIE: Well actually there was no entertainment. There was a local cricket club of course, and there was a tennis court at the school. I never ever took much interest in sport in those days. Never had any time in those days for sport.

THOMSON: Why?

GUTHRIE: Too busy.

THOMSON: Too busy working?

GUTHRIE: Too busy working.

THOMSON: How many hours would you say each day, on average, you would have worked?

GUTHRIE: Oh, with a dairy farm you'd work ... ten to twelve hours a day.

THOMSON: Was your father paying you at all?

GUTHRIE: No. No, I was only just

THOMSON: Getting keep?

GUTHRIE: Enjoyed working as I was. Then I decided to join the navy.

THOMSON: When was that?

GUTHRIE: That was September 1919.

THOMSON: Can we go back for a moment, back to 1914 when the war broke out. Can you remember the day when it was announced that war had been declared?

GUTHRIE: Yeah.

THOMSON: What can you remember of that?

GUTHRIE: Well I think it was ... if I remember rightly, the schoolmaster made the announcement. I think that was the first that I knew a war had been declared.

THOMSON: What was your response? Can you remember?

GUTHRIE: No, not really. Not at that stage of my life.

THOMSON: What about the community? The response of the community or of your family.

GUTHRIE: Well actually my brother ... he, he joined the army straight away. His number was number 47. So he joined pretty early in the piece. He was a cadet before the war. He used to do, I think it was one night a week training.

THOMSON: This is with the Militia?

GUTHRIE: The Militia, yes. Then he entered Claremont camp in Hobart, and he was ... he left Geelong, I just forget the date now. On the ... it left Hobart on the SS *Geelong*. That was the first convoy that went away. I think there was about forty odd ships in that convoy.

THOMSON: What Battalion was he with, do you remember?

GUTHRIE: He was the machine gun company.

THOMSON: In one battalion?

GUTHRIE: Yes, but what battalion it was I just forget now.

THOMSON: He went to Gallipoli did he?

GUTHRIE: He was a driver. No, he never went to Gallipoli. They never landed the horses at Gallipoli. He went to Meena. From Meena camp he went to Lemnos and then he returned to Egypt, because they never landed the horses at Gallipoli.

THOMSON: Had your other brother joined up?

GUTHRIE: No, he joined up later.

THOMSON: What was this brother's name, sorry?

GUTHRIE: The first one? The eldest one?

THOMSON: The one you were talking about, yes.

GUTHRIE: Oh, he was .. his name?

THOMSON: Yes.

GUTHRIE: Alec.

THOMSON: And he was in a machine gun company?

GUTHRIE: Yes.

THOMSON: You said you had another brother who was killed in Gallipoli?

GUTHRIE: Yes, well he was the eldest brother. He joined up later, I just forget now the date. But he was only on Gallipoli two days when he was killed, at Quinn's Post.

THOMSON: Can you remember when your family first heard of that?

GUTHRIE: Yes. I was in school, I was at school and .. father came and .. talking to the schoolmaster, the schoolmaster came over to me and he said, "Your father wants you outside." So we were walking home, it was only about twenty minutes walk from the school to where we lived. Walking home and ... there was no conversation, all of a sudden he said, "Norman's been killed." Oh, no, he was missing. He was missing but eventually he was declared killed in action.

THOMSON: Why had Alec and Norm joined up? Can you remember speaking to them or listening to them speak?

GUTHRIE: Well, Alec joined up. He was, he was actually a butcher, by trade.

THOMSON: In Ulverstone?

GUTHRIE: In Ulverstone, yes. And he joined up and went to Claremont camp, and later, unbeknownst to us at home, Norman had joined up. He went and seen the doctor who was recruiting officer. He said that he was going to war.

THOMSON: Was Norman also living at home?

GUTHRIE: Yes.

THOMSON: And what was he doing, was he working on the farm.

GUTHRIE: Yes.

THOMSON: Did any of your other brothers join up?

GUTHRIE: Well the one next to me, three years older than I am, he wanted to join up and my mother disapproved of it. But he went and saw the recruiting officer, saw the doctor, but in the meantime the war was over. So he never went away. He actually, he never left home.

THOMSON: Did you get much correspondence from Alec and from Norm?

GUTHRIE: Oh yes. Regularly.

THOMSON: Can you remember their letters being received and what sorts of things they talked about?

GUTHRIE: Yes, oh well, just ... a lot of it was censored. Parts of them cut out. But oh, just the life in the army. They couldn't say where they were. Yes we heard, they used to write pretty regularly.

THOMSON: What sort of pictures would they have drawn of life in the trenches in France? Or did they gloss over that? Or did Alec gloss over that, do you think?

