



Australian War Memorial

Sound Collection

ORAL HISTORY RECORDING

ACCESSION NUMBER: S01316

TITLE:

INTERVIEWEE: Mr F R Hocking

INTERVIEWER: Alistair Thomson

RECORDING DATE: 10th April 1983

RECORDING LOCATION: Ivanhoe

SUMMARY: Interview with Mr F R Hocking at Ivanhoe on the 10th April 1983

TRANSCRIBER: WRITE*people*

TRANSCRIPTION DATE: November 2004

THOMSON: I suppose my first interest is where you were born, and where your parents were living then.

HOCKING: Oh, well, I was born in Kyneton – that's ... I think about fifty miles ... and would probably know Kyneton, do you?

THOMSON: Yes.

HOCKING: Yes. Well, my parents lived there, and my mother was born there, and my father was born in Chilwell in Geelong. He settled there on the farm in Kyneton and that's – well, that was the start.

THOMSON: What were your parents doing in Kyneton?

HOCKING: Farming.

THOMSON: Farming? What sort of farm was that?

HOCKING: Oh – a mixed farm – they had ... cattle, sheep ... various things. I don't think they ever made very much money, my parents – small farming – you never do make much money. Somebody said ... missed farming like that working all day and doing odd jobs all night. That'll be about what it was, too, I think.

THOMSON: Was it hard work?

HOCKING: Very hard work, and no return, much.

THOMSON: Were there many other small farms in that area?

HOCKING: Oh, any amount, yes. Well, they weren't so small, there were some hundreds of acres, but – I think in those days, and even now, to make any money out of farming you want to have a large area where you break even, like big ... a man with two thousand sheep, perhaps, and my father had as many as that ... well, you get nothing out of those. You ... a break-even point, and then over that you probably would be getting all profit – well, you're after fifty thousand sheep over the Western District, and they earned big money. And they did have big money in those days. Of course they were the elite, as it were, of the country, weren't they?

THOMSON: How did your father?

HOCKING: They made it very readily themselves.

THOMSON: How did your father get the farm, and start the farm?

HOCKING: Well, his ... it was a farm that my mother's father had bought. My father's father was a very, err, well known man in the ... pianoforte manufacturing. He was a piano maker.

THOMSON: In Australia?

HOCKING: Oh yes, he came here.

THOMSON: In Melbourne?

HOCKING: Ye-yes ... he came to Western Australia for a start. This is way back in the 1840s. There was a ... one of those ... land settlement schemes something like you get on ... you know, where some of it is under water and all that. And they brought them out from England here more or less under false pretences, that's what they called the Swan River Settlement. And he got there and found that it wasn't any good and he went back to England again. He came from a place ...

THOMSON: This was your grandfather?

HOCKING: Yes, my grandfather. My mother's father – maternal grandfather. He came from a place called, ah Newbury, just near Newbury, in England, where they're having this bomb dispos .. no, you know, the ...

THOMSON: The American base?

HOCKING: Yes, the American base. You know, they've got that special petition against it. Yes. I would certainly join in, too. Ha ha ha! However, he came from there, and he got disgusted with the Western Australian thing – it was utterly impossible to do any good. It was one of those ... you know... frauds. He went back to England again ... I suppose he must have had some money ... he went back to his wife and they came back here again with his mother and his sister and they went to Western Australia again. And they're ... well, his sister, was a woman ... they must be extraordinary. I don't know much about them except thee was a woman doing a ... family tree. I never knew who – she was some sort of relative – rang me up and asked was I Ruth Hocking's son – this was my mother, who lived to be one hundred and two ha, ha! Over in the Heidelberg area. However ... he came back again, and this woman, Eliza Hay, she was a over there, heaven only knows, I don't think they'd ever get one from me – ha, ha, ha!

THOMSON: So did your maternal grandfather come to Victoria?

HOCKING: Came from Vict ... he went – came from there to Adelaide. He found things weren't any ... much good. He would have – he was a tremendous craftsman – he made furniture for the Emperor of Prussia at that time – there was no such places Germany. And also for the Queen of Spain. There is ... I've got some literature here about that somewhere err one ... for the Queen Victoria, a table, with about a hundred-off inlays of Australian timber, and that sort of thing. He was a marvelous craftsman. My father was very good with tools – I'm useless. He said that he was the finest craftsman he ever saw, except his own son ... that was my uncle. He was very good. But that's ... and they came to Adelaide and he bought a wagon and ... some oxen. I don't know whether this is a waste of time?

THOMSON: No. This is interesting.

HOCKING: And they set out for Bendigo. That was the time of the ... rush.

THOMSON: Right.

HOCKING: And they got to the Murray River – I don't think there could have been any roads then, of course – and somebody stole the wagon and the ... bullocks. I don't know how on earth that happened, but he went back to Adelaide and came on by ship. And they went to ... they went to Bendigo then. Why they shifted from there to Karlsruhe I don't know ... there his wife died – that was his first wife. And he eventually married another woman there who'd lost her husband in a mining accident. And ... they went to Kyneton and he opened a shop there of ... manufacturing pianos and organs.

THOMSON: How do you know all this? Is this family tradition? Or written down?

HOCKING: Well, it's – it's not. Most of it I got from this ... woman, who was – I didn't know.

THOMSON: Just found out recently?

HOCKING: ... just found it out recently. And there seems to be ... a great ... interest in family trees and that sort of thing. She's some ridiculous woman talking about William the Conqueror being one of our ... forbears. I wouldn't care to ... claim him, incidentally, but ... if you work it back, you find that you've got millions of ancestors, you know, this and that. If you get a family tree in England, you'll always get some sort of royalty somewhere along the line. Of course, sweetens the bill, probably. Ha ha ha!

THOMSON: So did you – (perhaps we should just check this, make sure it's working) – maternal grandfather, then, he had a shop. Did he then buy some land, which your father was settled on?

HOCKING: Yes. ... and ... my ... maternal grandmother ... she was his second wife ... do you want to ...?

THOMSON: No that's fine.

HOCKING: ... she ... she was there, living as a widow, and she had ... four children, I think, and he had eight. So they joined forces and they had another five – ha ha!

THOMSON: Makes seventeen.

HOCKING: They went in for things in a big way the heh, heh! And – oh – they ... let's see, she was living at a place called Boggy Creek which was a ... a house, just opposite the mineral springs in Kyneton – I don't know whether you know the mineral springs, but that's well ... Our farm adjoined the Campaspe there. Magnificent land, some of it ... black soil, very heavy, but very good. However, she – I remember her telling me that she was wakened early one morning – ah ... and there was a commotion outside, a lot of noise, and it was Burke and Wills going through.

THOMSON: Really?

HOCKING: Yes, well don't you know? That's rather interesting, I think, isn't it?

THOMSON: Did they stop and ...?

HOCKING: No. She never ... she didn't get up. She said ha ha ha!

THOMSON: Sense of ...

HOCKING: ... she let history pass her by without looking at it! Ha ha ha ha ha ha!

THOMSON: Tell me, when you were growing up, how many brothers and sister ...

HOCKING: I had only two sisters. Yes.

THOMSON: So you did a lot of work on the farm, I'd imagine?

HOCKING: Well ... well, I didn't ... you se, I actually ... left there ... we left there before I was actually grown up. I ... my father had land in other places – sounds as if he had a lot of it, but he didn't have very much money. He had land down at Little River and also down at Warragul, and they also had an interest in a, ah, place at Mount Dandenong, which was cut up on the north side there, where that Road Board's road runs through, you know. Going up from Montrose up to the top of the hill, Cararama.

THOMSON: Was this land all inherited from ...?

HOCKING: No ... no, it's stuff they'd bought it ... in conjunction with my uncle. They had land dealings.

THOMSON: So where did you move to?

HOCKING: Well we ended up – when I was about seventeen – in Melbourne, at Oakleigh, and my father bought ... had some land at Heidelberg and started to build a house, just as the First World War broke out. That's ... really, that's how it cam ... then I thought I ...

THOMSON: So you joined up in Melbourne?

HOCKING: Well, that's right, yes, joined up.

THOMSON: Can I go back just a little bit?

HOCKING: Yes.

THOMSON: A bit more about.

HOCKING: If you're interested in that ... I mean.

THOMSON: I'll come back to when you joined up, but a bit more about your childhood and youth, about where you went to school, what was school like, and.

HOCKING: Oh well I don't know that it's ... anything worth while talking about, there.

THOMSON: Nothing significant? Were you actively involved in the church? At all?

HOCKING: Well, my people were yes ... I'm afraid that I wasn't. I ... I don't think I really believed anything and ... as the I went on to ... believe less and less as a ... (chuckle) ... like a lot of fellows, I think, who got around the world a bit, you don't seem to, you know, become ... inclined to take things connected with religion – very seriously. You find that there ... I suppose there are ... a lot of different people thinking different things, that in the end that ... it's rather confusing.

THOMSON: And so, when you came to Melbourne, did you have a job?

HOCKING: Well no. My father was in the, he had an office in Collins Street.

THOMSON: What was he doing? In Melbourne?

HOCKING: He was handling, the land, you know, that they had.

