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INTERVIEWEE: Win Dodsworth

INTERVIEWER: Sue Hardisty

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SUMMARY:

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Win Dodsworth as a member of the Australian Women's Land Army (AWLA), 1942-1945, interviewed and recorded by Sue Hardisty on 13 April 1985 at Urrbrae, South Australia.

…lived all my life at Batlow [Adelaide]. I was born here [Adelaide], and brought up here and lived here. And you know, I was over protected and everything else. But my sister and I decided that we'd join the Land Army, which we did. And we sent up to Mr Holmes. Kingston-on-the-Murray. It was very hot. Oh, dear it was hot.

Where had you heard of the Land Army?

Well, I think it was just, you know, advertised in the paper. I really don't know how we got onto it. But my sister might remember more than I do. She's younger than I am. But I think, you know, it was advertised that they needed people to join the Women's Land Army, to go and do the work the boys were leaving behind. So off we went. And we sort of all arrived at this big sort of farm house. And we were all sorts of shapes and sizes and different kinds of girls. And sort of hot and tired. And I remember we had the bosses bed, my sister and I. They got turned out of their room. And I think the married daughter lived in the home next door. And there were, you know, various beds all round us. We shared these rooms, beds. You know, it was a lot of fun. And first I thought, "Wonder what we're going to get for dinner", you know. And, of course, we're all laughing about the Army and everything, and low and behold we had stew for tea. And of course everybody had the giggles. And the poor woman didn't know what we were laughing at. But we all sat around this great big table. When we got to know them very well, they were telling us their… when they saw us they sort of took one look at me and everybody said, "Bet she goes home first. You'll be gone tomorrow." I was the only one that didn't miss a day through heat. It was, actually we had wilted sole shoes, and we had to send home for wool socks to be able to bear to stand on the hot sand it was so terrific out there. Beautiful red sand everywhere.

Were you issued with your uniform before you left?

No. We went in our own clothes. No, we didn't have any uniform or anything. I can't even remember who paid our fares, whether we paid them ourselves, or just what happened, but we certainly didn't have a uniform. Cause I turned up in a pale blue linen suit, with Edwardian style hair, you know, all brushed up on top. No wonder the poor souls nearly had a fit. When we were introduced to the, you know, the seasonal pickers, you know, filthy dirty and they didn't speak the Queen's English, or King's English in that day. Oh, golly gosh, I thought "No wonder they thought that I'd be gone for the first part." But, oh, Mr Holmes was a dear old chap. We used to be working away there, and oh, "Come and tell us some

funny stories Mr Holmes." He had the most endless store of funny stories, and we used to, you know, be laughing our heads off most of the time. It was really great fun. And, you know, as much as we laughed, well, the harder we worked. It was good. The first night we got home we all demanded baths. And it was a chip heater, and River Murray water. It was like liquid mud. You know, it looked worse than what we were, but we got in it and had our bath. But it was a bit of a circus, you know, all these girls all in the one bath. The son was married, and his wife, they used to work out there too. They were very nice. We had a lot of fun with them. We had the same name, we were both Win's. We both used to answer. Oh, from there I think, we went to… for… There was just nothing to do. There was a ferry there at Kingston on the Murray, and the ferryman used to let us ride back and forth on the punt for our amusement on a hot summer night. And the mosquitos, they'd just about carry you off. Then we went to Hobcroft's, I think it was, at Renmark. Oh no, we went to somewhere else first. We got put off a bus in the middle of nowhere, and there was no one to meet us. No anything. And I think we made our way into town, and finally we were taken out to some place. But we didn't stay there very long, because I don't think we should have been sent there in the first place. And then Gwen and I went to Hobcroft's.

> I was interested as to why you said you shouldn't have been sent to that place?

Well it's funny. Just vague recollections. When we got there, there was no preparation made for us whatsoever. And I think the wife was a bit strange. And I don't know whether they had a strange daughter in the house. We were asked not to say anything about it. When we got back to town Miss Marshall, who was in charge of it all, sort of congratulated us. She said she couldn't believe… like we were asked not to say anything about it, and we didn't. I think they were quite a well known family in Renmark, or something, or had been. And, of course, nobody mentioned it.

> Was it common in those days if you had mentally retarded children, to sort of lock them up?