GUTHRIE: Well, as for Alec, he used to say quite a lot about the actions they were in. But of course Norman, he never wrote after he'd landed on Gallipoli. But after, when ... after Gallipoli, Alec went to France, and he went right through the ... he had three horses shot from under him in France. But he came right through and he came, he was returned home with what was called then "trench feet". Frozen, standing in mud and slush in the trenches.

THOMSON: Was that after the war had ended?

GUTHRIE: Oh no, no. He came home before the war, before the war ended.

THOMSON: Can you remember when he came home?

GUTHRIE: Yes, I remember very well. He had a great welcome, at Ulverstone. Course he was well known there being the butcher. He used to do the deliveries and that sort of thing and he was very popular.

THOMSON: When he came home did he talk very much about the war?

GUTHRIE: Oh yes. Quite a lot, quite a lot. But he got itchy feet and ... this was after the war had finished, and he thought he'd like to get away again and travel, and there was an advertisement in the paper for horse attendants for horses going to India and he answered one of these advertisements. He went to Sydney where the, where he was to join the horse boat, but there was some delay there and he got a job in a butcher shop in Pitt Street. He finished up marrying the cashier, so he never got to India.

THOMSON: You said he had itchy feet. How much do you think that was a result of being away at the war for so many years?

GUTHRIE: Oh well, it was, you know, he used to suffer a terrible lot, but that was actually the only difficulty he had.

THOMSON: Do you think his life style had been affected by his years in?

GUTHRIE: Oh yes definitely.

THOMSON: In what sort of ways?

GUTHRIE: Well he used to get lapses of, you know, nerves and so forth. He was a butcher in Sydney after he decided not to go to India, and he worked ... he worked in George Street and he managed a bit shop in George Street and then he decided to get his own business. He had about four or five different shops. He's work the business up and sell them, buy another one and work that up. He finished up in Brookvale. He was at Brookvale for the last, I suppose ten years in a shop there when he retired.

THOMSON: You said he had patches of nerves?

GUTHRIE: Yes.

THOMSON: What did he do when he had one of these?

GUTHRIE: Oh just depressions and that sort of thing. There was no actual effect on his life.

THOMSON: Would he talk about the war at those times?

GUTHRIE: O yes. That was one of his pet subjects. He was very, very patriotic.

THOMSON: Was he? So what sort of stories would he have told of the war?

GUTHRIE: Oh just different incidents and ... what they done here and there and so forth.

THOMSON: Was he ever bitt or sad or angry?

GUTHRIE: No. No. No. He'd just get these depressions occasionally.

THOMSON: Do you think any of his habits had been affected, for instance, by living in Egypt where alcohol was more freely available?

GUTHRIE: Oh no, no.

THOMSON: Did he return to the church, the Methodist church after the war?

GUTHRIE: Well he settled down in Sydney of course after the war. He used to be interested in church and his wife was a church goer. He always used to give the ANZAC lecture at the Beacon Hill school. Some of his lectures are in that, some of those parchments you've just seen there.

THOMSON: So he was very actively involved as a returned serviceman?

GUTHRIE: Very, very much so.

THOMSON: I might return to that in a moment. A few more questions about when you were living in Tasmania during the war. Do you remember what sort of pressures there were on young men to enlist? Were there any pressures of any sort?

GUTHRIE: Oh well there was, in those days there was a white feather sent to certain ones who had never joined up. But apart from that there was no ... there was no actual pressure.

THOMSON: Did anyone you know ever get a white feather?

GUTHRIE: Oh yes.

THOMSON: Did you ever get sent one?

GUTHRIE: No. Oh I was too young in those days.

THOMSON: Were there any forces trying to stop people going away? You mentioned your mother didn't want your brother to go?

GUTHRIE: No. No. Oh my mother objected to my younger brother. That was the third brother.

THOMSON: Why was that? Why did she object?

GUTHRIE: Oh well, she'd lost one son and he didn't want to loose another one I suppose.

THOMSON: Can you remember the conscription referendum?

GUTHRIE: Yes. Yes.

THOMSON: What are your memories of those?

GUTHRIE: Well I just remember that old Billy Hughes' conscription referendums. But that's going back a long way.

THOMSON: Can you remember was your family in favour of conscription or against it?

GUTHRIE: Well I couldn't tell you.

THOMSON: Can you remember any bitterness in the area of Ulverstone in 1916 or 1917 because of the conscription?

GUTHRIE: No. No.

THOMSON: You were working then on the farm when the war finished, were you still?

GUTHRIE: Err, well, when the war finished we actually had a road contract. We were camping out. My father and I, in a tent.

THOMSON: Just the two of you?

GUTHRIE: Just the two of us. He employed a couple of men. And I decided to join the navy, which he approved.

THOMSON: This is when the war finished you decided?

GUTHRIE: This is after the war finished. He said, "Well, Norman wanted to join the navy. Had he have joined the navy he might have been alive today. I'm not going to try and stop you." Course I had to get my, I was under age, I had to get my parents' permission. My mother put up a little bit of a fight but eventually I joined.