THOMSON: Right. Sort of managing all the land?

HOCKING: Yes. Well, I don't know about managing, but he was ... some of these things he's sold, you see. I don't think there's any point in going into a lot of detail about it ... and he was acting really as an agent. He had this ... in ... Heidelberg. Other odds and ends. ... Road, out just near Chadstone, where the Myer, you know, the ah ... there was quite a lot of land going, when he sold that, I think it was thirty shillings a foot. Ha ha! All that sort of thing.

THOMSON: So what did you do when you arrived in Melbourne?

HOCKING: Well, I wasn't doing anything, because I was helping him, more or less, you know, in a sort of ... general way.

THOMSON: And you were doing that when the war broke out?

HOCKING: Yes. Then I ... I joined up.

THOMSON: You joined up straight away?

HOCKING: Yes. Well.

THOMSON: In August?

HOCKING: Yes. A few ... well ... September. Mm. I messed around.

THOMSON: Where – what was the feeling? In the area where you were living, amongst your family? Attitude to the war?

HOCKING: Pardon?

THOMSON: What was the feeling amongst your family and friends?

HOCKING: Oh, they were all ... they were all ... my father was a great empire man. He thought that ... the Lord and ... well I don't know about that, but – ha ha ha ha! Remember the old Kaiser, you wouldn't remember the song "Poof, we could lick them all/Mien Gott, meself and Gott"! Ha ha ha ha ha! No, that was a sort of a thing, which permeated through. It was ... atmosphere which wouldn't would never have know. You'd never know it nowadays.

THOMSON: So why did you decide then to join up?

HOCKING: Well ha ha! You were brought up in the tradition that – it seemed as if it was the only thing to do, just the same as ... why did you... have breakfast this morning? Ha ha ha! That sort of thing. It was a ... it was more or less a foregone thing that we were brought up it wasn't a question of ... being brought up to think that were we going to fight. (That might fall, oh, it's all right.) Oh it was a question merely a question of when?

THOMSON: Where there any ...?

HOCKING: In those days ... Germany, you see, Germany was the ... and we had the yellow hordes, of course, they were ah very, very pressing on the north there and well of course, pretty obvious now, if you go up there you'll find them. Ha!

THOMSON: Were there any pressures, or reasons why you mightn't have gone?

HOCKING: No, only that I was a youngish son perhaps. My mother didn't, you know, I don't think that she liked it very much, in a way, although she was a very ... she was an extremely ... tremendously determined in any bit issue. Small issues, perhaps, no so. Remarkable, I've often thought that. She had tremendous courage in big issues but small issues, she ... sidetracked.

THOMSON: So did she make an issue of your going?

HOCKING: Oh no, no she just merely ... acquiesced, as it were. Hm.

THOMSON: Right. Did most of your friends, or many of your friends, also join up?

HOCKING: Oh yes, yes, yes. ... Nearly everybody in our circle joined up.

THOMSON: And where did you actually go? To join up?

HOCKING: Oh in Melbourne. Victoria Barracks.

THOMSON: To Victoria Barracks?

HOCKING: Mm.

THOMSON: And then to Broadmeadows camp?

HOCKING: Broadmeadows and the ... overseas and so on.

THOMSON: How long did you spend at Broadmeadows, and what were you doing there?

HOCKING: Oh, I couldn't ... not such a long while. We went away pretty quickly.

THOMSON: And what unit were you placed in?

HOCKING: Oh well, I was in a couple of units for a start. We were ... rather ... difficult. We were in a sort of stand-by crowd, we were ... you see, youngsters, although oh ... you know, big ... I was pretty big and strong in those days, not all feeble like I am now.

THOMSON: You were seventeen?

HOCKING: Ha, ha yes, well I was eighteen.

THOMSON: Eighteen.

HOCKING: Ah ... I think that ... you know, looking back on it, it's very, very hard to ... remember in any detail, with any accuracy, a lot of these things. We were ... were attached to a battalion called the sixth. We finally got, owing to a certain happening we got shunted away from them, I don't know why ... eventually, we went with a crowd of reinforcements, just after landing.

THOMSON: To a different battalion?

HOCKING: Yes. And err, yes. And we went to Gallipoli and ... stayed there for a while.

THOMSON: Did you know many of the people in the sixth? My grandfather was in the sixth.

HOCKING: I think you mentioned that before. Hm.

THOMSON: Yes. He joined up right at the start.

HOCKING: Yes.

THOMSON: Can you remember the approximate date when you left Melbourne and sailed overseas?

HOCKING: No. Look, I'd have to look that up somewhere now. I haven't got a ... I've got a ... a deed box here which ... solicitor's got it at the moment, I think. It's, er had wills ... my sister died recently ... my remaining sister, and she was ... probating the estate and that sort of thing. The house and some money and that sort of thing, not very much. Err I haven't got it here.

THOMSON: Not to worry. Did you go to Egypt?

HOCKING: Oh yes. I went to Egypt. Yes.

THOMSON: And what were you first, was this the first time you'd been overseas?

HOCKING: Oh yes. Yes.

THOMSON: What were your impressions?

HOCKING: Yes. Well ho ho! Well, that's rather a tall one to ... ha ha ha ha! I don't know, that we ... the impressions we ... the troop ship was a, a miserable sort of affair, you know, very oh uncomfortable, overcrowded and ... there was no ... there were no amenities, much, at all, everything was very primitive. And ... all I can remember very much about it, we were ... we arrived in Egypt. The first, the only sign of life I think we saw was ... a couple of Arab dhows off the coast of Peerim. I think. It's a place you probably don't know of, at the entrance to the Red Sea. They used to be, it used to be a big signal station and they report the ships, of course, the ships are not reported now, it's, you know, past Peerim and all that sort of thing. And sighted off so and so and all that business. However, well Egypt was ... I think a shock to everybody, I think, who thought at all, because, ... you found that you weren't exactly ... we had an idea that we were extremely popular in the world, you know, the British race, but I ... I don't think we were. People had ... well, they had the cheek to criticise us. Ha ha!

THOMSON: Did the...

HOCKING: We were very, very British in those days, of course. Ha ha ha ha ha!

THOMSON: How long were you in Egypt before you went to Gallipoli?

HOCKING: Oh, I dunno. Couple of months or three.

THOMSON: Couple of months? Right, and then you went to Gallipoli after the landing?

HOCKING: Yes, yes.

THOMSON: Were you actually on a ship as they were landing, or were you still in ...

HOCKING: ... no no... We were torpedoed, incidentally.

THOMSON: Where was that?

HOCKING: Oh that was ... off Gallipoli. And off ... Lemnos.

THOMSON: Before you went ashore?

HOCKING: Before we, before ...

THOMSON: Did your ship go down?

HOCKING: Er, no it was beached. Beached at Lemnos. Hm. Yes, all of that's all on the record .. a ship called the *Southland*.

THOMSON: How long after the landing did you go to Gallipoli?

HOCKING: Oh, it was some ... July, July.

THOMSON: Right. Before Lone Pine and the August defences?

HOCKING: Oh yes, yes.

THOMSON: Right. And you were the reinforcements for one or other Battalion?

HOCKING: Yes.

THOMSON: Which Battalion was that?

HOCKING: Yeah. Well ... we went with a machine gun crowd, who's ... and ... the fellow in charge was killed, incidentally, but that's beside the point, and then went to a Battalion who'd just arrived on 23 August. And ..., well, that was that.

THOMSON: Where were you posted to on Gallipoli?

HOCKING: Lone Pine.

THOMSON: Lone Pine?

HOCKING: Yes, yes. It was ...

THOMSON: And which Battalion was that? Sorry.

HOCKING: It was the 23rd. It was the 6th Brigade and they'd just come.

THOMSON: You'd just arrived?

HOCKING: Mm. And I was evacuated before the ... evacuation of the ... force. Yes.

THOMSON: You were wounded?

HOCKING: I wasn't wounded there. I was wounded in France but ... no, I was ill. Like so many.

THOMSON: What are your impressions now of Gallipoli, looking back?

HOCKING: Oh well, ha ha! How long have you got? Ha ha ha ha! No, it's ... it's a thing that ... I don't know that I've every actually tried to summon them up, in a way, it's a hodge-podge.

THOMSON: Did you ever write about it afterwards?

HOCKING: Oh, I've written odds and ends. I've found, thought, that it's an extraordinary thing, I have been, I have written a bit about odds and ends at different times, but writing about something that actually happened, I seem to get bogged. You can't do it. I don't know why. You ... anything you ... fiction ... you could probably manage it. You know. Ah, but I can remember ... I did on one occasion start to write about an actual happening there, which I wouldn't bore you with ... and ... I couldn't write about it. In any coherent way. No. It was just merely something, which seemed to ... give you a mental block. I don't know why. Rather, it was rather an extraordinary sort of feeling. Couldn't seem to do it.

THOMSON: What rank were you when you were in Gallipoli?

HOCKING: I was nothing at all.

THOMSON: You were a private?

HOCKING: I was, oh ... I was only a kid, but I was ... became an NCO in France.

THOMSON: Right.