Oh, yes. Well, of course, I never had any experience, personally. Except that there was… we were all just… there was no food, and then when we finally got some it was, I don't know, just bread and the grapes that they throw away. And… a buck… something or other as I try to recollect. And then the man just sort of stalked through the middle of us and got a gun and went outside to fire a round. And we were all sort of, you know…

> How many of you were there?

I think we were still the group at this stage. And then we went into, it was Renmark. I'm a bit vague on how we got from there to, you know, where we were supposed to go. I know we were in the township, and one of the girls got hysterical.

As a response to that..?

Yes, sort of with the heat, you know. It was terribly hot. And the heat and everything. But then Gwen and I were sent out. Oh, there were a few other girls, but yes, that's right there were a few of the other girls too, we were sent out to the Hobcroft's, but we boarded in Renmark at, dear old soul, Mrs Ingeson, I think her name was. And we used to catch the bus out every morning.

What time would that be?

Oh about, I think it was 6.30. Yes, it was 6.30, you know, it wasn't any later anyway. I think we had to start work at 7. And you know, it was beautiful. It was a beautiful time of the day, getting up there and that. But, of course, we intrigued the… coming home on the bus. I made overalls for myself, and blouses for my sister and I, and of course, we always wore gloves when we worked. And we had topees, topees, you know, those funny summer hats, and we always wore gloves to work.

You don't mean turn-ups, do you?

No, no, like they have in safaris. Topees, I think that's how you pronounce it. You know, they were usually white only these were only imitation ones. But you had to wear hats out there. You couldn't work out in the sun. And we used to drape big clothes, soaked in water, down out backs, you know, to help with the heat. One of the.. cause the normal pickers, seasonal pickers, I don't think they ever bathed from one week's end to the other, or changed their clothes, and one of them looked at me one day in the bus, and she said, "You don't do any work." I said, "Oh, yes I do." "How do you keep your hands clean?" And I said, "Oh, I wear gloves when I work. I always have." "Mmm." She wasn't at all impressed with me, I don't think. But the people told us after they'd rather have us than the normal pickers that they used to get. But we had fun on that. The Hobcroft's loaned us to.. there was some Greek boys had their vineyard next to them, and we'd got the Hobcroft's crop off before they thought we would have, and they loaned us to.. I can't remember their names. Well, I can remember one, Archie, was a brother to the owner, and ... My sister might remember their names, but I don't. And, oh, we used to have fun there. They were very hard workers. Cause they really weren't impressed with having women to help with work. And they weren't at all impressed that we could keep up with them. So, one day I was working opposite, we used to work one either side of the vine, and he started

showing off, you know, and working my side. So I'd just simply move up and work my side and then he'd just simply have to do his side. And that didn't impress him at all. And I sort of finished at the end with him. But then, of course, I have a most hearty laugh, that they, "Come on, laugh some more, laugh some more." They couldn't speak English very well, but, you know, what's so intriguing about my laugh. And I think it was just someone was happy enough to laugh. That was all I could put it down to. Oh, of course, living in Renmark there, some friends called in to see us, and we were washing our hair in a bowl on the back verandah. And we were down the street one Saturday, and I was sudden… I said "Mother!" My mother had only come up to Renmark to see, because we'd never been away from home before, although I was a married woman. Well, I'd only been married for a week. And when Mother saw us, she said, "Oh, whatever have you been doing, you're filthy dirty!" We said, "We're not dirty, we're sunburnt." Because we burnt through long sleeves and everything. A nice mahogany shade. Fortunately we both tanned, we didn't, you know, peel and blister. And we said, "No, it's just sunburn. It's not dirt, Mum. It won't wash off." From, oh yes, that was when we were loaned too, to the other neighbour, the other side. They had militia boys. And everybody else's crop was off, but theirs. And, of course, Mrs Hobcroft she moaned the whole time, "I don't why we had to have Land Army girls. Why couldn't we have militia boys?" you know. So in the end they had to lend us to their neighbour, who had the militia boys, to get the crop off. So we went one up in their estimation over that lot. Of course, the militia boys were just up there to have a loaf. They really didn't… of course they were only youngsters really. They didn't know what it was all about. And then we came home, there, I think. And then there was a factory. We lived on the Glindburn(?) Road, well, it's Glindburn Road now, it was called the Glind Road in those days. On the corner of Glind Road and Brookside Avenue, my parents home, where we lived. And there was a factory opened up, oh dear, I can't remember the… just several miles down the Glindburn Road, a mile and a half I think. And I think it was called the Roebourne? factory, and they also had olive groves. You weren't allowed to… Bumber… weren't allowed to go and work unless there was a certain percentage of outside work. And so we went there and picked the olives and then we had to pack them, pickle them in the factory. And then they started, they were only just establishing this factory, and then we used to have go along. Then they started dehydrating potatoes and apples for the troops, and we were put on this. Of course, I'd never been in a factory before in my life. While we went in there, the permanent staff, I could see, they were absolutely terrified. There was a Foreman, and the two they were partners. Mr Robinson, I can't remember the other man's name. Gwen probably would, because she continued on there. And they had to stand up around this table for eight hours a day, on this freezing, it was winter time by this time, freezing cold on concrete. And they were elderly women. And so I said to them, I said, "Don't you get tired standing?" - "Oh, yes," you know, "My feet ache." So I go around and got a couple of cases and some planks and made some seats, and we all sat down to do our work. The Foreman came along,