THOMSON: Why did you want to join the navy?

GUTHRIE: Why did I want to join? Well it always appealed to me, the sea. Some way or another. I used to get these books out and join the Royal Australian navy. I used to peruse these.

THOMSON: Had you ever wanted to join either the navy or the army during the war?

GUTHRIE: No. No.

THOMSON: So where did you go then when you decided to enlist?

GUTHRIE: Well I ... when I joined the navy the depot was over in Williamstown. I joined there. That was before Cerberus was ... opened. I went from ... I went from there to, I joined the *Melbourne* light cruiser. She's just finished a refit in Sydney when I joined her, and I spent four years on her. I joined her as a second-class stoker and worked as a stoker Petty Officer.

THOMSON: What sort of places did you go then?

GUTHRIE: Well we used to have our regular cruises, what they call "the show of the flag."

THOMSON: The which, sorry.

GUTHRIE: Show the flag. We'd do north in the winter and south, such as New Zealand, Tasmania and we always attended the Hobart regatta. We always represented the navy at the Hobart regatta. I done two trips to New Zealand. On the first trip, I think that was 1921, February 1921, we got a signal there was a ship in distress. Probably about three hundred miles from where we were at that time. We were due in Auckland the next day, next morning, and we were diverted to this area. Well we picked the survivors of the ... an American ketch. She'd foundered. She had a load of coal and she foundered. We Admiral De Merrick, we were flag ship carrying the Admiral, Admiral De Merrick, and he ordered the sail maker to make buoys. The weather was terribly rough and about midnight we sighted these flares and they lowered the cutter and saved the whole of the crew with these life buoys, britches buoys.

THOMSON: Did you go to the Northern Hemisphere? Did you sail to the Northern Hemisphere?

GUTHRIE: No, not at that time.

THOMSON: In the next four years? In those first four years in the navy?

GUTHRIE: No.

THOMSON: Not at all?

GUTHRIE: We done the Solomon Islands and Rabaul and round New Guinea and those places, but never went farther than that.

THOMSON: So you were away then for the first four years at the First World War, you were outside of Australia for most of the time were you?

GUTHRIE: Oh no. We might be, we might be in Sydney for a month and then we'd do the cruise. But never actually far away, you know. Go to Western Australia and Darwin and those places.

THOMSON: In your various times when you were on shore in Australia, can you remember whether returned servicemen, army or navy, who'd come back from the First World War, whether they were having any sorts of problems finding work?

GUTHRIE: Oh well at that time really there was very little work about, I remember. Course personally I didn't know anybody that was actually ... you know, 'cause in the country where I came from, there was always work there. Farming and wood cutting and that sort of thing.

THOMSON: So none of your friends for instance, who went off to the war and come back, can you remember any of them having trouble finding work?

GUTHRIE: No. Not to my knowledge.

THOMSON: Do you remember any disputes between returned servicemen and men who hadn't gone to the war over employment?

GUTHRIE: No.

THOMSON: So being out of Australia you really missed out on any problems?

GUTHRIE: That's right.

THOMSON: Did you ever hear any stories or know of any returned servicemen who had problems when they came back into their families after being away for these numbers of years?

GUTHRIE: No, well actually, I wasn't home that much. See I'd only be home ... we used to get two leaves a year. Christmas and Easter, which was fourteen days. Well of course you didn't mix that much with ... And I didn't know that many before I went away, before I left. I don't recall of any troubles.

THOMSON: Had your brother Alec joined the RSL?

GUTHRIE: Yes, he was a very ... enthusiastic member of the RSL. Very much so.

THOMSON: In Tasmania, or in Sydney?

GUTHRIE: No. No, in Sydney.

THOMSON: So he used to march on ANZAC Day and give speech and give speeches?

GUTHRIE: Yes. He never missed a march until the year before he died.

THOMSON: Can you remember what did he think was the significance of ANZAC Day for him?

GUTHRIE: Oh it was just one of those things that he lived for, I reckon. Yes. He'd never miss a march.

THOMSON: Did it mean for him, was it a day of patriotism or of mourning or ...?

GUTHRIE: No, more of patriotism, I think. Meeting his old friends, his old mates at their reunions and so forth.

THOMSON: After your four years in the navy, what happened then?

GUTHRIE: No, I done seven years.

THOMSON: So you did seven years?

GUTHRIE: Seven years altogether. Seven and a half.

THOMSON: Right. So it was 1926, was it, approximately, when you finished?

GUTHRIE: I paid off in 1926.

THOMSON: You didn't want to keep on in the navy?

GUTHRIE: Well, I would have done, I would have liked to have done. At that time they were reducing the ... compliments and I was never asked to ... to re-sign on. Also, I got married at the end of that year.

