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INTERVIEWEE: Jean Schollar

INTERVIEWER: Sue Hardisty

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Jean Schollar as a member of the Australian Women's Land Army (AWLA), 1942-1945, interviewed and recorded by Sue Hardisty on 11 April 1985 at Woodville Gardens, South Australia

So I'll just ask you about your early life, what you were doing before you joined the Land Army?

I was working in an insurance company. I'd been there about four years, I suppose. And when the war started we had friends up at Barmera and I went up there and picked grapes up there. And I got the taste of that, so the end of that season I went up to Mildura. Somebody recommended these people I was going to stay with up there. And picked grapes up there. Was it hot! Anyway, that's where I got the taste of it you see. And I went back to the insurance company. I was on holidays, you see. At the middle of 1943 I joined the Land Army. They called me up. I joined in May, I think I eventually went away in July. June or July, I forget when. But actually I was in an agricultural family. You see, my father was in agriculture. He was the Deputy Director of Agriculture and he was pretty friendly with Dorothy Marshal, you see. And between the two of them they got me into it.

So there was no problem about hearing about the Land Army?

Oh no, no. Because he used to go around a lot with them, you see. What on earth was that Dorothy Marshal used to be in before the war? The Women's Agricultural Bureau, you see, and Dad used to go round with her, you see. They lived out by us, the Marshals. We used to live at The Grange and they actually used to play golf with Mum and Dad, Dorothy Marshal.

It wasn't called the Women's War Service Council, was it?

No, that was afterwards. This was the Agricultural Women's Bureau and they used to go round to different country centres, you see. Talk to country women.

Was that what Dorothy Marshal's job was?

Yes. I think she was, might have been a school teacher before that. Got an idea she was a school teacher. She lived with her father down at The Grange, just the two of them. Lived down there.

What was her job in the Agricultural Bureau that she did?

Women's Adviser, or something. The Women's Agricultural Bureau Adviser.

So what did that entail?

Oh, I don't know what they used to talk about. Mostly country women sort of thing, I suppose, but they used to travel around the different country districts. What they used to do, I don't know. But I suppose she'd just give talks and things. Wouldn't have been any demonstrations or anything like they would give now.

And so what about your Mum - what was she doing?

Oh, Mum, she was only bringing up the family. She was a great golfer. She used to spend half her time on the golf course. She's still alive, she's 91. She had four children, two girls and two boys.

And where did you come in the family?

I was the eldest. My sister, she didn't do anything. She got married during the war, followed her husband round everywhere. One brother went to the war, youngest one did. The other one was, what do they call it? When they can't go, you know. When they wouldn't accept him in the war he was in that industry that it was compulsory that they weren't allowed to go, you see, so he didn't go. The youngest one did. He went up to New Guinea just at the end of the war. He was only about 18 or something and he goes up to New Guinea. On Christmas day he left, Christmas day. Mum was very upset about that, but he was all right. We lived at Roseworthy College. Have you heard of Roseworthy College? Roseworthy Agricultural College. We lived there, you see. Because Dad was an instructor up there before we came to town. I was only ten when we came to town. But you see it was an agricultural family. Actually, Mum's people came from Roseworthy College in the first place. Her father was the head stockman or something, the station manager at the College and they had nine children. Four girls and five boys or something. So all the girls married students from the College and the boys all went to the College and did agriculture. So we really came from a really agricultural family.

Do you remember the first day when you joined up?

I remember going away. Because we had to go through all this medical business first, you see. What on earth was her name? Doctor Violet Plummer. That's right, Doctor Violet Plummer. We had to go through all these medical tests. And the first day we all went up by train. Everybody arrived by train. All they're luggage and everything, and we got dumped out on this little tiny station right out in the middle of nowhere. Nobody knew anybody else and there we were just standing on the station there. I think somebody must have come and picked us up. I suppose somebody from the flax store picked us up, I can't remember.

Where was that?

That was Undalya. It was, I suppose, a couple of miles away, the station from the hospital, you see. And can you imagine all these, well I suppose, about 24 of us I suppose, trying to settle in to this house on the first night. And as I say, they put all the beds outside because everybody couldn't sleep inside and they got washed away the very first night so that was a great start.

So everyone piled inside?

So everybody had to go inside because the storm was all blowing all right into the bricks. But anyway they all out again afterwards and it was really a lovely spot. Round one corner it was protected, round the first corner. I don't think beds went round there, only in the summer time. One side was protected, it was quite nice.

What was your first job there?