"You're not allowed to sit down. Up you get!" And I said, "Well, why not? Why can't we sit down? We can work just the same." - "You're not allowed. You have to stand up." So I said, "Right." So I went straight to the owner and I said, you know, "The Foreman won't allow us to sit down." I said, "I see no reason why we can't." And so I said, "Those women are elderly", and I said, "They're tired by lunch time." I said, "They won't be able to do half the work that they're allowed to sit down in comfort." Hardly comfort on the plank. "But if they're allowed to sit down, they'll be able to work much better than standing up." And he said, "Oh, yeah." So that was all right. And then, of course, we were laughing and chatting, and you know, the permanent staff would sort of, half whisper and answer to us, and go on working. I couldn't sort of work out what was the matter. They were terrified. You know, they weren't allowed to talk. So I thought, "Well, that's ridiculous, so I went back to… What that Foreman did, I wouldn't know, except stalk around looking at us, and having an affair with one of the lasses. But I went back to Mr Robinson again, and I said, "Look, we're not allowed to talk now." I said, "Look if we're happy and working", I said, "As fast as we chatter, our hands go." And I said, "It's much better for everybody if we enjoy our work. We'll do much more than if we have to stay there in rigid silence." Got my way again. We had a wonderful time, you know, we used to laugh and joke. You had to, to sort of keep on, you had to look on the funny side to keep going.

Where was that factory? Was it Hectorville?

Yes, that's right. Yes, it was. Hectorville. I go blank now in my old age. When I want to think of something - blank. Yes, I think the factory's still there. I think it's a very large one now. I haven't been down that way for years. But, I still lived at home because I was married one Thursday night, and my husband up and left for Overseas the next Thursday night. When we got married, of course, he wasn't going away that soon. And he was twelve months in Malaya, and then he was in the fall of Singapore, and then I didn't hear anything more for three and a half years. I didn't know it he were dead, alive, or you know, minus his arm or a leg, but he was listed as POW Missing. And then I got notice that he was alive. But the card from the … it was about eighteen months old. And you never, I think I got three, you never knew whether they were alive or dead at the time. And they were only phrases, and they could tick "I am well" or "I am not well" or they weren't allowed to say they weren't well. That sort of thing. And it was small comfort. But it wasn't until after the bomb went off that we got word that they were alive. And actually my husband was only forty miles across the bay from that. And while I was looking for the things for Simon, I found a letter he'd written to me. They brought them out through either Hiroshima or the other, Nagasaki, you know. And he said, "The devastation just made my blood run cold. The way …" Of course, everything was censored, and he said, "I think I'm allowed to say now." He said, you know, it was shocking coming through there. And really it wasn't until, of course the very morning I go out, he rang up from

Sydney. They'd been landed at Sydney, and they were brought home on aircraft carriers. Course they were very weak. And they brought them home on these aircraft carriers to give them time to pick up. Build them up on good food. And also he had to tranship on the edge of a typhoon from one aircraft carrier to another. And they had to go down, you know, net ropes, and up the other side. And they were told to jettison everything, the Americans would give them. Well, he brought me those two vases, he managed, Japanese ones, one each end there, had them in a little wooden box. And they were told to jettison them, but he strapped them on his back. And he brought me a present for each wedding anniversary. He'd sent me one, and it got to me before they were taken. He was in Changi too. And he brought those home to me, all the way. He'd said he traded an army blanket for them, after the war. So they have quite a story really, which is digressing from the Land Army.