THOMSON: How had you met your wife if you'd been at sea? Where did you meet your wife?

GUTHRIE: Well there was some celebration in town, I just forget now what it was. I just happened to meet her there with a couple of my mates.

THOMSON: This is where? In Melbourne?

GUTHRIE: In Melbourne, yes. She lived in Footscray.

THOMSON: So what did you do when you signed out from the navy in 1926?

GUTHRIE: Well I ... I joined the Harbour Trust. In Melbourne.

THOMSON: You were married already?

GUTHRIE: I was married yes. I was married on I think it was the 23 December. That would be 1926.

THOMSON: And joined the Harbour Trust. And what work did you do with the Harbour Trust?

GUTHRIE: I was engine driver.

THOMSON: That's on a boat?

GUTHRIE: On the, on the ... tugs and hoppers. Carting mud out, out into the bay.

THOMSON: Did you know Mr Bridgeman when you were there?

GUTHRIE: Oh yes, yes. I knew him, I knew him before that. He was on the, he was on the HMAS *Sydney* of course, in the First World War.

THOMSON: Working at the Harbour Trust were you a member of a union?

GUTHRIE: No, there were no unions. We never had a union. I was there for three and a half years and ... of course the depression started in 1929 and I was out of work for ... about three weeks.

THOMSON: Why? Did the Harbour Trust close down?

GUTHRIE: Well there was a hundred and seventy of us put off one day. They were reducing staff.

THOMSON: In 1929?

GUTHRIE: 1929. That was the start of the depression. I happened to be in town one day. I used to ride the bike in those days. I'd be out every day, you know, looking for a job, and getting knocked back wherever you went. Then I happened to be in town one day and I ran into a chap that was a shipmate of mine in the navy. He said that he was ... he was in uniform and I thought that he was still in the navy. "No," he said, "I finished. Paid off. I'm on leave. I'm looking for a job." I said, "so am I." So we exchanged addresses and about a week later, telegram boy came up. I was cutting the hedge. We had a hedge in those days. Cutting the heads and this telegram boy rode up with an urgent wire. "Come to Commercial Bank Collins Street." So I dashed in there. He said, "I got a telegram from the manager of Gas Works last night when I got home." He'd got a job in the meantime as commissionaire like, in the bank. A messenger. I said, "I can't go down there, I don't know ... you know, I can't go down there and say my name is Vine." "Well," he said, "do you know Stan Veal?" That's the old chap that ...

THOMSON: The Commander from the First World War?

GUTHRIE: Yes. I said, "Yes." "Well," he said, "he's personnel officer at the gas and fuel." As it was in those days, now it's the – it was the Metropolitan Gas Company in those days. And he said, "Well go down and see him and he might be able to do something for you." I went down and seen Stan, introduced myself. Had my discharges with me and he wrote a letter to the manager of the West Melbourne gas works. He said, "No give this to Mr

Turns. Nobody else. Don't give it to a clerk." He said, "If you can't give it to Mr Turns don't give it to anybody." Anyhow I went down and I enquired at the watchman's office and he said, "Go upstairs. Mr Turns' office is up there." Which I did. I went up and seen him and he said, "What's this Vine doing? Is he manager of the bank or something?" He was a little bit sarcastic. I said, "I don't know Mr Turns." And I had to eat a bit of humble pie, too. I said, "I don't know Mr Turns, but he's advised me to come and see you and I saw Mr Veal." I said, "And here's a letter from him." So he read the letter and, "oh well," he said, "we are, we do want some engine drivers. Have you got your engine driver's certificate?" I said, "Yes." "Alright, well," he said, "start work tomorrow morning." I was there for forty-eight years and seven days. Right through the depression and before war broke out, the Second World War broke out, I was called up. I was away from the job for six years and seven months.

THOMSON: Do you think that the fact that you were an ex-serviceman helped you get that job?

GUTHRIE: Well, there wasn't many engine drivers about, you know. And me, being in the navy I automatically got an engine driver's certificate. I was there then for forty-eight years and seven days.

THOMSON: Can I go back a bit and come back to the depression again later? When you left the navy in 1926, you were married you left in Melbourne. Did you immediately come out to Footscray?

GUTHRIE: Actually I left the I was on the HMAS *Brisbane*. I left her in Geelong, and came up by train. I went and boarded with my wife's mother, in Shepherd Street here in Footscray. Then, we were married on the 23 December and then after that we were looking for a house. I came home from work, I was afternoon shift. Come home from work and the wife said, "I had a walk round and there's a house for sale up in Eleanor Street." It was this one. So we came up and had a look at it and it had been up for sale, auction, but they never got their price. I closed the deal. I went down and seen the agent and paid a pound to seal the deal. We shifted into here then.

THOMSON: And you paid it off gradually over the years?

GUTHRIE: Paid it off gradually. Paid it off through the credit

THOMSON: Did you as an ex navy man, were you give any benefits on leaving the service?