Well, spreading flax. I think it was a Saturday, a Saturday morning we went up. I'm pretty sure it was a Saturday. So we had Sunday to sort of settle in, and Monday we had to go out to the flax. Nobody had a clue what they had to do, you see. Well, everybody came home with aching backs, you know, because you're bending all the time. It's just one big bend. Well, I was the welfare officer and I was supposed to sort of like be a foreman type thing, and I didn't know anything about spreading flax. Anyway they had a foreman, you know, the flax mill had a foreman there. But you had to sort of go and measure out all these plots that you had to spread it you see, and they were supposed to have spread it straight, you see. Half the time the lines were like this. And eventually went off and found out a bit more about it. But I used to go and measure out with the foreman with a tape. You know, run down with that block of flax here, and then so it would go to the end and spread another one out. And you just sort of keep ahead of them all the time.

Did you have a peg?

Yes, you had a peg and a string between. And they'd put the first row down. Well, that would be nice and straight. By the time they get the last one in you'd get about this much in and there's nothing down the other end. But still, that didn't matter. By the time you turned it all over, you see, you got it all out of alignment again. Then you'd go with sticks and turn it all over. And then quite a few times a storm would come up and it would blow all this flax up that we'd spread all in these rows. Put it all up like this, and put it all up against the fence, and we'd have to put it all out again and get the heads up the right way and all out in rows again. Most exasperating. You know, there'd be great piles of it and there we are trying to pull pieces out and get it back into line again.

Did you go further into the whole process of wanting to deal with the flax?

Well, out in the paddocks yes. All the rain, shine, summer rain. Although we had a big tent, you know. You had to put the tent up. That was the first thing that happened there in the day. We'd go out in the back of this freezing cold truck, no cover or anything, all in our yellow rain skins. And they'd pile us all off and we'd put the tent up, we'd put the pole up the middle and half the time the wind would take it away. You'd be rushing around trying to put the pegs round. You know what putting a tent up is like. And then they eventually set them all out. You go here, you go there, sort of thing. Then they'd follow them along. Each one would get in a row one behind the other and spread it out in the flax. Well after, I don't know long, but it rotted down a bit, you see, it would have to dry out. That's what you're doing, is putting it there to dry it out, you see. Well, when it dries on that side you have to tip over the other side for it to dry on the other side, you see. Well, after that's done you bundle it all up into sheafs, pull it all up your leg, then tie a string round it tight, and stook it all round to dry it all off further again, you see. When that's dry they just toss them on to the truck and take them away and that's the last we see of them until they bring another lot out. They'd toss all that out, toss it all up the back of the truck and there's great piles a mile high, you see, and you get to carry them here, there and everywhere and get them in the right spot.

Did you ever see flax growing?

No, no.

So it was brought in?

Yes, it was brought in from outside. Yes, I suppose they did grow it up there somewhere but we didn't have anything to do with that you see. We only had to dry it. That's all we had to do.

Was it brought in so as to be closer to your hostel?

Yes. Well, the flax mill was in Auburn, you see, four miles from Undalya. The flax mill was in Auburn. And different farmers from out there would lend you their paddocks, you see. Well, sometimes we had to go all the way up to Clare, which was twenty miles up to Clare from Auburn. That was round about the frost times and we'd get on this open truck with our rubber boots and our yellow rain coats and our black hats and we'd sit out on the back of the truck freezing. And we'd get up there and we'd be frozen up to the knees. You couldn't feel your feet and you're out there trying to work with gloves. And by 12 o'clock the sun had come out and it would be that hot you didn't know what to do with yourself and you're tossing your clothes off right, left and centre. And your feet would gradually thaw out, you know. But can you imagine these days? Anybody being sat out on an open truck on a freezing cold morning when it's minus something degrees. Well, that's what we used to do.

So what did you job as welfare officer involve?

Well, it was only sort of the foreman. Just control the girls so they get on the right job and everything. Just make sure they're doing their work, you know. Just hurry them on a bit and other than that, as I say, send Dorothy Marshal a letter everything month just to tell her what was going on. And actually it was social work as well, you know, arranging dances and all that sort of thing which we had a lot of. A lot of dances they used to have and social table tennis. Because it was such a beautiful hostel. The two big rooms, the dining room and the lounge room, all opened with the doors in between. They'd open it all up and we'd have a great big hall. Polished Jarrah floors. Well, you should have seen every time it was the dance, everybody would get down on hands and knees to polish this floor with the boot polish. By that time it was that slippery you couldn't stand on it. But they used to have really good dances out there.

And the field officers, what was their job?