No, it's interesting, about the war.

Well, because this was the background, you know, I sort of was there and I think, you know, I joined that to do something. I would have liked to have joined the Services, only I thought my husband might take a dim view of that. If I was anywhere there were males. But the Land Army, I didn't see how he could quibble at that. And, of course, he said, "I looked for you in the Islands. I was sure you'd be in the Army." I said, "Oh, well I would have been, if I thought you would have approved, but I didn't think you would."

So when were you married, and when did your husband..?

I was married on 16 January 1941. And he didn't come home till 18 October, 1944.

And you joined the Land Army?

I don't know. It's on that book. I don't even know myself. December '42. That's right.

So what were you doing between when your husband left, and you joined the Land Army?

Oh, I'm sorry it makes a noise. I was a dressmaker. I had a business of my own. And that got a bit much for me. And, of course, my mother, she always had a weak heart, very high blood pressure, and I was always called home when anything went wrong with Mum. And, sort of, I continued on working, but then I thought, you know, it was a bit useless.

Were you working from home?

No, I was still living at home. No, I still lived home. My parents had a large home. Of course, they wouldn't have agreed to my… well, you know, never thought about going away. It all happened, you know, so.. Although I'd gone to school with my husband, I'd known him, you know, for eleven years before we got married. It wasn't a shotgun affair or anything. I've been married for about forty-five years, and my daughter's thirty-eight I think. She was born in… I was married in '41 and she was born in '46. And my son in '48, so… But, of course, when the boys came back the doctor said, "Oh, you know, they probably won't be able to have children. Or if they can it will be years." But it didn't take my husband long. When I was sitting… It was funny, I knew, next morning I said, "Oh, I think I'm pregnant." He said, "You can't be." I said, "Well I am." He said, "Oh, no you're not." I was. So, and then the peculiar attitude. People thought because he'd been in that, there'd be something wrong with the child. The weirdest things people would say to you. I went to, you know, our dear old family doctor, and he said, "Look, you're husband was a fit physical specimen." I said, "Yes." "There's nothing wrong with him, and there's nothing wrong with you", he said, "there's no reason why there should be anything wrong with the child." Which there wasn't. So that, but, oh dear, you know, horrified. I don't know whether they thought it was going to be Japanese or what. Of course, that, now I've got off the track again. You asked me..?

No, that's interesting because it's people's attitudes at the time.

Yes, I suppose that's sort of what makes you do these things. Then, apparently, according to the book, I was only in there twelve months and twenty-four days. I got ill. I think perhaps everything fell in on me then. Oh, that's when Bob went missing. Well, Bob had been missing.

When did you hear that? Where were you?

I was home, at home. A telegram came from the Department of Defence, Defence Department. Yes, by telegram. But they couldn't tell us anything, just that he had been listed as a POW. And he was in Changi. And then he was put in the hold of a boat, and they were battened down and taken to Japan. And they were made to go down in the mines, and work down in the mines. And, oh, before, Bob had picked up a few… learnt Japanese, and when they discovered this, they made him in charge of the other boys, you know, and he had to… he was responsible for getting a certain number of men to work down in the mines. You know, to sort of try and to protect the sick ones, and you weren't allowed to be sick or anything. Of course they'd come from working on Changi, you know, and that. When he was there, you know, when the bombs fell, they didn't know anything about it, but they said every time there was an air raid, they had slit trenches, and they made all the POWs go down the slit trenches, and they'd train machine guns