HOCKING: Ended up as ser ... I was an acting sergeant major for a while.

THOMSON: mm. What was the spirit, what was the spirit on Gallipoli when you first arrived in July and August?

HOCKING: Well, it's very hard to say. You know, you go to a place, the way we went, you only get ... not a bird's eye view, you get a worm's eye view almost. We were only in such a small, circumscribed space that it's very hard ... it's very hard to judge the ... the feelings of even a company, or a battalion, or a division or any army corps, like the ANZAC, Australia and New Zealand Army Corps, and a.

THOMSON: Did...? Sorry.

HOCKING: Go ahead. What was I doing? Ha ha!

THOMSON: Did you see the film *Gallipoli* last year?

HOCKING: Yes, yes. I went ... they took us, you know ... I think I mentioned that.

THOMSON: Yes you were on the front page of "The Age".

HOCKING: There was a ... picture in "The Age" ... and some guff about it. I think they got it upside down and inside out, but that's just true to form. Ha ha ha ha!

THOMSON: What were your impressions of the film as opposed to the real thing?

HOCKING: Where there are a lot of things, which you, ah ... could criticise. There were good points about it. I told them, I think, at the time I told them it was a good attempt at an impossible ... objective. And which is quite true. But what I think one of the big mistakes,

which was made, or which were made rather, there were quite a few! Was they all looked very neat. Did you see it?

THOMSON: Mm.

HOCKING: They all looked pretty neat and trim. They had good uniforms. Well, we looked like a damn bunch of scarecrows after we'd ... been there for about a week or two, couple of weeks. You had ... you couldn't shave, you couldn't wash, you couldn't ... and that sort of thing, and that was where ... that was a big gap between reality and what they presented.

THOMSON: Do you think that depicted life on Gallipoli as cleaner and also less dangerous, or less miserable?

HOCKING: Well they didn't depict anything in the way of any great misery as such, such as ... you know ... the lice and ... things of that description, of course flies, particularly in the hot weather, you know, they were so frightful. In biblical times I think there was a plague of flies in Egypt; well, that was only just merely an overture. Ha ha! It was a very small area, Lone Pine, I didn't really, you wouldn't know the size of it, perhaps.

THOMSON: I've been there. I went there a couple of years ago.

HOCKING: You went there, did you? My son's been there. He's a fellow I just started to tell you something about and then I was sidetracked. Ah, he was very impressed. He did the ... he's a mapper, you know, a cartographer. He was ... quite ... fairly prominent in that area. But ... he had this idea of ... a new approach to the whole campaign. What was one of the great troubles was the inaccuracy of the maps they had. You see, one map, which I had, it's got a fellers blood was killed, incidentally, on it, you know, stained he's got that too, he got most. Ah Krithia down on ... Helles ... it's marked on two placed on the one map. Krithia! You see, it, it's just incredible what people should These people who are supposed to make studies of these possible campaigns which you might have, ... study how to ... the best way to invade France, and take Paris, starting from England you know, and that sort of thing. They do that, that sort of thing, and it's ... they never know what's going to come up in this world, but it was never done there. And the only time that it had ever been forced, I think in the States, was about ... somewhere about in the early eighteen hundreds. I'm not really sure about that. You might know the ...

THOMSON: I'm not exactly sure. It was a long time before.

HOCKING: Yes. A long while ago. But what ... were ... we landed there at Lone Pine, of course Lone Pine was ... it was only supposed to be a diversionary action to take and ... to hold it was a disaster, because you were losing men all the time, and it was only held for prestige, and it had cost us a tremendous ... number of casualties ... to take it ... was, you know ... a disaster, I think. But, however, that's ... that's one aspect.

THOMSON: Did you spend all your time at Lone Pine before you were evacuated?

HOCKING: Yes, yes, that's right.

THOMSON: Where did you go when you were evacuated?

HOCKING: We went to ... we went to Lemnos and then, ... we went to ... that was full ... at that time.

THOMSON: The hospital?

HOCKING: The hospital was full ... it was only a very primitive hospital at Lemnos. And we went to Malta and that was also full, and after a few days we went on to Gibraltar. Spent some time there. And ... a very interesting place incidentally. The history of Gibraltar. I don't know if you've ever read it or not.

THOMSON: A little bit.

HOCKING: But it's rather a fascinate... What?

THOMSON: A little bit.

HOCKING: A fascinating place. In a way, yes.

THOMSON: And from there you went to France?

HOCKING: Oh er no, I went to England from there.

THOMSON: What, were you still ill or were you healthy by now?

HOCKING: Well no, no ... well they ... had to do something with us ... We went to England on a troop ship ... and ... they gave us some leave there, and ... we ... then came back to Egypt. On a ship. It was ... you know ... getting around a bit. And we went out to Sinai ... they were expecting the Turks to attack.

THOMSON: Was this after the evacuation of Gallipoli?

HOCKING: Oh yes, this is after the.

THOMSON: So you went to Tel el.

HOCKING: They were expecting the Turks to attack.

THOMSON: This was Tel el Kebir or ...?

HOCKING: Ah no. We went out to a place called ... well, it was out from ... It was out from, at Ismailiya a place called The Hog's Back, which probably wouldn't appear on any maps as far as I know, but ... It was a frightful hole, had trenches dug, and there used to be a sandstorm, and it would fill them up, and you'd go and dig them out again and then the same thing would go on over and over again.

THOMSON: So you were there for quite a while?

HOCKING: And there were Turks ... were supposed to attack, when they didn't. And they ... the next ... I think they did attack eventually, but there was ... just was more or less a skirmish. We'd gone by then.

THOMSON: So when did you leave for France?

HOCKING: Oh ... well, I think the end of February or something. 1916.

THOMSON: 1916. And where did you go to then? What Battalion? Were you still with the 23rd?

HOCKING: Yes, yes. We were in, came back from Marseilles ... we went to Marseilles from Alexandria, and ... up to France and spent some time in Verdun.

THOMSON: What were your impressions of France? Travelling through on the train?

HOCKING: Well it looked ... very ... it looked very attractive after Sinai. Ha ha ha ha! The Rhone Valley was a very, very beautiful place and ... I don't know whether you know it or not?

THOMSON: Yes.

HOCKING: Mm. In fact the Rhone Valley, I think the only other valley which is more beautiful in the spring is the ... the Loire. You know, down to ... through the Basque country there, it's ... along that ... wonderful old houses and chateau and things of that description there. My wife's people lived in France outside Paris. They were – she wasn't French, but she was ...

THOMSON: Oh where did you go? Or where did the train leave you? Ending up north, through France?

HOCKING: Well, we went ... we went to a place, the name of which I can't remember, but it was near a place ... near a town called Aire A-I-R-E. That's about all I can remember of that area there.

THOMSON: And where was that? Was that Picardy or Flanders? Or..

HOCKING: No that would be ... Flanders. No, Picardy was further south and, and from there we went into the line at a place called ... Fleurbaix which was near a place called Fromelles which was very prominent later. A gentleman by the name of Mackay, who came unfortunately from the same place as I did, Kyneton.

THOMSON: General Mackay?

HOCKING: Uh, the butcher. Ha ha ha! He did have, I think it was, ... people there were living in the past altogether, they didn't realise what was happening. Same as this slaughter in France. You know, later on, the Somme.

THOMSON: So you were in the line at Fleurbaix for a while?

HOCKING: Oh yes, and we went down to the Somme. And ... joined in there. But ... oh, I don't know. It's one of those things. You wouldn't ... wouldn't be much point in going into detail. There's all sorts of details.

THOMSON: What was your impression, instead of details for instance, of the AIF itself as a fighting force and of the spirit within ...?

HOCKING: Well I think it had a wonderful spirit. They were ... they had faults, of course, I think shortcomings. I think a lot of the.

THOMSON: What would you say they were?

HOCKING: Well, I think ... a lot of the officers ... some of them were very good ... generalisations, as you know ... they're dangerous things to make. At any time. Well, I was told that. Ha ha ha! Sometimes you might feel like making them. Ha ha! No. Er one of the troubles was, I think, that all those fellows they were ... you know, pre 1914, it was the ... glamour age in the military sense, in a way, and a lot of them were social ... people ... and ... they were more less interested in perhaps military balls, or something like that, and ... somebody said the only bloody face powder they ever, only powder they ever smelt was face powder. And they got out of the way if they could. And they were over there, a lot of them didn't go at all from here. They stopped here in administration posts and ... you know, training and all that sort of thing. I think that was one of the downfalls. Although there were some people who were very, very fine people, you know, who ... had, I think, military genius, I think Monash. He came out of that ... you know, came up through there. He must have been ... extremely able to, to have risen, because he was a colonel, he was over age, and given a brigade, and he ended up with an army corps, and of course Lloyd George said he would have made commander-in-chief if he could have done. So he was a man who had ... brains. He was a, I think, he was a genius. Probably the only genius Australia's ever produced. And there's our friend ... what's his name, that fellow who won that marathon?

THOMSON: De Castella?

HOCKING: Yes! Ha ha ha ha ha!

THOMSON: How did soldiers?