Well, the field officers, funnily enough, weren't in the field, they were in the house. They were in charge of the hostels you see and do the cooking. Field officer one and field officer two. They stayed inside. And actually they were in control. They were the head, they only did the cooking and look after the house, you see. And I think every now and again, I think there was a roster and some of them, one or two, used to stay inside everything other week to do the housework. You know, do the polishing and that. I think there was a roster. Of course, I never did that, so I can't remember. But I think they would have had to, you see, with cooking for 60. Because we didn't have 60 the first time we went up, that was only, I think it was about 24 or something,

but then by the next year they'd put all these huts around, you see. And then we had 60 of us up there then. So that was a pretty big job cooking for that mob. And then we'd have to cut our lunches the next day. A roster system. Queue up to cut your lunches for the next day. They'd cut them to night before, you see.

Was your pay any different because you were a welfare officer?

I think I got a bit more, yes, yes. Yes, yes, I did. I got $1.50 a week, that's right. I got $1.50 a week from the Government.

A pound or a dollar?

Oh no, no, sorry. One pound ten. That's what I got from the Government for being a welfare officer. But then I think I got moved a bit more in the field because that was a bit of a controversy about the pay in the field because they paid them according to their ages, you see. Well, these girls were 16, you know. They were really good workers and they only got a pittance compared with the girls who were 21 you see, which wasn't fair at all. And they used to do much more work, you see, than some of those 21 year olds. Some of them were really good little workers, you know and they only got 16 year old pay, you see.

Did you ever come across the union coming in where you were working?

Oh yes, oh yes.

Can you tell us about that?

Well, I remember the union coming in there, yes. Yes, we had to join the union, that's right. Oh yes, there were big fusses.

Do you remember any details about it?

No, I can't really remember.

What the union was?

No, no, can't remember what the union was. I remember them coming out there.

And you all had to join?

Yes, we all had to join. There was a bit of a fuss about it I remember at the time.

Would that have affected your pay or conditions?

I don't think so. No, I don't think so.

What was the fuss about. Do you remember if there was anything in the headquarters about it?

No, no, I really can't remember. It was only to do with the flax mill, you see. It only came out from there. I don't think it was anything to do with headquarters at all. Just people came out from the flax mill. Really, I can't remember that much about it.

Was the union involved anywhere else where you worked?

Oh yes, I think so. Berri, I think, when we were cutting potatoes. I think there must have been a union up there, I think, but I can't remember. Grapes, no I can't remember. Casual workers, I doubt whether you had to be in a union for casual workers, would you, for grapes? I can't remember. But I should say we would have had to be in Berri because it was a pretty big concern up there.

What sort of social activities? Could you go into that a bit more, that were organised at Undalya? Or just spontaneously what the girls did?

Well, they had a bit of everything. Always something, horse riding, bikes. They used to lend us horses. Some of the residents down at Undalya down at the bottom of the hill, they're still there too. I was only up there last weekend and this friend said, "Oh, we should have gone round to see Mrs Masterton." We saw one lady, her husband was alive when they were up there and she was saying how they came down to her one day and asked did she have an egg beater because they didn't have anything really. They had to mix up the eggs with a fork, you know, and did she have a spare egg beater. So she lent them an egg beater and I can imagine how many other things that would have been missing. Phil, she would have been able to tell you a lot more about that in the kitchen. All the utensils that they would be trying to scrape together. When you've got to turn round and feed 60 people, you know, I mean you need lots of cooking appliances, don't you. There were 60 at Berri too I think.

Where did the bicycles come from?

We brought them up. I went up there because they used to have pictures sometimes on Saturday night. We used to bike in there. Because you couldn't get down to town because there was no transport, you see. You could get down but you couldn't get back. But sometimes, about once a month, we'd come back as far as Rivertown because a train would go through to Broken Hill. Be the Broken Hill express. And you couldn't get any further than Rivertown, you see, and they used to come down with the truck and pick us up. But it was against the law and they weren't allowed to carry passengers so we'd be all sneaking out of the Rivertown station and into the dark and getting onto the back of this truck in case the policeman was round there. Because they weren't allowed to carry passengers unless they were paid passengers. To sit on the back of the truck you could just imagine.

So, Auburn was the big smoke and Undalya wasn't?

Yes, yes. Oh some of them used to go down but not very many. Unless it was the holiday weekend. You could get back on a holiday weekend but you couldn't get back on an ordinary weekend. So Auburn was the place although down the bottom of the hill was the Undalya School and they used to have dances down there. They were really good dances. Clear out the school and have dances down there. But other than that you had to go to Auburn. There wasn't anything else other than Auburn.

Were there any men around?