on them. And they said if they ever set foot on Japan, they'd just machine gun them all, so that there'd be no-one alive when they got there. But, of course, they dropped the bombs, and they saw the reflection, or something, and they knew. But the Japs didn't tell them anything, but they suddenly realised that the guards, officers, had disappeared, and they were left to their own devices. So they commandeered cars and bicycles and anything they could, and went off touring Japan. And Bob said some of the most terrible guards and that were dealt with there and then. And then he said there were good ones and bad ones, the same as, you know. He'd had some that had been very good to him. Some that had been terrible. When he was in, don't whether it was Winsum? Prison in Singapore, or Changi, he used to go… They had their Red Cross parcels in a building right next to their compound. .They were separated by barbed wire fence, and they weren't allowed to have their Red Cross parcels. And they had boys dying for want of decent food and things, and they knew that they were in their Red Cross parcels. And Bob and a couple of others used to crawl out under the wire and raid the Red Cross parcels. They got caught one night, and they tied his hands behind his back and made him kneel on split bamboos, out in the open, and anybody… you know any of the guards or anything went past, well, they'd pick up big bamboos and bash him wherever they felt inclined. But they never took… he had all his shirt stuffed with cans and food and things, and they never took that away from him. He was paying the penalty for that. It was his. Although he'd stolen it, he'd paid the price, and that was his. He was able to give it to the boys. But that was one of his experiences.

> Were you at home? What date would it have been when you got that telegram?

That I can't remember, but I've got the telegram there. Do you want to know? That was after. Twelve months was the fall of Singapore. Of course, they were taken prisoner immediately. But it was some time. Do you want to turn that off?

> Yes, if you'd like to get the telegram. Oh, it's.. So you were at home, and you were working at Hectorville, were you, at the time when you got the telegram?

Yes, yes.

> Must have been...

Whether I was still, no I don't think I did. I think I was home. I'd got out of the Land Army, and was living at home with Mother. Oh, in the meantime they'd brought the Eighth Army back from, the Eighth Divvy, back from Egypt, Middle East, and we had six Officers billeted in our home. That's right. I hadn't heard anything then when they were there, because they did all they could to, you know,

see if they could find out anything for me. So it was after they'd gone that, it must have been twelve, eighteen months, I suppose, before I really heard that he was still alive.

> That must have been a terrible time for you?

Well, it was. It's sort of, it's there, and you have to cope and that's it. Yes, that's right, twelve months. It was three and half years. I didn't know whether he was dead or alive until I got the telegram to say that he was on his way home.

> So you were actually in the Land Army when your husband was missing, was that correct?

No, he was missing, no, he was a POW. It must have been… I joined the Land Army after he'd gone missing I think, as I remember it. I don't remember it very well.

> Well, that must have been a bit of a barrier in terms of socialising with the other girls.

Well, cause I had my sister, and my brother's girlfriend at the time, although he didn't marry, he met somebody. He was in the Navy. Met somebody in the West and married her. But, and that, sort of. And the girls from the Church, we used to go around together, you know, go out to dinner together, or visit one another's home. It was all, you know, females, females, and more females, at that time.

> It would have taken the edge off? It seems to me that a lot of the women that I've talked to, the younger women in the Land Army, had a lot of fun. But it must have taken the edge off life for you at that?

Well, I always, I wasn't free, you know, to… Although we, because as I said we had a large home, and my parents had their name down at the Cheer Up Hut, and anybody that didn't have anywhere to go for the weekend, had leave and didn't have anywhere to go, because a lot of them didn't have very much money to spend anyway, they'd come out and stay with us. And we'd have groups. I remember one group, there were four Western Australian soldiers, we had them. They stayed with us for a week or more I think, and you know, we used to wait on them hand and foot and that, and sort of, you know, you had fun with that. And one of them turned, had his, can't think whether it was his nineteenth or his twenty-first birthday, but, I think it was his nineteenth, cause they were only young. And I made him a birthday cake, and I had to go out and they wouldn't cut it until I came home. And, of course, I was always, sort of, "the married woman", you know, I was the big sister. And it was funny though, one of them picked up my serviette ring, which Dad's partner had given me, marked "Winnie 1915", and looked at it

and said. "Oh, we thought you were older than that!" One of them blurted out, "We thought you were 4..." you know. I was 27 or 8, I think, but I was very staid. One of those very prim and proper. As I said, we were never allowed out, sort of, we led a very sheltered life.

Could you tell us a bit about your life before you joined the Land Army?