GUTHRIE: No, only deferred pay.

THOMSON: They didn't help you with re-training or war service.

GUTHRIE: No, no. Not in those days.

THOMSON: This is the first time you'd lived in Australia for a number of years, permanently, when you moved to Footscray. Did you join the Returned Serviceman's League?

GUTHRIE: Never joint the ex serviceman's league.

THOMSON: Why?

GUTHRIE: I just don't know. I never ever joined the RSL. I joined the ex-naval men's Association, which I'm still a member of.

THOMSON: When did you join that?

GUTHRIE: Here in Footscray.

THOMSON: In 1927?

GUTHRIE: Well no. They never had a headquarters here then. I joined in Melbourne. Now they've got their own hall up here in Graham Street.

THOMSON: That's separate from the RSL?

GUTHRIE: Yes.

THOMSON: Just navy men. Can you think of any reasons why you never wanted to join the RSL?

GUTHRIE: No, I can't. I just, just didn't

THOMSON: Did you ever have any antipathy to the things that they were doing?

GUTHRIE: No. No. No.

THOMSON: Did many of your friends join in this area?

GUTHRIE: Oh a lot id a lot didn't. But most of the ex naval men the Ex-Navel Man's Association. A lot of them belonged to the RSL of course.

THOMSON: I might run over a series of events related to returned servicemen in this area during the depression. I've been reading some of the local newspapers so I've got some idea of a certain number of events, some of which you might remember. Others which you might not. Can you remember late in the 1920's. 1928 and 1920, before you stopped working at the Harbour Trust, there was an appeal for money to build, the shrine was being built and there was an appeal to raise money.

GUTHRIE: Yes, yes, yes.

THOMSON: Can you remember, in Footscray itself, any response to the call for money?

GUTHRIE: No.

THOMSON: Were you ever a member of the Militia? The 32nd Battalion Militia or anyone like that in Footscray?

GUTHRIE: Yes. I knew of it but I didn't know anybody that actually

THOMSON: But you were still in the Navy Reserve?

GUTHRIE: I was in the Naval Reserve, yes.

THOMSON: Did that entail any activities?

GUTHRIE: Not the Naval Reserve. The Naval Reserve actually is ... see what I joined is what they call the RAFA's. The Royal Australian Fleet Reserve. Well you done one week's training a year, which you'd get a notice to go to Flinders, and do a week down there and that's all it involved. I think, I'm not sure, I think we got ten pound a year I think it was.

THOMSON: Can you remember any particular problems or tensions related to issue of preference for returned servicemen in employment?

GUTHRIE: Oh well I remember the, the events but I can't recall any, any definite individual that was effected in that way.

THOMSON: For instance, in 1930 the Prime Minister, Mr Scullin tried to replace soldier preference with union preference in employment.

GUTHRIE: Yes.

THOMSON: You remember that?

GUTHRIE: Yes. That's right.

THOMSON: There was an uproar over that.

GUTHRIE: That's right. Yes.

THOMSON: Were you at all involved or interested?

GUTHRIE: No. No. I was employed and I wasn't involved.

THOMSON: What about an ex-serviceman in the short period where you were unemployed, were you helped in any way by any of the ex-serviceman's Associations?

GUTHRIE: No. No. Oh I was only unemployed for a few weeks.

THOMSON: Were you ever involved or did you know very much about the various unemployed organisations during the depression in Footscray.

GUTHRIE: Oh I knew of them. I knew a lot that was ... that was unemployed and they used to get their issue of firewood once a week and all this sort of thing you know.

THOMSON: For instance, the Footscray Unemployed Rank and File Association?

GUTHRIE: No, I don't recall.

THOMSON: Another period you might remember, or might not, that Association called the Footscray Rank and File Association; it had a separate sub-section of diggers, unemployed returned servicemen associated with it. At the same time the RSL in Footscray and an unemployed bureau of its own and the two of them were battling against each other.

GUTHRIE: No. I don't remember that. No.

THOMSON: What sort of activities did the Ex-Naval Men's Association, which was based in Melbourne, what sort of activities did that entail?

GUTHRIE: Oh, assisting those in need, ex-servicemen, who belonged to their Association? They have their reunions of course, and they have a meeting up here ... every month. Sometimes I go sometimes I don't. I had a car accident here, May last year and I don't get round as much as I used to. I was out on a Carry On job. Carry On is similar to Legacy. It assists ex-servicemen, their wives, and families. I joined that, oh fifteen, sixteen years ago. I was the family contact in this district.

THOMSON: For Carry On?

GUTHRIE: For Carry On. I think I ... had about, oh, let's say thirty or forty cases I visited here over those years. As a matter of fact I was out on a Carry On job when I had the car accident. I had a black out. Lost my car.