Oh, a few, a few. All the local boys, you know, that were too young to go, they had a lovely time with the Land Army girls, all the local boys. But they were too young to go to the war, you know, and they were all round and, of course, there were some working on the flax. But, we used to have good dances in Auburn. Of course, you know what the locals would be like. They'd be watching everything the Land Army girls would do and see if they were doing something wrong which was quite often they did.

Such as?

Well, I don't know. Getting up on the dance floor and pinching all the boys, I suppose, and make trouble. The local girls didn't appreciate it too much. No, as I say we had table tennis out there. We had a table tennis tournament and dances. I remember Dad came up once up from Adelaide for the dances. Wasn't until the last one that we were there that we had this concert. We had this big concert on and this girl that I'd been staying with this last weekend. Girl, she's not a girl now. She used to play the piano, you see. She used to play for the dances up there and we got her in to play for our concert. She didn't have any transport and we didn't have any transport. So she can always remember this one Sunday morning somebody was coming back from church so they drove her to the hostel and we had a rehearsal, you see. But she couldn't get back to town again so one of the girls put her on the pillion on the back of her bike and sitting on the back of the bike with all her music, pushing the bike back to Auburn. She can always remember that, she says. Anyway, it all went off all right. The concert was packed. The Auburn Town Hall was packed. We were raising money for the Welfare Club which supplied all the bits and pieces for the hostels. You know what burlap is? Well, it's dyed hessian and that was our bed-spreads, you see. They were nice. They had them all different colours and things but that's what it was. It was a dyed hessian and they called it burlap. Well, all those sort of things is what the Welfare Club supplied by holding these concerts and things round. We had the big one up Berri. That was before I got there, but they had this big one at Berri. And see we had all this money over after the war. I think we donated a cot to the children's hospital at one stage out of this Welfare and then we had this money over. Well, I held on to it for years and years and years. Didn't know what to do with it. And eventually I got in touch with Lall and I said, "What are we going to do with this money?" So that's how it came about that we gave it to the crippled children. It was hydraulic hoists, you see. And then, of course, after that they started the reunions, you see, where as it would have come in handy for that. I suppose the kids got some use out of it. And as I say they had a plaque and everything on it so they should say they would have brought it down here to Regency Park. You see, it was down the summer time at that stage. Whether it's worn out or not by now.

What sort of contact did you have with the local community up at Undalya?

Oh, very good, yes. The local people used to invite the girls into their places at weekend. Yes, they were very good to us the local people.

What was your next job after Undalya?

Well, I was to go to Berri. No. I had a bit of time in between so I cut herbs, marjoram and that. You know herbs about this high and you've got these big cutters, you know, all along the road and when you got home you couldn't touch your arms because they were so sore. That was quite close to where I lived. It was only a couple of stations away.

Why were your arms sore?

Well the muscles, you know. These muscles that you haven't used before here. You know those big things that you go along the roadside? Anyway it was only two weeks, luckily. I didn't like that too much. Bending over this little patch cutting.

And what did he do with the herbs?

Dried them. We only cut. We were only ever cutters, you see, and he just scraped them all up and they'd put them all along shelves and dry them. And then I went to the apples, didn't I? No, I went to cherries. That was good, I liked cherries. Mr Yateman. Yes, that was only about six weeks but it was up the old Northern Summit Road. Straight up the Gool Road and the back way. And all the cherries, picking up cherries was all right but to get to them. Because they went straight up like this because that's how cherry trees grow on hills, you see. And we lived in the home.

Who did you go with?

There were two of us living in the Yateman house, I think, and there were three others living at another house that was on the property but I can't remember what their name was, the other people that I lived with. Dulcie Cooper was the one I was with and there's Lorna somebody or other. Lorna McMahon, that's right. Lorna McMahon, yes. And what was that other one there? That photo. Betty, and I met her too. Dawn, Betty, Lorna and Dulcie. Lorna McMahon and Dulcie Cooper and I can't think what on earth Betty's name was. I have met her since too, Betty. Anyway, we used to come home on weekends up there you see because it was only just up the hill. And actually being on private property I wasn't the welfare officer then. It was only when you were in a group that you were welfare officer. When you go with just a few like that, you know. They were having trouble up at Auburn or something, a lot of girls leaving. See, when we left up there they'd finished spreading all the flax, you see, and so they just left a skeleton, about a half a dozen girls left up there. And there was some strife going on up there so they sent me back again, you see, after the cherries and they were working in the mill by this time and they were doing this, whatever they call it, scutching or something. De-seeding. When you put these sheafs through the big two rollers and get the seeds out of it. And the linseed falls on to the floor and the take the sheafs away for flax and make parachutes or something out of it, didn't they?

And before that weren't there Land Army girls in the mill?