HOCKING: No, Monash was a man of tremendous mental ability who ... meet him you could feel that, you know. And ...

THOMSON: Did you meet him?

HOCKING: Well, I have met him, but only more or less in a cursory way, you know, and I heard him talk; I've been in a group which he talked to. But he was, I think, a most amazing man and he had tremendous disadvantages, he was ... a colonial for a start, and he was a Pole, and he was a Jew. Of course that was very bad in the eyes of, ah ... a lot of prejudice.

THOMSON: How did soldiers from other countries regard the Australian soldiers do you think?

HOCKING: Well, I ... that's another one. I think they had all sorts of ... In Egypt, I think the Egyptians looked on us as er, a pretty good source of getting a few piastres. ... I don't think they cared if we won the boat race, ha ha ha ha! They were ... I suppose ... rather hostile to the British underneath. They didn't show it very much, I suppose they thought it was better to ... keep quiet. The fellow who had the big stick called the tune. Heh! I think with French people, well they're another case really, you've got the north eastern people there, they ... you know, round where they called the cockpit of Europe. ... Flanders which ... those areas, they were, they didn't care who won the boat race, really, none of them. You take the Walloons and the Flems and all those people and mixture it is ... what, write a blasted library about those people. They probably have. Heh! But, ah ... no, they weren't very ... I don't think they were particularly ... hostile, most of them, but on the other hand they thought that they ... well, I think they had the war summed up, for what a futility it was, when it was all boiled down. What did that ever achieve? Of course they asked old Churchill, and he said, when they asked him what the First World War was about, he said, "Oh, it's a power struggle". That's all it was.

THOMSON: Did you start to feel that while you were at the war, or was that only afterwards?

HOCKING: Well, I think ... I think Bean puts it rather well in one of those volumes, you know 1916 and 1917, they're two years I knew in France very well, Didn't know 1918 much, but ah ... he said, ... "By that time the ... troops had lost all faith in the high command. Which was a terrible thing to say, you know, but it's true, because if you're, couldn't have any faith in them, all that they were doing was slaughtering people...

THOMSON: Did that include Australian high command?

HOCKING: Well, the high command wouldn't even include Australians then. Not at that juncture. In 1917. I think ... Keith Murdoch, he summed it up pretty well in the letter he wrote from Gallipoli.

THOMSON: About Gallipoli?

HOCKING: Yeah, I think you might have read that.

THOMSON: Yes.

HOCKING: You probably know a whole of a lot more about the war than I do. The First World War. Ha ha ha ha!

THOMSON: No I'm not sure. Where were you when you were wounded?

HOCKING: I was in a place called Noreuil.

THOMSON: Where's that?

HOCKING: Oh, it's down ... Picardy way.

THOMSON: On the Somme? And were you in any particular action at that stage?

HOCKING: Oh, there'd be a variety of actions, with one thing and another. They were, oh ... named, you know ... Noreuil was really a village area there. Mm, you know, Lagnicourt and so on, and Pozieres and so on.

THOMSON: Were you badly hurt?

HOCKING: Oh, it was pretty severe. Eh, I was ... I had a good deal of trouble with the leg ... and with the ... but I finally got over that.

THOMSON: And you were evacuated from ...?

HOCKING: They went to ... oh, went to England evacuated to England.

THOMSON: So you got a Blighty?

HOCKING: That's what you call a Blighty, that's right. And ...

THOMSON: Were you pleased, or.

HOCKING: ... well ... in one way, yes, but they were ... at one time they were discussing, audibly in front of me, whether they'd take the leg off or not, which didn't please me much.

THOMSON: What did you have a bullet wound or a cut?

HOCKING: I don't know what it was. I don't ... one of those things you wouldn't know. It was a through and through, as they called it, and you wouldn't know what it was.

THOMSON: Right so where did you go? Where were you in England?

HOCKING: I went into a place ... called Epsom. Err ... it was a ... County of London War Hospital, Epsom.

THOMSON: Right, and how long were you there for, very long?

HOCKING: Oh, some time. I forget now the details. I couldn't tell you that. Ah yes that's ... before that, I'd been in the Fishpond hospital at ... at, Bristol, that's when I came from Gallipoli. They put us in there, no ... a couple of us, we ... thought it was a queer dish there. They'd emptied out the lunatics ... that's what we used to call the, you know, the ... psychiatrically ... disabled, or whatever you call them now. And ... the same with the County of London War Hospital at Epsom. This was an enormous place. We were, we often wondered, you know, I never really found out what they did with the ... you know, what they did with the ... people ,, the patients, ah.

THOMSON: The patients?

HOCKING: And, of course, as one genius said, they were in the war office working.

THOMSON: Ha ha! Were you recuperating for long?

HOCKING: Pardon? Oh yes. A good while.

THOMSON: A good while. Till the end of the war?

HOCKING: Yes, yes.

THOMSON: So you were in England till the end of the war. Did you actually get much chance to go out and see much of England? And London? Or were you not well enough?

HOCKING: Oh ... not a great ... well, yes ... I saw a ... bit of it; bit of it.

THOMSON: And what ...?

HOCKING: Oh, I went to Ireland incidentally, at one time. They, they stopped you going to Ireland, because people ... didn't come back. Ha ha! Some of them.

THOMSON: Why?

HOCKING: Well, that's a good question.

THOMSON: They went AWOL or ..?

HOCKING: Ha, ha, ha! That's a good question. Yes, ah no, I went to Ireland ... I went to Scotland.

THOMSON: So you travelled around a bit, where were you then when the Armistice was signed?

HOCKING: Er ... in London.

THOMSON: And what was, can you remember that day?

HOCKING: I remember it very well, yes, very well.

THOMSON: What do you remember of that?

HOCKING: Well, there was a certain sense of, well, I don't know I suppose there was ... with the populace, I suppose you'd say there was mixed feelings of all kinds ... but one of those things, I think. I think we ... got so used to the war in a way, it seemed such a hell of a long while to us, particularly when you're young, a year's a good while. And ... I think we were stunned in a way, a lot of us, we really didn't ... really believe it could have happened. It seemed a thing that was going on into ... you know, indefinitely on and on, like the brook the babbling brook?

THOMSON: Yes.

HOCKING: But I remember going ... oh, a crowd of people had turned out in the streets and they rushed about and cheered and some of them cried and all those sorts of things, you know, a mixed grill. It was very ... of course ... a big relief to many people. I think a lot of people, perhaps ... not altogether displeased with the war. I'd say that maybe ... one of the slogans, I think, that Wilson, American President. He er ... I don't know whether he coined it, you know, "making the world safe for democracy". We thought that it was making the world safe for Fray Bentos.

THOMSON: What was Fray Bentos?

HOCKING: Fray Bentos. They were the people who made the bully beef. You know, Argentine. And it was said at the end of the war there were one hundred and five millionaires. Fray Bentos had in that huge firm. And it was said that they used to boil all the good out of the beef and then sell that as Bonox, you know, sort of extract, OXO, that sort of thing. Bovril. And the rest used to be tinned as bully beef. So they did well out of it.

THOMSON: When you were in England, after you'd been repatriated to there, did you go through any training programmes or education? Nothing like that.

HOCKING: No, no, no.

THOMSON: How long were you there before you came back to Australia?

HOCKING: I came back, I was discharged ... sixty-three years ago on Friday, just day before yesterday!

THOMSON: Really so what was that date?

HOCKING: That was the 8th, and I remember it very well. One of the dates I can 8 April, 1920.

THOMSON: 1920. So you were in England all of 1919?

HOCKING: Yes.

THOMSON: Why so long, why were you in England so long?

HOCKING: Well I was having treatment for my leg and that sort of thing, and.

THOMSON: Your leg was still crook, you weren't well enough to come home?

HOCKING: Oh I probably could have come home, but ...

THOMSON: So you spent, in fact, a couple of years in England?

HOCKING: Yes. About that time. I have spent time there since.

THOMSON: Did you meet a lot of people and make friends in those few years?

HOCKING: Oh I think to some extent yes.

THOMSON: Had you had a lot of contact with family and friends in Australia in those six years that you'd been away?

HOCKING: Oh yes, yes. I used to write and that sort of thing. The mail was very much delayed in those days. Sometimes it wouldn't arrive. Different to now, where you get things, you know, you see them before they happen, almost. Ha ha!

THOMSON: So what were your thoughts of returning to Australia April 1920?

HOCKING: Well, I came back earlier than that almost, I came back in January 1920, and I was discharged in April.

THOMSON: Right.

HOCKING: Oh I think that from what I've seen ... very mixed thoughts ... I think we were all rather confused in some ways, we didn't exactly know where we were, in many ways.

THOMSON: Do you think you were a very different person from what you were in 1914?

HOCKING: I think so. Yes, and I had different ideas I think.

THOMSON: In what way?

HOCKING: Disillusioned, in many ways. Hmm. I don't know how far one should go into that sort of thing.

THOMSON: About what sort of things were you disillusioned?

HOCKING: Well, as you say, Disillusionment in the general set-up, as it were. Just to generalise, ha ha! We thought that there was something, er, rotten in the state of Denmark, and a few other places, perhaps Schleswick Holstein, that's next door, isn't it? Ha ha ha!