THOMSON: In the period between the wars did you, like your brother, march in ANZAC Day parades?

GUTHRIE: Yes. Yes.

THOMSON: In Footscray or in town?

GUTHRIE: No. No. In the city.

THOMSON: In the city?

GUTHRIE: I always lead my Association.

THOMSON: That was the period after the Second World War. What about between the wars? Did you march in ANZAC Day parades?

GUTHRIE: Yes. Yes.

THOMSON: Was that in Footscray or in the city?

GUTHRIE: In the city.

THOMSON: With whom did you march? From your ship, or ...?

GUTHRIE: With the Minesweepers Association.

THOMSON: This is before the Second World War?

GUTHRIE: Between the wars?

THOMSON: So the Minesweepers Association was formed?

GUTHRIE: In 1942. I was on the *Arara*, the minesweeper, and we had what the called ship's company canteen. If you had a certain amount of money in that, in the canteen funds, if you got over a certain amount, the Navy Board could come down and inspect the books and confiscate over what you were allowed. So in 1942 we endowed a cot in the Children's Hospital. Two hundred and forty pound, I think it was. Donated to that. Immediately after the war we formed the Association. The Minesweepers Association and we donated a hundred, and we donated a hundred, which is a hundred dollars now. It used to be fifty pound to that cot, and we've never missed a year, all over those years. We also give a hundred dollars to Carry On.

THOMSON: Just going back a bit before the Second World War, in the 1920's and 1930's, were you marching in ANZAC Day parades in that period?

GUTHRIE: Between the two wars?

THOMSON: Between the two wars?

GUTHRIE: Yes. Yes.

THOMSON: You did. And who would you march with then?

GUTHRIE: Oh, just anybody who was, you know, I could drop in with. Nobody in particular.

THOMSON: In Footscray or in town?

GUTHRIE: No, in town.

THOMSON: Why did you march? What was the significance of the parade for you?

GUTHRIE: Oh I don't know. It was just that ... I was an ex-serviceman and ... I didn't, I didn't march regularly at that time, but since the Second World War I don't think I've missed a march.

THOMSON: Do you think that had anything to do with the fact that you didn't actually serve overseas during the First World War but you did in the Second World War?

GUTHRIE: Oh, I suppose it did, yes.

THOMSON: When were you called up to serve in the Second World War?

GUTHRIE: About three days before war broke out, which was the 3 December.

THOMSON: Where did you go? You had no choice I take it?

GUTHRIE: No, I ... I got a telegram to report to HMAS *Platypus* in Sydney, forthwith, and I had to go in and see my employer at the Metropolitan Gas Company in those days. Told me I'd been called up and I caught the train, I think, two days after that.

THOMSON: So what family did you have at this stage?

GUTHRIE: Three, three girls.

THOMSON: You said goodbye to your wife and three girls and off you went.

GUTHRIE: Yes. The youngest one was only a baby in those days.

THOMSON: Where did the HMAS *Platypus* go?

GUTHRIE: That's their photo there.

THOMSON: That's the three girls, right. Where did the HMAS *Platypus* go?

GUTHRIE: Oh she was a depot ship. She hadn't been to sea for years before that. She was tied up at Garden Island. I joined her and about Of course I had to get new kit. New clothing, full kit. Then I joined the HMAS *Stewart* from the HMAS *Platypus*, about a fortnight after I was called up. We done exercises every day, outside Sydney Heads. Torpedo and gunnery exercises, and then on my birthday, on the 14 November, 14 October, we sailed from Sydney. Thinking we were just going out on another exercise and we finished up in Singapore. Then from there into the Mediterranean. I was on there for about, what about twelve months and then I was sent home on compassionate grounds. My wife was taken ill, a nervous breakdown. It was then that I joined the HMAS *Arara*.

THOMSON: You went from the HMAS *Stewart* to the HMAS *Arara*?

GUTHRIE: From the HMAS *Stewart* to the HMAS *Arara*, yes.

THOMSON: Did you serve on the HMAS *Arara* for the remainder of the war?

GUTHRIE: Oh no, no. I, I was about two years on the HMAS *Arara* and then I was made, I was made chief stoker and I got a draft to the HMAS *Adelaide*, which was in Fremantle. I joined the ... I left Sydney on the *Spirit of Progress*, got the Sydney next day and reported to the DNO there and he said, "Well you're a bit still. The HMAS *Adelaide* sailed for Fremantle last night." So I said, "What happens now?" He said, "You have to go to Balmoral and just wait for transit." I went to Balmoral and was there for ten days. No duties, nothing to do. Then I got a draft to join the HMAS *Adelaide* in Fremantle. Arrived in Melbourne and I was here for ten days waiting for transport to the west. I joined the HMAS *Adelaide*. I went to Lewin Depot. She was at sea when I got there, the next day she came in and I joined her. We sailed for Melbourne that night.