Yes, there were. There were about six of them, you see, but then they needed more. So that's how I came to go back. So then I went back again. That was two days after Christmas and I was there three months again, you see.

Do you know what the strife was about?

I don't know. I think it was something to do with the field officer up there. It was all a bit of a hush-hush about it, I think. Anyway they sent me back there and it was the middle of summer. Can you imagine with all this dirt and dust flying around in this hot mill? Of course, no air conditioning in those days. You know, in this tin shed. Gee, that was hard work. That was really hard work. And you'd get these great big sheafs, you could hardly lift them up. And then you had to push them through the rollers, you see. And we used to get all these rashes up our arms from the flax.

Was it itchy?

Oh, a lot of girls used to get dermatitis from it. And, too, when you put it up your legs you'd get all these little prickles and you're forever picking prickles out of your legs and you'd have sugar and soap in there trying to draw the prickles out. Oh yes, we really worked hard, no doubt about that.

Did you know any girls that became sick during the course of being in the Land Army or had any medical problems?

Oh yes, I think quite a lot of them did, yes, I think quite a lot of them did. Because they were coming and going all the time, there was always somebody different.

Well, as a welfare officer, what happened if someone became quite sick or had an injury. Were you in any situation where that happened?

Oh yes, well there was a local doctor in Auburn. He was always out there. But if they found they couldn't work on the flax more, they'd just get sent down to town. And if they were all right they'd send them out on a different job. But a lot of the girls couldn't take it. It was just too hard work. Go out in those freezing cold paddocks and the freezing winds. Everybody used to say, "Gosh, I bet in later life we all have rheumatism and our backs will click." It's marvellous what you can do.

Did you work Saturday mornings?

No, no, five days a week. Early, started early. Finished fairly early. We must have started at 8 o'clock. Eight until four, I think perhaps that's what it was.

So how long were you at the mill?

Three months exactly. Three months, and then I went and picked apples. I think I came down, what did I come down for? They still stayed up there, they still stayed there. The hostel was still open. I came down then I went to Berri, that's right.

Were you a welfare officer at Berri?

Yes. There was such a big crowd up there I think we had about three welfare officers up there.

How many girls were in the hostel?

At Berri? I think there were 60. They had huts, all huts. Everybody was in a hut up there, two to a hut. Yes, they were divided up. I was at Touravale and some of them went across to Lyrup. We were on potatoes but they were only on fruit cutting and that sort of thing.

What was at Lyrup?

It had an experimental orchard over there. I played tennis with one of the girls on Tuesdays and she worked there. She used to go over there.

You were all in the one accommodation?

All in the one but they used to go one way and we go the other in the mornings. But they had a lot easier job than what we had because on these potatoes, dried potatoes.

Can you tell us about that work?

They had big trolleys, conveyer belts. You know, they'd tip the potatoes on and they'd go through the process of peeling them you see. Half the time they weren't peeled and they'd all come past and you'd have to pick them all out as they went past and the smell sometimes of the rotten potato was terrible. They'd all go past the girls standing all along the conveyer belt to sort them out as they went along. And then they'd go through a cutting machine and out on to the trays, big trays and you'd have to spread them as they came through and then zip them into the hot ovens. And huge big trays - hard work. Because you'd take it in turns in going on the trays and then you'd go on the conveyer belt and then you'd go on the trays. But you'd have to be quick and spread them all over quickly and then zip them into the ovens, you know. And that was really non-stop. You couldn't have any spills there. That was a terribly uninteresting jobs that one, as you can imagine.

You didn't get any choice about whether you did the indoor work or not?

No, no. This was compulsory because they were going to the troops, you see. The dried potatoes were all going to the troops and they just had to be done. I mean I can't see that that's Land Army work but still, they didn't have any labourers so that was it.

Any other work that you did?

Yes, then we went on to grapes. From Berri, we went up to Renmark, not very far up the river, that's the next town up. And we had a hostel, I suppose it was a hostel. I suppose we had about a dozen of us there and we had our own cook who was a field officer. A field officer and a welfare officer there for the grapes. That was good. That's hard work too. Picking's hard work.

Which job did you enjoy the most?

Oh apples, I think. Apples and cherries. But on the grapes we were on piece work, you see, and you got paid by the number of buckets you picked you see. And so the slow workers didn't get paid as much, you see, which was fair enough I suppose. It's fairer than the girls on the flax with the 16 year olds didn't get paid as much as the 20 year olds.

So there wasn't a flat rate that you got paid?