THOMSON: Mm. So what were the particular things that you thought were rotten.

HOCKING: Well if you ... do you know England very well at all?

THOMSON: Not very well, no.

HOCKING: No? Well, you may have seen some of the ...

THOMSON: I've been there once.

HOCKING: ... frightful, frightful conditions in which they used to live, it's a bit better now, all that ... cramped ... I think, terrible. That's one thing which ... and the class. I think the class distinctions were, you know, beyond all reason ... not classes almost, they were castes, hah! And they were ...

THOMSON: And that struck you much more than in Australia?

HOCKING: Oh, I think so, although we do have classes here. And some people say we don't today, and I think we have, very much so.

THOMSON: Were you sorry?

HOCKING: Go ahead, go on ask me.

THOMSON: What were your aspirations and hopes for your return and what you'd do when you came back to Australia?

HOCKING: It was one of those things, you really didn't know where you were, in a way. I didn't have ... I was in a position where I wasn't quite so unfortunate as some people. I had, well, I had a family and my people were here and my father, although he had trouble at the end of his days, he had glaucoma and lost ... a lot of his sight.

THOMSON: Was this after you came back?

HOCKING: Oh yes, yes. But oh, I had a family background, which was a help.

THOMSON: You didn't have any particular plans of the sort of employment you'd like to take up?

HOCKING: No, no. Well, I didn't really know what I wanted to be, and I don't know now. Hm! Ha ha ha!

THOMSON: So you'd never had a chance before you left to develop any particular employment skills?

HOCKING: No, no.

THOMSON: Can you remember the day when you first arrived back in Australia, when the ship came into port?

HOCKING: Yes, I remember that ... reasonably well, we'd ... I think we landed at ... ship was landed at Victoria Dock, I think.

THOMSON: Yes.

HOCKING: There was a crowd there, and they had cars, and they drove us to somewhere or other in ... Sturt Street, I think it was at the time.

THOMSON: Sturt Street?

HOCKING: Sturt Street, South Melbourne. There was a drill-hall there, and you went there and got all sorts of papers and things and ... so on. But the details I don't remember the details. I can remember the salient points of some of these things, but the details, they ... more or less escaped me right through that time.

THOMSON: But your family met you on the ship?

HOCKING: Oh yes.

THOMSON: And was there a welcome home celebration for you?

HOCKING: Well ... no, I think they were probably glad to see me, but there was no actual ... ha ha!

THOMSON: You didn't have a big party?

HOCKING: He! What?

THOMSON: You didn't have a big party that day, or ...?

HOCKING: No. I didn't have any big parties, no.

THOMSON: Where were your parents living at that stage?

HOCKING: Heidelberg, and then they ...

THOMSON: Still in the same house?

HOCKING: Well, they ... built the house, you see, during the First World War, and they...

THOMSON: During the war?

HOCKING: I'd never lived there. I never have lived there ... an old house there, you know.

THOMSON: Were your sisters, had they been working by this stage?

HOCKING: Well, one sister had gone away overseas. She ... became a missionary in Korea. She was there for nearly thirty years. And she is now dead, and she was ... very known in her day. My other sister stayed home. Neither married and they were... My other, younger sister died last year.

THOMSON: And so you went to live with your family again?

HOCKING: N-no ... well, yes, I did, for a while. Yes.

THOMSON: And what did you, did you start looking for employment?

HOCKING: pardon?

THOMSON: Did you start looking for employment, or?

HOCKING: Well ... yes, yes I did. And I became, well ... what they called a supply officer's secretary. Of the 16 AGH at Mont Park.

THOMSON: What's the AGH.

HOCKING: Australian General Hospital.

THOMSON: Right.

HOCKING: It was in connection with the AIF and they were here, and ... I was there for a while.

THOMSON: Did you have any problems getting a job when you returned?

HOCKING: N-no, not a great deal, no.

THOMSON: No problem. Was there any antipathy to the soldiers coming back and looking for jobs when jobs were scarce?

HOCKING: I think, I think there was. A good deal of, a good deal of antagonism in certain quarters against, you know, I didn't have any great experience of that, not, not at first hand. No.

THOMSON: Not directly?

HOCKING: I think there was a ... of course, at that time, you may remember, ... there was a tremendous feeling about conscription at ... that time and Dr Mannix was against it, and ... he was a gentleman who ... he was one of the old school, he didn't think England was a very nice country ... and that sort of thing. And ... it was a, there were a lot of them stayed here, stayed home, who might have gone if there'd been conscription, and all that kind of thing. There was a lot of, I think there was a good deal of bitterness in certain quarters.

THOMSON: What was your, you must have been overseas during the conscription referendum. Did you vote when you were overseas?

HOCKING: No. I voted once the second time. First time I was too young.

THOMSON: Right.

HOCKING: The second time they let people who were there, they thought if you, you know, if you were in the army, well you might as well vote, I suppose, and very gracious of them.

THOMSON: Did you favour conscription, or were you opposed to it?

HOCKING: Well ... yes, I thought that it was probably the fairest thing. If you're fighting a war, it was probably the fairest thing ... that's what I thought. That's on the second occasion, I don't think that I was very enthusiastic about it, because, well, you feel as if you'd be reluctant to bring somebody there who might get his head blown off, or what have you ... there was a sort of a mixed feeling, you know, but I think I did, I voted "yes" on that occasion. I think the AIF as a whole, though, they had a small majority against it ...

THOMSON: Yes, that's right.

HOCKING: That's right.

THOMSON: Yes. So you remember that the bitterness which had begun with the conscription referendum. Did that seem to continue?

HOCKING: Pardon?

THOMSON: The bitterness which had begun during conscription referendums. Do you think that continued?

HOCKING: I think it, I think it was continued into the twenties, you know, the ... Dr Mannix went away from here, and he was apprehended by a British destroyer before he could land in Ireland. I suppose ...

THOMSON: That's right.

HOCKING: Do you know ... you seem to be well versed in these things.

THOMSON: Done a little bit on that. Yes. And he had a lot of trouble. They wouldn't let him in.

HOCKING: Not, not into Ireland, no.

THOMSON: He got shipped back. To Australia.

HOCKING: Can you remember any, I mean, did many of your friends who came back with you, other soldiers, any of them have particular problems finding work?

THOMSON: Oh, I think so, yes. A lot of them did. And of course, it was such a tremendous ...

(END SIDE ONE)

THOMSON: I'll just ask that again. You were talking about the wrench from civilian life to becoming a soldier?

HOCKING: Yes. There was, I think a tremendous difficulty in it for a lot of people readjusting. Yes. I knew one man very well, who ... I wouldn't mention his name, because ... As a matter of fact, he was a very fine soldier ... he was recommended for the VC. I knew him very well indeed and he was a sergeant, and he was reduced to the ranks, and (I've got to say) he was a bit of a lad, in a way, outside the line. He was a, they gave him the DSO as temporary Second Lieutenant, they'd made him. He, he never settled. He had bad wounds. Finally shot himself, down on St Kilda beach, one fine Sunday morning ... service revolver. That sort of thing. We that was, it wasn't altogether uncommon, there were quite a lot of suicides. I don't know where was any record of those as such, you know, apart from the general run of things.

THOMSON: What about married men, returning to their families?

HOCKING: Well, there's another thing, of course. I well, I wouldn't know anything about that at first hand, in a way, but a lot of trouble, I think. An awful lot of trouble. I think marital matters are, you haven't had much experience of them, perhaps?

THOMSON: No, not yet.

HOCKING: You know, what Bernard Shaw said about that sort of thing?

THOMSON: No.

HOCKING: He said, when he met the Almighty, you see ... he probably has done by now.

THOMSON: Ha, ha!

HOCKING: Heh, heh! He would talk about different things, and he's say, "well sex", you know, he said "it's been a terrible failure", telling the Lord, you see, he said, "try something else".

THOMSON: Ha, ha, ha!

HOCKING: It creates more hell to the square inch than anything else in the world.

THOMSON: Mm.

HOCKING: Well, ha, he the world, well, it probably might, too.

THOMSON: Did you, how was your leg at this stage were you well enough to move around quite easily?

HOCKING: It never gave me any great trouble. It's always a thing that's been a handicap. I might have, I couldn't play any very active games ... with any great success.

THOMSON: Were there any, did you get a pension for that?

HOCKING: well, I got a pension in 1938, I think it was. Ha, ha!

THOMSON: Not for quite a while?

HOCKING: ... small pension. I think it was eight and three pence a fortnight. Far too much for one person to have.

THOMSON: Ha, ha! Did you, when you came back, did you start remaking contacts with your returned servicemen friends, and join the RSL or its equivalent?

HOCKING: Well I was we did join the RSL but I was never a very enthusiastic member of the RSL, I think it went right off the rails.

THOMSON: In what way?

HOCKING: Oh, I think that's rather a long story, too. I think they were going to have Monash as President, a lot of people. I don't whether you'd know anything about it.

THOMSON: When was that? A bit later on, or ...

HOCKING: Oh, that was ... early on, I think, round about 1919, before I came back overseas. And he said he wouldn't stand unless, unless he was ...