THOMSON: And were you on the HMAS *Adelaide* for?

GUTHRIE: I was only on the HMAS *Adelaide* for one trip. We brought a convoy from Fremantle to Melbourne and we were here for a few days and returned to Fremantle.

THOMSON: What was your position or rank?

GUTHRIE: Chief stoker.

THOMSON: Right. So working in the engine room.

GUTHRIE: Yes. Then an old, a very old friend of mine, was chief stoker of the HMAS *Burnie*, and he refused to go to sea and I got the draft to replace him on the HMAS *Burnie*.

THOMSON: Why did he refuse to go to sea?

GUTHRIE: He reckoned he was too old. Which he was too. Old Snowy O'Brien. I joined the HMAS *Burnie* and then I went over and joined the Eastern Fleet. I was over there for two years. We done the ... what they call the ABC, Aden Bombay Colombo convoys and then we were sent to the Persian Gulf. We were up there for three months, on submarine patrols. I came back on the HMAS *Cumberland*. I got a draft home on the HMAS *Cumberland*, which ... we landed in Fremantle and I came across by train. Troop train from there.

THOMSON: Was this the end of the war?

GUTHRIE: No. No. After I had my leave I joined the HMAS *Platypus*. That was the one that I originally joined in Sydney.

THOMSON: Was that still a depot ship?

GUTHRIE: No. O no. She'd ... she was repaired and she was in the first Darwin raids. The Japs ... and she came back from there and done a refit in Sydney and I joined her there and then we went up as a repair ship for small ships to ... around the islands.

THOMSON: Were you in many actions during these years?

GUTHRIE: Oh, not a great lot. Only in the Mediterranean, and a few actions convoys with the Eastern Fleet. Then from Sydney we went to ... well we finished up we followed the ... the Japs were, you know, our Allies were advancing by that time. They were pushing the Japs back and we followed on, to such places as Madang and Morotai, where, in Morotai, the war finished.

THOMSON: And you were at the surrender at Morotai?

GUTHRIE: Yes. I was at that ... we landed at Morotai on the Sunday morning and that's where, that's where that surrender was.

THOMSON: What are your memories of life during these six years? Did you enjoy the life?

GUTHRIE: I did. Very much, I did.

THOMSON: What were the things you enjoyed?

GUTHRIE: Oh. I think it was more of the, the company and seeing different places. That sort of thing, you know.

THOMSON: Did you miss your family?

GUTHRIE: Oh yes, yes, yes. There was one incident, which was very unique, I thought. A friend of mine from the west, he had three daughters and I had three daughters. We went ashore in Bombay. It was just before Christmas. It would be 1943, 1944. We could send parcels home, you see. We could send things home from there that they wouldn't buy here, such as cottons and underwear for the kids and all that sort of thing. So we went ashore to ... to buy up to send some parcels home. Went into this shop, which was called, it was a very big place, army and navy stores, although it had nothing to do with the army and navy. We were looking round at children's underwear and a woman came up, a middle aged woman, and she said, "Can I help you?" I said, "We're just looking for something to send home to the children for Christmas." "Oh," she said, "I think this stuff that you're looking at would be too light, too thin for your climate." I said, "What climate's that now?" She said, "You come from England, don't you?" I said, "No." She said, "Where do you come from?" I said, "Australia." "Oh," she said, "So do I." She said to my mate, "Where do you come from?" He said, "I come from Perth." "What part of Australia do you come from?" I said, "Victoria?" She said, "So do I." So she said, "You don't come from Melbourne?" I said, "Yes, I do." She said, "So do I." She said, "Don't tell me you come from Footscray?" Ha ha ha. I said, "I'm telling you I come from Footscray." She said, "So do I." She said, "Do you know Irving Street in Footscray?" I said, "Yes, I know it very well." She said, "That's named after my father." Just a coincidence. I said, "How did that come about?" "Well," she said, "He was a surveyor with the Footscray Council and the Indian Government was advertising for surveyors and he shifted over there. Got the job." Shifted over there with his family and her mother was eighty-six at that time. So the wife always used to send me the Footscray Mail every week. I used to give it to her. She appreciated it very much. Well we corresponded, after the war we corresponded for a short time, and then those raids, riots in Bombay and I never heard of her again. What happened I don't know.

THOMSON: Did you have a strong sense of yourself as a Footscrayite?

GUTHRIE: Oh yes, very much so.

THOMSON: In the period before the war and then while you were at war?

GUTHRIE: That's right. Yes.

THOMSON: Did you come back to Footscray as soon as the war finished?

GUTHRIE: Oh yes, I came straight back here.

THOMSON: When was that? 1946 or 1945?

GUTHRIE: No, that was in 1946, because we were held up at Morotai.

THOMSON: Did you go straight back to your job with the Metropolitan Gas Company?