No, not on the grapes, no. I should say that some of the places would be, but this was a big place. Shoals. I think he was a Mayor of Renmark or something, was Shoals. He's got a huge property up there so you can imagine with 12 girls working there. And he paid piecework but I don't know that they all did. Probably small places didn't. Yes, that's really heard work because it's so hot, you know, underneath those grape vines. Yes, well then I went back again to the flax after that, you see. Dehydration. Don't know why I went back there for five days for. Then I went back on the flax and that was in March of '45. Of course, the war finished in August. What day was it in August? I haven't got anything about going into the office here. It was only a couple of weeks before the war finished that I came down. I wasn't up there when the war finished because I remember they were way out of the town somewhere and they just picked up everything and left. Walked home because there wasn't any transport there to take them home. It was too early in the day but they weren't going to work any longer. The war was over and that was it.

Where was that?

That was in Auburn and Undalya, where they were working. They were working out from Auburn somewhere. So actually I was only in the office for the clearing up stage.

Was that from the August to the December?

Yes, yes, that's when I was there.

Could you tell us about that time or how come you were called into the office?

Because Dorothy Marshal had left. She'd gone to do something in Europe, wasn't it?

The displaced persons?

Yes, something like that, yes. Yes, and there was only Lall and Betty Ferris and Joyce Walk there. They were in the office when I was there. And we had to go and clear up everything you see. Betty and I went up to Auburn, up to Undalya and just packed up everything. You can imagine.

What did you have to pack up?

Well, everything, all the bits of pieces, all the furniture, and all the kitchen utensils - terrible job. Because the girls had just taken their things and left, you see, and the

place was just there empty. That was the only place Betty and I went to. Though Betty went out to Hectorville, too. There was one of the places at Hectorville. What did they do out there.

Turnips? Cabbages?

Yes, and peas and things like that, I think. I never went out there but they had one out there, too. And then, of course, there was all the clothes and all that sort of thing.

What happened with the clothing?

I think they sold most of it. The girls bought most of it. They could keep what they had and they could buy the new stuff they had there which was quite good stuff, you know, nice material. I don't suppose they sold any oil skins or anything like that. I don't really know what they did with the rest of it. Somebody was asking me the other day did I remember what happened to all those things. And I couldn't remember. I said, "Get in touch with Betty Ferris, she might remember." Darned if I can remember. Your mind just goes a blank sometimes, doesn't it? I can't remember what they did with the rest of those things, if they just left them to the Government or not. They belonged to the Government, I suppose, didn't they? There was all the blankets and all that sort of thing, you see. I think I bought some blankets. They were good blankets, really thick blankets.

And did you do any other thing? Was that your job or was there anything beyond that?

In the office?

Yes?

No, I can't remember doing very much in the office at all because I say it was all at the end except to enter up their books, you know. But other than that I didn't get into it very much at all in the office because I wasn't there long enough.

What about them being discharged? Did you do anything to do with that?

Oh no, only to sign their books. It's got in here that you've been discharged, hasn't it? Got a signature there that you've been discharged? Yes, I think that was about all I did except to get rid of all the records and things. Where they went, I don't know. They must have gone to the Department of Manpower, I suppose, all those records. See, we were in a bank building there, in Curry Street. But I can't remember where the papers went. Darned if I can.

Did you hear any discussions about the Land Army being a fourth service or becoming a fourth service?

Oh well, they wouldn't accept us. They wouldn' t accept us. When I joined up, see I was in an insurance company, and the manager there wouldn't recognise it as being a fourth service. And Miss Marshal wrote to him and everything and explained to him

that it was, but no, he wouldn't accept it. And they had an honour board there and he wouldn't put my name on it.

Does that mean he wouldn't release you?

Oh yes, he released me, yes. But I mean he couldn't do anything else really. But he wouldn't put my name on that honour board, no way. No, it wasn't one of the services. Well, it was years before they recognised us. We weren't allowed to do anything. We couldn't march or do anything. Now, all of a sudden, everybody wants to be in it.

Did you actually hear any discussions from above about it being a fourth service and an Act being put through Parliament?

No, no. I can't remember. Was there an Act, I don't know. No, I can't remember anything about that going through but all I remember was that the RSL accepted us eventually because they wanted more money probably. No, I can't remember it as being official as being a fourth service.

How do you feel about not being given the same benefits as the other services?

Well, I think it's a bit rough really. Because I mean to say we did as much as anybody else really, if not more. Some of those chaps, they never went out of Australia or anything and they can get benefits. It really should be, shouldn't it? Can't see why it shouldn't.

Going back to Berri, there was the Loveday prison camp nearby. Did you know anything about that or about who was either interned there or what the situation was?