THOMSON: Unopposed?

HOCKING: Unopposed. And they said they couldn't guarantee that, so he wouldn't, he wouldn't stand. I understand that's so. Well after that, it really ... somebody said, there are these different parties and National Party, which became the Liberal party, and the ... Australia Party or something, it was?

THOMSON: United Australia Party?

HOCKING: UAP. Yes, and that sort of thing. Well, they're all, we used to say that, no matter what your ... opinions were politically, they, the RSL, became a branch of the Liberal party. To a great extent.

THOMSON: Mm.

HOCKING: I don't know what you ever, have you ever heard anybody talk along those lines?

THOMSON: I have, yes.

HOCKING: You have? Yes, probably, well, I think it's quite right.

THOMSON: Were you, had your family been Labor supporters, before you went to the war?

HOCKING: No.

THOMSON: They were Liberal?

HOCKING: No, they were very much ... as you'd say ... you know, there wouldn't be very many farming people, Labor supporters.

THOMSON: Mm.

HOCKING: No, I don't know that I'd be anything, I suppose you'd call me a swinging voter, as far as that goes, but I have certain ideas, which nothing to do, I suppose, with the war.

THOMSON: Mm.

HOCKING: But I think, particularly with the present time, well, I don't suppose this is a publication, but I think the man who's the President of the Victorian RSL is just merely a damned disgrace. Ha, Ha!

THOMSON: Back to 1919.

HOCKING: Ha, ha! You probably know his name, do you?

THOMSON: Yes, I do.

HOCKING: Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha!

THOMSON: Back to 1919, did you, what were the sorts of things, which made you think that the RSL was really just connected with the conservative parties?

HOCKING: Well in 1919 I didn't know very much about the RSL at all. I hadn't ... Subsequently, though, they more or less were on the side of the angels, as it were. The big battalions, I think, always, and, I know Holland, he lived up just near here, I knew him personally, that was Sir George Holland.

THOMSON: Yes.

HOCKING: He was a fellow, I think, who ... was knighted, and that sort of thing. I don't know ... he was a chap with just an ordinary background, not that that's be anything against him at all, necessarily but I think he became ... rather inclined to go along with the big boys, and he went to Japan with a, I think a ship for the Liberal party, I think it was, and they gave him a huge silver tray with all their, you know, signatures on it. That sort of thing, I think it's ...

THOMSON: Can you remember much antagonism amongst returned servicemen to the RSL? In that early period? Because of its ...

HOCKING: A lot of them well, a lot of them never joined the RSL I did. I was a member for quite ...

THOMSON: Did you stay a member all the time did you remain a member?

HOCKING: No, well I, I didn't, as a matter of fact. I just lapsed.

THOMSON: When was that, do you remember when you did that?

HOCKING: Oh early in the 1930s or something.

THOMSON: Why did you do that?

HOCKING: Well, I it was one of those things. I mean, why do we do anything?

THOMSON: Ha, ha!

HOCKING: I just merely, ha, ha! Just merely went by default, as it were. You know, you seemed to lose.

THOMSON: Lose interest? Did you have a family by this stage did you marry?

HOCKING: Yes, oh yes.

THOMSON: Do you think that might have affected the...

HOCKING: Yes, well there are a lot of things like that, probably distract you. But I don't know that they have, I would say that any organisation in that regard is better than none. I wouldn't say that about the Nazis, for instance, but ...

THOMSON: No.

HOCKING: I'd say that about the RSL. I think that it is better than none. No matter, may be off the rails – they have done certain things.

THOMSON: What, things for the soldiers?

HOCKING: Well, yes. They run these carious homes. Well, I had a fair bit to do with that, I could tell you quickly, and that sort of thing.

THOMSON: Might come back to that, a bit later. What about when you returned, were you a regular attendant at Anzac Day marches?

HOCKING: Oh yes, yes. ... usually.

THOMSON: And was that an important occasion for you, getting together with your mates?

HOCKING: Well, to a certain extent. I think it's one of those things where people march, I supposed, for varying reasons, but I marched, I think, as a sort of mark of respect for those who no longer could march. And it wasn't an idea of glorification of war, or anything like that ... The very antithesis.

THOMSON: Did you ever feel that other people made it into a glorification of war?

HOCKING: I think so. I think a lot of them ... I don't know whether they still do to the same extent, but ... I think they did.

THOMSON: Did you, how long did you stay with your job at the hospital?

HOCKING: Pardon?

THOMSON: How long did you stay working at the hospital?

HOCKING: Oh about three years.

THOMSON: And then what did you do?

HOCKING: I went into business.

THOMSON: By yourself?

HOCKING: Mm.

THOMSON: What business was that?

HOCKING: Oh agency, manufacturing agency. And we had a bakery, things of that description, bakery, broking, selling and machinery.

THOMSON: How did you get into that?

HOCKING: Oh, that's another story I suppose!

THOMSON: Mm.

HOCKING: I knew a man who was more or less in it. That's really one of those things, one of those casual things.

THOMSON: And so, for the rest of your life, then, you were ...

HOCKING: One of those things. I think I ran into her in the street, accidentally, one day. I hadn't seen her for years. Tremendous trifles. Ha, ha, ha!

THOMSON: And so you remained, sort of self-employed in business for the rest of your life?

HOCKING: Yes. I only worked for two people ... One was the army in the First World War, and the other was the well, the services in the second. I was the liaison between the war organisation and the ... manpower and the services in the Second World War, associated with a chap called Macarthur, Colonel Macarthur. Nothing to do with General Macarthur.

THOMSON: No that was in Melbourne was it?

HOCKING: Yes.

THOMSON: What was your job then? What particular work what did that involve?

HOCKING: Well that was what I was doing Oh, I was involved in a variety of things. Quite a wide variety. For one thing, we had the ... we had the people from Nauru here. That's all the people you know, they'd ... the Chinese labour force. Had a hell of a job getting the right food for them. They'd couldn't take, they wouldn't eat certain things. Finally, I don't know what happened to them eventually. They were shunted up to Alice Springs to look for minerals of some sort, I think. I think that was one good way of getting rid of them. Ha, ha, ha!

THOMSON: So you were basically involved with ...

HOCKING: Yes there was, I remember, another thing was a hush-hush business in the Flinders Ranges, and we didn't know that ... that was a hell of a long while after and they, they were looking for uranium there. Which they didn't find. Some I think, but only in a small amount. ... far better if it was, had been left in the ground, I think.

THOMSON: During the depression, did you have trouble with your work then?

HOCKING: Well, yes, yes. It was a pretty thin time. Yes, but I ... I was very fortunate.

THOMSON: Mm, where were you living? Were you still living at Ivanhoe?

HOCKING: Yes, living, living here. Just in Ivanhoe.

THOMSON: This house?

HOCKING: Yes, yes, this house.

THOMSON: When did you get this house?

HOCKING: Oh, way back in the early twenties.

THOMSON: Really? So you've been here for a long time?

HOCKING: That's right. A long time. Yes. I'm the old resident now.

THOMSON: Tell me, when you were living at Ivanhoe, were you therefore a member of the Ivanhoe branch of the RSL at that stage?

HOCKING: No. ...Er, yes I was. Yes, the Ivanhoe branch. That's the one.

THOMSON: Was that a strong branch?

HOCKING: Oh, reasonably so. I think it was, what you'd call only moderately strong. And later on I ... I met a fellow, he said "you ought to join the Gallipoli legion". I'd never heard of them, as a matter of fact.

THOMSON: When was this that you met?

HOCKING: O, that's ... about, just after the Second World War. I'd never heard of them. They were formed, you know, in about mid-thirties in Sydney.

THOMSON: Right.

HOCKING: And he said, "yes, come over with me." He's a chap who was a Light Horse fellow, ex-Light Horse. He was in that ... stunt it wasn't exactly a ... charge, it was on Gallipoli.

THOMSON: Beersheba, on Gallipoli?

HOCKING: The eight and the tenth, you know, that famous charge.

THOMSON: At the Nek?

HOCKING: Yes. And they were only to pay two and six, I think, if I remember rightly. And another two-and-six or something for the badge. And that's how I came to be there. Another accident again.

THOMSON: What was the difference the, between the type of things the Gallipoli Legion did, and the RSL?

HOCKING: Wasn't any great difference in a way. I think that the RSL theoretically wouldn't be, wouldn't have been much different. It was a kind of association for social purposes, and also for welfare, and to try to help people who thought they were entitled to pensions, and that kind of thing. Well that's ... come under the heading of generally welfare, or we've done that since.

THOMSON: In the Legion?

HOCKING: Oh yes, I I've done a lot of that. I've been .. Honorary Secretary for 21 years now.

THOMSON: Have you?

HOCKING: Which is a long spell, isn't it?

THOMSON: Yes, it certainly is. How many members have you now?

HOCKING: Well, that's a thing I couldn't tell you, because half the time you don't know whether they're housebound, they're in hospital, some of them are dead, and all that kind of thing. We've got very, very few. At one time we had about ... the most we ever had once, I've been there, oh about six hundred and fifty or seven hundred. Some of them jointed up, you know, at later times.