Well, of course, it was the Depression time. My father had a business. We had a big home and that, and we had food and all the rest of it. But his money went in keeping the works going, and his men employed as best he could. Of course, I used to help Mother most of the time. Because, as I said, she had a bad heart, and very high blood pressure. And then, sort of, my sister, she came home too. Then I decided 1'd open, I had learned dressmaking in the meantime.

Where had you done dressmaking?

At Mrs Chatfield. She used to, was in at the Masonic Chambers. Used to give lessons for, you know, there. And I decided to open my dressmaking business, which I had a local shop down there. Well, I had more fun than anything. It was lovely. Because I loved clothes, and I loved the work. And then, sort of, when I came out of the Land Army, and I was home helping Mum, Mother's cousin was the head of the Melville Work Room, Charles Burkes it was called then, and she couldn't get any, you know, qualified people to work for them, so I wasn't doing anything, I was just home with Mother, helping her and that. And she rang me up one day and said, "Would you like to come and work for me?" And I thought, "Oh", you know, and I thought, "Oh, I'd love it." And I'm blessed if the next day G&RW Wills, were a big factory, they rang me and said would I come in and oversee there. And I said, "Oh", and I said, "Well, I've just promised to go to Burkes." And they said, "Well, we'll pay you more, whatever they're paying you, we'll pay you more. Come here. Just supervise." And I said, "Well, I'd rather go to Charles Bourkes' Model Room, and see what they do there. Then I'd come just supervise the machinists." So I went there and I loved that. And I was doing cutting. That was quite an experience, but you wouldn' t want to know about that. I'd never worked with anybody before in my life, and of course, the girls, there were about forty girls there, and they resented me wholeheartedly, and I couldn't sort of work out why. And, of course, apparently Miss Martin, as they called her, used to talk about me and, you know, and my father had a big engineering business, and so-on and so-forth. I was just, you know, they thought I was her white-haired girl. Well, I'd hardly ever seen the woman, you know. And I couldn't work out why they resented me so. I just sort of carried on. Used to have one senior and one junior you taught, but I had two juniors at my table. And my

juniors always got their own table before anybody else's, which didn't go down very well with the girls. And then Ida said would I like to cut, and I said, "Oh, yes, I'd love to." I said, "That's really what I love doing." And so, of course, the senior dressmaker there, she did the sort of tailoring part. She was beautiful. Of course, more resentment. She should have had the job. And this Millicent said she couldn't do it. She couldn't cut, you know, she sewed beautifully, but she didn't know how to cut. Although, you're given the patterns, but she had no idea. And so, here I was, out in front of this forty pairs of eyes, and you know, big fluorescent light down on the table, and everyone hoping to hell I'd make a fool of myself. And, but I was going great guns, but the higher ups decided that I couldn't do it because I didn't belong to a Union, and they might object. Oh, I wasn't being paid cutters wages either.

What were you being paid?

Well, just a senior dressmakers wage. It was, I can't remember, but I think it was about three pounds, ten and six, or something like that in those days, which the… oh, years ago girls used to get that for being juniors, and picking up pins off the floor. Wages weren't very high in those days. But it was a lot of money then, sort of.

And cutters wages?

Were higher. And, of course, I had control. That's what irked them. I had control of the girls then. As they were putting their work together, they had to show it to me to get the okay to go on, that it was all right. And that they refused to do. So I just went to them. Of course, there was one ring-leader that, she was a beautiful dressmaker, but she had, the things she made herself at home, she just had no style whatever. But she could do what you told her. She made me some beautiful frocks, when I told her what to do. After that she sort of realised that I wasn't any menace to her. But she wouldn't come to me, so I just simply walked down the aisles and looked at the work and said, "That's very nice", or "I think if you shifted it just a fraction it would sit better", and sort of took no notice of them and went on with my work. And they sort of came around. And then I don't know what I did after, whether I went off the cutting, or went back to work. Oh, my husband came home, what's the matter with me? Yes, he came home. Of course, he wouldn't allow me to go on working. And, of course, after he'd been home for a while they rang up and wanted me to go back, take control of the room. The other senior dressmaker was leaving, and they wanted me to take her place. "Don't you think I can afford to keep you?" That didn't go down very well,