Well, we went down there. Went to a concert down there once. Well, I suppose Italians, Japanese, Germans, I suppose. I don't really know who was there.

Did you have any social contact?

I only remember going there once and had a concert down there once. But really can't remember much about it.

Was that the soldiers or people inside?

Well, I think it must have been the soldiers. I can't remember any prisoners.

Do you remember any of the internees or prisoners ever coming to the tea dances at Berri?

No, no.

And were there any other workers on the places, say at the grapes?

Oh yes, yes.

Aside from yourselves?

Yes, yes. They had locals. And on the flax, they had locals on the flax.

Any other people?

Some of the local girls, and of course the men. They used to do all the tossing and the really hard work. They used to put all the nodes on the back of the truck. They had a few local girls, not many. Half a dozen I suppose would be about the most. Yes, of course, a lot of Land Army girls married boys from the river. A lot of them married up there. A few up at Undalya, too. A few up there that married local boys. But a lot of them married up the river.

Did you feel a lot in common with the other girls who were in the Land Army in terms of did they have sort of similar or different backgrounds to yourself?

Oh well, yes but you never really heard much about their backgrounds, not really. No, we were just one big happy family. You didn't worry about where they come from or anything else. But you never really heard much about their backgrounds.

Did you feel there was much difference in the background?

Oh yes. Well some girls came from the country, some come from the city. But, oh yes, I think there was a lot of difference but they all mixed up well. And we had a pin up contest at Berri. The manager, Mr Morris, was the manager of the Touravale where we lived and his son was away at the war. And he wanted a pin up girl photo. So everybody in the hostel had their photos taken and they all sent away to him and he had to pick up somebody who was going to be his pin up girl.

Was it Desmond?

I can't remember what his name was. I know Kath Maddox won it. I remember she won it but I can't remember what his name was. Could have been, I don't know.

So, do you remember the day that the war finished?

Well, actually I wasn't working. I was on leave. I must have gone on leave before I started in the office. See, that's because I didn't have anything to do with sending any of the girls out anywhere because the war was over. I was up at Angaston with Mum, as a matter of fact. You see Dad was in the agricultural department – he used to travel around - and he dropped us at Angaston while he did all his business and we just stayed there for a few days. And that's when the war was over while I was there.

Did you have any ideas during the latter part of being in the Land Army about what you might do when the war ended?

Oh well, yes, I think I was going back to insurance again. But anyway I didn't to start with, I went into the public service and into the children's welfare department. And, of course, for four years I hadn't done any shorthand or typing or anything and I had

to go back and do the reports on the children. And the welfare officer, she used to come out a rattle this report of to me and I'd write it down in shorthand and I didn't have a clue what I was writing. Hadn't done shorthand for so long and I couldn't read it back. That was terrible. I was there about three months, I suppose. Actually I wasn't supposed to be doing that. That wasn't what I went in for but the other girls were away and I was supposed to be the secretary to the Minister there. I had to do this in the meantime, you see. Darned if I could read my shorthand. So anyway, I had plenty of insurance experience, you see, so this chap eventually got in touch with me and said would I come and work for him. He was starting off insurance in South Australia, you see, so I got out of doing this welfare.

You didn't think about going and doing any more work on the land?

No, no, no, I'd had that. No, you just thought that's your duty during the war and as soon as the war finished, you know, back to normal.

Would it have helped you in readjusting if there'd been some refresher courses?

No, I don't think. I just wasn't interested any more?

I mean like in your shorthand?

Oh well, yes, probably, yes, but I just rushed straight into it, you see. I was forever going to the girls, "What do you think this is?"

Can you remember any girls sort of being dismissed from the Land Army for any particular reason?

Oh I think there were, yes, I think there were.

Would you be able to tell us for what reasons you could get dismissed?

No, I really can't remember. I think there might have been a bit of drinking going on at one stage but you hate to name names.

I was just interested in the reasons why.

That would be about all there would be other than that, having a drink about the place. I can't remember anything else that you could possibly be dismissed for. But I think there were a couple that I remember, but what it was all about I don't know. I can't remember putting in my report anything like that.

What about relationships with the soldiers and that sort of thing?

Well, we didn't see many soldiers, you see. Anybody that was coming back, you know, they'd come back to their property. I suppose they would have seen a few in Berri, I suppose, but other than that, very few. You could count on one hand the number that came back on leave while you were there.

Did you tend to go out on group outings?

Oh yes, oh yes, everything was in groups. Because, as I say, there was no transport otherwise, you see. Of course in Berri everybody used to go their own way. A lot of them used to go to properties during the weekends out there. It was different up there because you had a bit of transport about the place. They used to go to Renmark, you know, to catch the train up on a Saturday and come back on a Sunday, or something like that, that was quite fun. But up at Undalya there was no transport. You just had to wait for somebody else or ride your bike.