THOMSON: Can I go back a bit to when you were with the Ivanhoe RSL? In some of my study of other local suburban branches of the RSL during the twenties and thirties, I've been interested to find that the RSL got involved in suburban local politics in various ways, over issues like preference for council employment, and those sorts of things. Can you remember anything like that happening in Ivanhoe?

HOCKING: Well, no I don't think I can.

THOMSON: No?

HOCKING: I wasn't very closely associated with them. I was more or less a nominal member, you know, you pay your sub and you, well, you were doing other things, you were earning a living and that kind of thing, you'd never a great deal of time. Some had more time.

Such people, perhaps, well, in some cases, public servants, or something like that. They might be in a better position. But if you're away from home a good deal, and all that sort of thing, you haven't got the time.

THOMSON: So you'd say then that in the twenties and thirties your memory and association with returned servicemen and so on wasn't a particularly important part of your life?

HOCKING: Oh no.

THOMSON: No?

HOCKING: Not a great deal.

THOMSON: But then, after the Second World War, when you joined the Gallipoli Legion and eventually became secretary, would it have been more important then?

HOCKING: Well, I don't know that it did, actually, in a way the reason, I think was that I became secretary by accident ... a fellow asked me to take it on for six months because he said he was ill, he had been the honorary secretary, he was ... he's now dead. But he said he would take it on till Christmas, well that was in 1962. And it's just gone on and on and on. If you try to get rid of an honorary job, you find it's very hard.

THOMSON: No-one wants to take it on?

HOCKING: No. Ha, ha, ha!

THOMSON: Can I ask you about a couple of particular events in the years between the wars? Just to see what your memory of them is?

HOCKING: Yes.

THOMSON: Do you remember the police strike in 1923?

HOCKING: Oh yes, yes. Quite well.

THOMSON: You were in Ivanhoe then, what are your memories of that?

HOCKING: Well, in point of fact, I've got a fairly vivid memory of it, in a way. I think ... first, I knew a man who participated in it. He was a police sergeant. Happened to know him by accident.

THOMSON: And he was on strike?

HOCKING: Yes, he went on strike. Their conditions were bad, I think, and they had ... of course, the Government of the day said, "well, they've taken an oath, they wouldn't do anything", you know. Which they did eventually.

THOMSON: Yes.

HOCKING: And the night they had the riots in town, and they smashed the shop windows. An uncle of mine, he's now long since dead, he and I went to a concert. We were going to a concert in town. We went in there; I don't know where the concert was, now. I think it was the Town Hall. And I forget now what it was. But he was very musically inclined, and liked that sort of thing. I went with him for some reason or other, and we saw the riots. We didn't get involved, but we saw them and they smashed windows and stole fur coats and things, and all that. It was a very rather a frightening thing. I've often thought, now, when you see that sort of thing, that sometimes that's a repetition of something along those lines might be nearer than you think. There's a huge number of unemployed. People ... now burn trains and that sort of thing. Well vandalism's here for thousands of years. It's always been in the world.

THOMSON: Yes. Did any of your friends, or anyone you know, join up as a special constable during the police strike?

HOCKING: No I don't think, I can't remember anybody.

THOMSON: No-one who got involved?

HOCKING: ... special constables, they were I think they were ... fairly ... fair number of them; I don't know how many. Of course, there wouldn't be so many in proportion to the population.

THOMSON: There were quite a lot.

HOCKING: I don't know how many there would be.

THOMSON: Do you remember some of the other big strikes later on in the twenties, the timber strike and the seamen's strike?

HOCKING: Yes, I have, but I haven't got any particular ...

THOMSON: Just vague memories?

HOCKING: ... close memories of them at all. Not, ah but I wasn't specially, you know, effected by them, I suppose.

THOMSON: What during the depression? Do you remember, or did you ever come in contact with any of the sort of right wing secret armies, like the new guard in New South Wales, or its equivalent in Victoria?

HOCKING: Yes, I knew of them. I don't know how far they would have gone, or how far.

THOMSON: Was that in New South Wales you are talking about, or in Victoria?

HOCKING: Well, New South Wales and, there were I think several different things in Victoria. I don't know how far they were organised, you know, the different ones, you heard them talking about.

THOMSON: Do you know what they were?

HOCKING: No, I don't. No, it's one of those things that I ...

THOMSON: Never really made contact? No-one ever asked you?

HOCKING: Well, anyway, it was never a vital thing for me. I thought, well they were just merely one of those, just a symptom, I suppose, of the times. I don't know how far they'd have gone if anything had happened. You can, of course, out of this sort of thing ... enormous ... you can get civil commotion, perhaps something worse.

THOMSON: No-one ever asked you to join the white army or or any of its equivalents?

HOCKING: No, no, no. The new guard ... in Sydney. I knew a man who was a member of that ... illegal organisation, of course. It was ...

THOMSON: The new guard?

HOCKING: Yes. He was a quite prominent member of the stock exchange here for a long while. His father had been one of the general managers of one of the big banks. Ha, ha, ha. I knew him quite well. I still know him, as a matter of fact. Ha, ha, ha.

THOMSON: Yes! He's still alive?

HOCKING: Oh yes. Not the father, not the man.

THOMSON: Was he an old soldier?

HOCKING: No, he wasn't. No, he was only a young fellow then, he was a young guy.

THOMSON: Do you think many returned servicemen got involved in those sorts of organisations?

HOCKING: Oh I wouldn't have any way of knowing ...

THOMSON: On a different tack, I was wondering what was your response when the Second World War broke out, having served in the First World War and been disillusioned at the end of that, how did you feel about another war?

HOCKING: Oh, I thought that it was ... one of those things, it was ... a bad matter that had to be ... gone through with again, that was happened.

THOMSON: Was the spirit at the outbreak of the Second World War anything like what you remember at the outbreak of the First World War?

HOCKING: No, I don't think it was. No, I think it was a good deal different. There might have been a certain amount of spirit there, but not to the same extent as the First World War did. The change of attitude, I think, in some ways, of course. I suppose the world changes at it moves along. Sometimes for the better, perhaps, sometimes not for the better.

THOMSON: Were your sons of the age that they could join up?

HOCKING: Oh yes, a couple of them went.

THOMSON: Did you encourage them to, or.

HOCKING: no, no, I don't know that I did. I didn't have any ... you know, they wanted to go, I suppose, and ... that was that.

THOMSON: What about later wars, Korea and Vietnam? What was your response to those? Did you feel that, well, particularly Vietnam, for instance?

HOCKING: Well, I ... I don't there's be any need to ask. I think it's pretty obvious to anybody who thinks.

THOMSON: About Vietnam? You didn't think much of?

HOCKING: Well, what do you think? I'll ask you a question. Okay. I think it was a bit stupid for Australia to be involved.

THOMSON: I'd agree with that.

HOCKING: Yes. We rushed to the aid of the winners. We thought ... "we" being the Government, of course.

THOMSON: So your attitude to conscription would have changed then since 1916?

HOCKING: Yes, well there ... I think that was an outrageous thing, that "dice of death" and all the rest. I think it's an outrageous thing. Oh ... it's ... of course you've got the same sort of thing in America now; you've got these people who are enormously involved and interested in huge armaments. I've spent some time in California, and I know a man there, he was a ... an ace in the Second World War, a yank. He married an Ivanhoe girl. Quite well. Stopped there quite a few times. ... very ill, incidentally. He's about sixty odd. But in that area, that's Silicon Valley, down where they lived, it was further down from San Francisco, San Jose. I know, know the place fairly well. The enormous ... investment there, the enormous vested interests in armaments and that sort of thing. And space ... and so on. You've got, it wasn't brought to the world to some extent, but the mess that they're in now, although I think it's, it's inevitable, and they should have a war every twenty years. It is a fact that you have to have a war, to get things moving. But what has happened, the Americans thought they could clean up Vietnam by spending about five hundred billions there, and they spent about another five hundred billions on the space race. You wouldn't see the structure of those enormous factories in where I'm talking about, down off Silicon Valley, towards San Jose from San Francisco. The enormous numbers of people involved there. They're ... this new missile, or "missal", as the yanks prefer to call it, of course, I always thought it was some kind of prayer book.

THOMSON: Ha, ha, ha!

HOCKING: But, ha! However, they know better heh! They have people behind Nixon, behind Reagan, well, Nixon too, he's still around, ha, ha! People behind Reagan, who put him into the presidency, well, they ... they stand to make, not millions of dollars but billions. They stand to make billions. And well, an old Latin saying, you know "whom the gods would destroy, they first made mad". Hm, hm! Well, they're blinded by money. And that of course is ... it's more than an important thing in America; I think it's the thing.

THOMSON: Can you see parallels between that and the situation during the First World War? With the big munitions factories?

HOCKING: Oh, I'm not – I don't think to any – anything like the extent that this American ... complex. There is ... a military complex.

THOMSON: Yes.