and, of course, I didn't protest. We were still living at home. We lived home for four years. The children were two and four before we got our own home. Because, you know, there was just nothing, no buildings or anything during the war. And, of course, everybody wanted, you know, woodwork posts and flooring and all that hadn't been manufactured for homes during the war. Anyway, Bob finally wrote them a funny letter, and he got a special permit for us to build. And we had, as I said the children were two and four when we went into our own home. We lived at home, which was rather difficult. I was still the daughter of the house and ordered round by Dad and Mum, and my Dad was one of those demanding people, you know. And, of course, my husband, sort of out of POW camp, he had to be treated with velvet gloves. Two small children, the first I'd ever seen. I'd had no idea how you looked after children. Mum loved children. Of course, she tried to take them over, and everything I asked her she didn't know. So I could see that the chil dren weren't going to be mine much longer, so I said to my husband, "You build me a house or else." He said, "Oh, you wouldn't be happy in a little home." And I said, "Look", a young couple, he was a returned soldier, built next door to my Dad, and I said, "Look - they can afford that, we can afford it, and that's all I want." – "Oh, you wouldn't be happy." I said, "Yes, I would. I've never wanted a big home. I've always wanted a little home, and that will do me." You know. We got our own home. And that was that.

So you were dressmaking before Land Army?

Yes. Oh, during, before and during. Yes. And, yes, of course, there was only a few months that the war had been over. Like it finished in Europe first, didn't it? And on the September, the September before, wasn't it? And the October. Is that still going? Am I nattering on too much?

It's interesting.

I never thought it would be interesting to anybody but myself. I was talking to the young girls down at the hairdressers one day. And one of them was carrying on because her boyfriend was going away for three weeks or something. And I started to laugh. And I said, "Ye Gods, I was married for a week", and I said, "then my husband went away and I didn't see him again for nearly five years". Like when Singapore fell he was due to come home on leave, but of course, that was wiped out. And she apparently went home, and, of course, they were fascinated, and she apparently went home and told her mother. And she said, "I bet she was a war-time bride", you know. And she came back and said, "Were you?" And I said, "Yes", you know. I told her. And of course she was

fascinated too. Sort of you don't think things that happen to you are of any interest to anyone else. I thought it was just a very ordinary thing. Sort of take it in your stride as you go along. That was our life time. We had a Depression. First off, you know all my girlfriends, you know, their husbands or fathers had least had lost their jobs. Then people used to come and knock on the door, could they do some gardening for a meal. Nothing like it was… you know, it was so degrading at first… Because they didn't have anything, and they didn't have dole money. All you got were food coupons. And there was just nothing. You just sort of battled along as best you could on your own. And people lost their homes and all that sort of thing, you know, it was tragic. And it was terribly awkward, you know, when they knew your father had a works, you know, "Aren't there any jobs?" or that. – "No they've got as many as they can keep going now." And it was really dreadful, you know, and you felt so sorry for people. And, you know, men that had been in decent jobs, reduced to coming around to the door to ask for a meal, or could they cut some wood because there used to be open fires in those days. Could they cut some wood for a meal? And, if they do something in the garden, I'll give you a meal, but you know, I haven't got any money to pay you to do anything else. But we never saw money when we were growing up. You know, I look at my Grandsons and I think, "Oh, you spend a fortune." I can't help saying every now and again, "You are lucky that your Mummy and Daddy can afford to give you so much money." And it's sort of water off a duck's back. They've never known anything different. And they were children who have everything anyway, and even more than they have. But it's… that Depression left a lasting imprint on everybody because it was so degrading. You sort of, you didn't have anything, or anyway, you know, if you didn't have enough money to pay for your home, well, you lost it, and you just had to get out. And I vaguely remember you know, they'd build tin humpies along the Torrens, and all this sort of thing. And then they'd go out into the country and try and get work, or go out shooting rabbits, and sort of bring those in and sell them. All sorts of things like that. But we were always fortunate, as I said. My father was in business which kept going.

> In the Land Army, you said earlier on about people coming from all walks of life, could you expand on that, about the other girls in the Land Army? About what sort of backgrounds they came from?

Oh, dear I don't know.

> Just your impressions at the time.