And you had a special name for BBQs there?

Did we?

Chop picnics?

Chop picnics, oh yes, nobody had never heard of a BBQ until after the war. No, it was always a chop picnic, oh yes. Yes, they were very good to us the flax mill up there, used to take us out. Chop picnic, oh yes, there was always a chop picnic. No, BBQs didn't come in until after the war.

Do you feel the Land Army effected your health in any way?

I don't think so, although we thought at the time that it would, you know, because you'd have rashes all over, but it hasn't, no, I'm sure it hasn't.

Was there any other work you did where you did get skin problems in the short term?

Well, I didn't get them very much. I used to get a heat rash. There was a heat rash because you'd get from the freezing cold to the boiling hot in the middle of the day I used to get a heat rash then. But a lot of the girls couldn't take the flax, you know, it was just one continual dermatitis and they just put them out on other jobs or put them out all together, discharge them all together. But I don't think, you know, you get aches and pains now you wouldn't know whether to blame the Land Army or what to blame, would you? Old age.

And you know we're making a film. I'd be interested to know what you would like to communicate with people about the Land Army in that film? What things would you like to see put into the film?

God, I don't know, I don't know.

What did the Land Army mean to you? If you had to select out certain things to communicate with people who hadn't heard of the Land Army like kids in school or the general public, what sort of elements would you choose out to highlight?

Just that nobody sort of recognised us in our days when the Land Army was on. It was after years, like in the ANZAC Day, you march your little group and they clap

and they clap and the Land Army comes along for some reason or other. In nowadays nobody would even know the Land Army even existed. Well, I don't know, the kids these days, they wouldn't know what the Land Army was, would they, really? The kids these days, they wouldn't know what to expect. Just hard work. I suppose we just thought we were doing our duty.

What reasons do you feel you joined up?

I just liked to be outside and I was working in the insurance company and they were all going off to the war, you know, everybody sort of had a war effort to do something for the war effort and I didn't want to join the army. And, as I say, I'd been up a couple of times grape picking up the rivers so I thought, "Oh, well, that's what I'll do." Then I couldn't get into it quick enough.

Was there much consciousness that there was a war going on at the time, you know, when you were out doing things?

I don't think so. You'd get a paper and it would just sort of slide off. You seemed so far away when you were out in the middle of nowhere and you think there's this awful war going on overseas, but it really didn't affect you that much.

Was it the subject of discussion much amongst the girls, do you think?

No, not much. They'd sooner talk about the latest film that they'd seen. They didn't really talk about the war much at all. You'd get The Advertiser and you'd read how this awful battle's been going on, but it would just slide over. I really don't think that they thought about it that much.

Were you writing to anybody away?

Yes, I was engaged at the time, but that fell through. Yes, you know, I sort of was forever looking for letters there to find out what was going on.

Do you think that was sort of typical of the times, you know, the ups and downs?

You know, as I say, I was forever looking for letters but as for worrying about what war who was fighting where, sort of went over your head.

Is there any other things you'd like to say?

I don't think so, I can't think of anything else.

Anything funny you remember?

Well, I suppose there were plenty of funny things. Like that girl, heard the stories about Lucy, have you?

Lucy Ives?

Yes, I think she was Lucy Ives. She's Lucy Brown now. She used to write to this pen friend and his name was Frank Brown. And she'd never met him - he was only a pen friend - and every time a letter would come from him everybody in the hostel would read it and it used to be the laughing stock about Lucy and her Farmer Brown. Well, she married him eventually. And they're still married and live over on the west coast somewhere. But it was always a big joke about Lucy and her Farmer Brown because everybody used to read these letters and she ended up by marrying him.

> You wouldn't be prepared to sing that song for me? Just the first verse or a few lines?

No, not my voice. Where is it?

"The Land Army girls are happy,
the Land Army girls are free.
The Land Army girls are happy when out upon the spree.
They never never quarrel,
they never disagree,
three loud cheers for the Land Army girls and three for liberty."

Do you want to next verse?

> Yes.

"We are the girls in khaki drill, the true Australian type,
we are the girls who work the land from morning until night,
we never drive a tractor or cultivate the land,
milk the cows or feed the pigs,
Army life is grand.
We spread the flax in winter time,
and work out in the rain,
we will show the Aussies how to grow the grain.
We are doing our bit to fight for liberty,
Three loud cheers for the Land Army girls,
and three for victory."

> That was good

If I had a copier I'd give you a copy.