GUTHRIE: Oh, I had about a month off then I went straight back to the Metropolitan Gas Company.

THOMSON: They took people straight back on, there was no problems?

GUTHRIE: Oh yes. They, as a matter of fact, they ... any employee that left there to join the services, they made their pay up. But I was getting more than that what I was getting there ha ha, in the navy, so I dipped out on that. Ha ha.

THOMSON: How did it feel coming back to live with your family again after being away for six years?

GUTHRIE: Oh alright. Very good. Very good.

THOMSON: Did you have any problems readjusting? For instance your wife would have taken on many roles in the house that you would have normally done.

GUTHRIE: Oh I don't think there was any problems there.

THOMSON: Did your children remember you at all?

GUTHRIE: Oh the two elder ones did. Oh they, they used to correspond with me. Oh yes, they knew me. The youngest one of course, she would be what, what age she was when I came back. But there was two of the girls, they were both nursing sisters. One trained over here the other trained at Geelong, finished up doing her midwifery over there.

THOMSON: Do you think you changed in any way during those six years away?

GUTHRIE: I don't think so.

THOMSON: You didn't have any great difficulties getting back into civilian life?

GUTHRIE: No.

THOMSON: After the war, you were still a member of the Ex-Naval Association?

GUTHRIE: Yes. The Ex-Navalman's Association.

THOMSON: You never joined the RSL?

GUTHRIE: Never joined the RSL. For what reason I don't know. I just didn't.

THOMSON: Then you went on marches every year after the Second World War?

GUTHRIE: Yes. I haven't missed a march. We have our reunion ahh, on ANZAC eve every year, and march on ANZAC Day. We had over sixty members march with us this year. A good muster.

THOMSON: One last question. How important an effect do you think your experience of being in the navy at the end of the First World War and then during the Second World War, how important do you think that was as part of your life?

GUTHRIE: Oh, I don't think it made any difference actually. I just done the normal job, and lived a normal life. But I liked the sea. I liked the life in the navy. Company and good friendship and so forth. As a matter of fact my ... at our last picnic, we have a picnic every year, as I said I've been President for ... for eighteen years.

THOMSON: This is the Minesweepers Association?

GUTHRIE: The Minesweepers Association. And at our picnic last year, which we hold at Keats Park, they presented me with that whisky set.

THOMSON: So after the Second World War you were quite involved in the various ex-serviceman's associations?

GUTHRIE: Yes, oh yes. When I left the HMAS *Stewart* ... there was only eight in my mess. Stoker Petty Officer at that time and they gave me a send off in the Union Jack Club. They presented me with that set.

THOMSON: We were just talking about the various organisations you were involved with after the war. Ex-serviceman's the Minesweeper's Association, Carry On.

GUTHRIE: Carry On Victoria it's called.

THOMSON: So you'd say that these ex-serviceman's associations were quite important in your life after the war?

GUTHRIE: Yes, yes. I also, I'm on the committee of the ... oh the Naval Commemoration Committee. That is the crowd that sent me to Sydney on that World Assembly War Veterans.

THOMSON: Right, in 1975.

GUTHRIE: Mm. They paid all my expenses and everything. Stopped at the Hotel Australia.

THOMSON: What do you see as the importance, the main role, of those organisations?

GUTHRIE: The main role, oh assisting, assisting the ex-servicemen, families and children. There's a difference, slight difference between Carry On and Legacy. Now Legacy doesn't assist anybody who didn't serve overseas. But Carry On does. I've had two patrons here, from the black watch, ask for assistance. Well, we get. Well, we get ...

THOMSON: This is in Footscray?

GUTHRIE: Yes. I'm in the western districts. We've got depots in other areas. There's northern branch, Dandenong, Ballarat, Mildura. We have fourteen units for the elderly in Mildura and four now being built. With Legacy they don't assist anybody who never served overseas, whereas Carry On does. In the event of Carry On getting an appeal for assistance, we might get it from a church, from Salvation Army or from a private citizen. So-and-so is in distress and needs assistance. Well I get a letter from headquarters to go out and visit that family. Well, I've got to, I go through the house and have a look, and see the discharge and take the number of the discharge and his services. Well, if we assist that family and that man dies, we turn that widow and children over to Legacy. Now if Legacy gets an appeal and finds that the man never served overseas, they refer them to Carry On. So we work hand in glove.

THOMSON: How important is the commemorative function of say the Minesweepers Association as opposed to the social service function that you've been talking about?

GUTHRIE: In what way?

THOMSON: The commemorative function commemorating the people that you served with.

GUTHRIE: Oh well it's pretty close. Of course I don't do any contact work now. I lost my car and I can't get round, but I'm still a member of Carry On. We have our Annual Badge Day and they have a gold day at Kew. Golf day at Rosanna, fund raising. No assistance from the Government at all. Done by charity. And all members are volunteers.