HOCKING: In America at the present time, they admit to twelve million unemployed. I could you say it's nearer twenty millions. Er, you've got ... the army, and the navy, and the air force, and you've got the munitions factories. And of course, you've got ... military orders for trucks, from Detroit, which is God knows in a bad enough way now. You see it's ... it's a desolate city. But you have that sort of thing. If that was all wiped out, suppose you came to a disarmament agreement, which of course, nobody will back away farther and quicker than the yanks, ha, ha ha! From signing such a thing. You'd have ... I think that would breed chaos, in America. You'd have absolute chaos. I don't whether you've thought along those lines at all?

THOMSON: Yes.

HOCKING: Yes. Well it's a very good thing, I think, to think. Although the old Frenchman said, "If you want to be miserable, think."

THOMSON: Ha, ha!

HOCKING: Ha, ha, ha!

THOMSON: Yes, that sounds good advice! Can I ask one..

HOCKING: Ha, ha! Ignorance is bliss, 'tis folly to be wise.

THOMSON: Ha, ha! One last question. I've been very interested in the last few years, there seems to have been an increase in publicisation of the First World War in terms of films and books. Films like *Gallipoli* and that television series *1915*, Patsy Adam-Smith's book, *The ANZACS* and more and more people coming to ANZAC day parades and things like that.

HOCKING: I wondered ... well ... I don't know whether they do come more and more to ANZAC day, do they?

THOMSON: I'm not sure. I went to the Dawn Service last year, and I was surprised at how many actually ... Perhaps not so much just coming to ANZAC day, but also you've got an

increased number of people joining the army, and things like that. I suppose my question is, why do you think there's been this increased interest in the First World War?

HOCKING: Well, I think possibly somebody said some old cynic said some years ago there was no copyright on the Bible or the war. Ha, ha, ha!

THOMSON: I'm not quite sure if I understand how you mean that?

HOCKING: Ha, ha, ha, ha! Well, you can write anything about the damn war, it's very hard to ... for the present generation to know what whether it's of any great, whether it had any great content or not, or whether it was just really a figment of the imagination.

THOMSON: Did you read Patsy Adam-Smith's book *The ANZACS*?

HOCKING: Well, yes, I did look through it.

THOMSON: What was your impression of that can you remember?

HOCKING: Oh, I think it was ... oh, I suppose the fact that I can't remember the impression is ... ha, ha! ... it wasn't tremendously impressive in a way.

THOMSON: Do you think it's important for my generation to know about the First World War?

HOCKING: I think so.

THOMSON: You think so?

HOCKING: I think it's important if you know about the Second World War and I think it's very important for you to know about the Korean war and Vietnam, and all those things. And what's happening now, and ...

THOMSON: What do you think...

HOCKING: And you get ... you get people who are I think ... well, what they are I don't ... you get a woman like Mrs Thatcher. She's bat blind. Bat blind. That's all you can say about her. As you can remember that Falklands thing was coming on for years and years. And she knew it. ... unless she, unless she's ... mentally deficient, which she may be, in some way. But she ... it was a thing coming on, and there you are. Well if you had the knowledge of the populace, well the English people wouldn't know much about it, Falkland Islands, what the hell. And now they're saying that it's costing them half a million per person to keep the place fortified. And armed against ... Argentine aggression, which they may do again, and they'll have the ... atomic bomb by then. Because God knows, you've got enough Nazis there. You know, people who are extremely able ... I don't know whether you ever thought of that, along there?

THOMSON: I've certainly thought about the Falklands. The interesting thing about that was ...

HOCKING: Yes. Well, you see, the Spanish people are an extremely proud people, and they are Spanish, of course ... you know, same as we are English, I suppose. In that sense that we are Anglo-Saxon or whatever you like to call it. But ... what by the way is your nationality.

THOMSON: Going back, there's a bit of Irish, bit of Scot and a bit of English.

HOCKING: Do you have any religious inclinations?

THOMSON: Not personally no.

HOCKING: You don't? No you're not a believer, are you?

THOMSON: No that's all right.

HOCKING: Ha, ha, ha!

THOMSON: Ha, ha, ha! No, I was going to say, that those people and they are, as far as I know, according to what has been published in these American papers from time to time, my son, who ought to be in New York at the moment, he subscribes to a lot of American papers. Business stuff and that sort of thing. If you want to read, get a good line on what's happening in the inner circles of America, I think the best paper of all is the United States New of the World Report. Do you know that at all?

HOCKING: No, I don't.

THOMSON: Well, it's a weekly. It can be subscribed to. It's published in Washington. But, er the people like Kennon, he wrote a series of articles on Mr X, they I think they appeared in the National Review. I have seen quite a lot of copies, but, you remember that? I think it was Kennon, wasn't it? Kennon?

HOCKING: George, George Kennon.

THOMSON: That's right. Ah yes that sort of thing. It's, it is very frightening, you know. There's a marvellous, there's some very wonderful people in America, and I think the American dream still exists you know through Jefferson ... although of course, he was a person who was criticised in his day. I've often thought it rather a wonderful thing, you know, Jefferson was an aristocrat to his boot soles, and Mr. Menzies was you know, British to the boot soles. He went there to give those series of lectures, you know, in that ... university. I thought that was an incongruity. He and Jefferson are so far apart, I think. Ha, ha, ha! I don't know whether you happen to have read?

HOCKING: No, that was before my time, and I've never really studied Menzies much, so.

THOMSON: Oh, I'm not talking; I'm talking about Jefferson.

HOCKING: Oh about Jefferson?

THOMSON: Yes.

HOCKING: I did a little bit. Well, that's much longer before your time. Ha Ha!

THOMSON: Well, yes. I did a little bit of work on the American Revolution and Independence. So in conclusion you'd say that it is important for us then to remember these wars? As a warning?

HOCKING: Oh, I think so. Very much so. Very much so. I think it's vital. In the full sense of the meaning. Because I think there's a meaning a matter of life and death. One of, one of the things I think we've got here, now ... people don't realise that if anything happened between America and the Soviet ... I would imagine that there's a North-West Cape here, Central Australia, Alice Springs, Omega down in Gippsland, and this think at Watsonia, not very far away, I think the Russians ... well, the Soviets (you could call them) the Russians of course, the Russians are in a minority ... If you go to their ... Have you been to the Soviet?

THOMSON: No. I've been to Poland, but not.

HOCKING: Poland? Well they, seem to say, that you come down to say Tashkent, for instance, from ... from India, if you ... I went there once. You ... come down the middle of sixty million Moslems there. It'd give you an idea of why the Russians are interested in Afghanistan. When they were against that border there. And they were talking about the Russians are going to Afghanistan. To think they'd invade Iran, what a lot of tripe, you've got a two hundred mile border already with the, with the, with Iran, you know. It's frightful the rubbish that's fed them. That's the intelligence that a retarded cockroach.

THOMSON: Ha, ha!

HOCKING: Ha, ha, ha! It is! It is. However, those ... places I mentioned, they would be, I should say, taped off to about a quarter of an inch, or perhaps a little less. Ha, ha! In the Soviet. You're going to have the North-West Cape, how long will that last, and this sort of thing, and Central Australia, and, and Omega, and they say it's non military, of course, it couldn't be used for military purposes. It's so ridiculous. The whole thing. We were blind as damn bats, I think.

THOMSON: Another question. How often or I've got sort of two questions which join up really as, I think, by way of conclusion: I was going to ask, how important generally did you think that your war experience has been throughout the rest of your life, and in particular, did you talk about it a lot with your family and friends? Or is it something you kept to yourself?

HOCKING: I don't think we'd talk about it a great deal. Very little. If anything. I think it has been, probably, talked about at odd times over the years, and we'd perhaps know where we stand, more or less, if there was any question of opinions, and that sort of thing. Say, I don't think you'd better publish this. They might call be a subversive, probably.

THOMSON: Do you want me to turn the tape off?

HOCKING: Ha, ha, no.

THOMSON: Leave it on?

HOCKING: No, no. Oh no, well you're not going – you wouldn't use that, would you?

THOMSON: Not this sort of thing, no. This is just interest.

HOCKING: I'd rather not have any war experiences, you know. It's, I don't think there's anything much in it. It's just a scrappy thing at best, you know, you ... you could, you could write books about it, impressions, experiences, occurrences and that sort of thing. To get a correct picture is almost impossible.

THOMSON: Well, I guess that's all I've got in particular to ask. I'll switch this off.

HOCKING: ... well it wouldn't be very perhaps, patriotic in a way, but still ...

THOMSON: Ha, ha, ha!

HOCKING: Hm, hm! There we are. Well what was you were going to..

THOMSON: Yeah, we were talking about the way one felt guilty for having served in the war and actually fired and shot people and things like that, and you told me some lines of poetry that you'd.

HOCKING: Yes, well I think there is ... with a person with any sensitivity, there is a certain felling of guilt if you look into things, er, particularly if you've gone through the wallet of ... of a man ... say a German that was killed, and saw the pictures of his family, perhaps, and his children and that sort of thing...

THOMSON: Did that ever happen to you?

HOCKING: Yes, that would wring your withers. Ah ... I think the poet summed it up pretty well in a way, he said, "if you take sword to battle and run some fellow through never mind what others tell you God will send the bill to you." Ha, ha, ha, ha!