Well, you know, some of them sort of had hardly been educated at all. Rough and ready. And then other girls, I think they, vaguely remembering, they tried to sort of keep like with like as best they could. You know, who would get on well together. But we all did, although, you know, we were quite varied. I just can't remember. Of course, the other girls were mostly younger than I was, because… I suppose girls my age, were busy supporting themselves. But my family sort of had more or less always supported me. I was never brought up to think that I had to go out to earn my living or anything like that. I only did it for fun, because I wanted to. You know, I wanted to go out. But most of the other girls had, had.. oh, I suppose some of them joined the Land Army because they didn't have a job either. Because lots of jobs disappeared through the war, and you either, well, you had to do something. That's right, you had to go into munitions or take a job of some sort, if you were able to. I hadn't thought of that.

Did it matter whether you were married or single?

Oh, when I said, you know, my husband wasn't here, you know, that I didn't have any ties whatsoever, and I was still living at home, really to all intents and purposes I think I was still single, and that. You know, as far as ties and that go.

But you weren't directed by Manpower to do anything?

No. No, I wasn't. I think because I was home with Mother.

What about your sister?

No she never did anything either. But she stayed on. They wanted me to stay on as Forewoman at this factory, and I said, "No", but my sister did for quite a while. Then, sort of like the end of the war, when her husband came back, she got married then, after the war finished. I can't quite remember whether Ken was invalided out or whether, you know, he got out at the end of the war, or invalided out just before the end of the war. She's had her fortieth wedding anniversary, Easter Saturday. She wasn't married on Easter Saturday. And we went up there to the… had a lunch and reunion. It was lovely. It just seems such a long time. So much has happened to me since then. And I hadn't thought about it, you know, in years. There's been no reason to think about it. It was… all I can remember… isn't it funny? There's a photograph of Gwen and I, and I'm sitting on the rail fence, and there's a dear old draught horse got his head poked over my shoulder. But, oh, yes, we were down the Hindmarsh Valley too, you know,

Victor Harbour. Picking and packing oranges. And we boarded in Renmark there. We had fun there too.

Where did you board?

In Victor Harbour, almost opposite the Methodist Church, you know, the circular church there. Oh, you don't know, of course not, you're Victorian, yes. Yes, we… in Victor Harbour. And we used to go by bus. How we weren't killed on that bus, I do not know. It didn't have any brakes. And the chappy, I think, used to be half full all the time. Used to, you know, it was hilly, belt down there. And there was a, you know, and it turned around a big dam, and how we didn't finish up in that I'll never know. But we didn't. Oh, yes, we had a lot of fun there with the girls. Of course, there's always a one wit in everyone, very humorous. I can't remember her name, but she was hilarious.

Did you feel you had much in common with the other girls? Did the backgrounds differ?

Well, I get along with everybody. No, we really didn't, I suppose. It's an awful thing to say, I think we were better off than most of them. But, yes, I didn't expect to see.

Was there resentment because of that?

No, I don't think. I can't remember. Of course, like Gwen and I we had one another. But, I was older and, as I say, I get along with anybody, always have done. And we never considered we were any better than anyone else. It probably helped. And we were brought up that way. But you know, it's the person themselves that was valuable, not what they had or the rest of it. No, we had a lot of fun. I don't remember having any disagreement with anybody. We never had any disagreement with anybody. Down at Hindmarsh, at Cherryville, there was one girl, she was a devil. She didn't do a scrap of work she didn't have to do, and the others got a bit sick of that, of her. But, no, they were all very friendly towards us. Of course, I had a peculiar habit of going (click, click) or you know, would say something and I'd have to go (click, click, click, click) which started the dear old draught horse every time, you know, he'd just amble along the road. We'd load the oranges and cases onto the back of the dray and, you know, me without thinking I'd say (click, click), and of course the horse, "Come back here". I had to sort of correct that habit, quick smart. Silly isn't it? After all these years, those funny little things. I can remember being in the packing shed, grading, you

know, in the graders. That was for Mr Hobbs. He also had, oh, we worked out there too, at, oh Lord I haven't thought of… Paradise, Mr Hobbs' market garden there. He used to grow beautiful celery. We worked there too. Oh, that was lovely. Picking, packing, you know. Half past seven on a cold, frosty morning. And they had to be all washed, you know, in troughs of water. Celery. Picked, packed, and sent to Victoria. But, yes, out there. That was pretty hard work. That's all I can remember about being out there. And I can 't really remember how long. I hadn't thought about that in years. But I think it was Hobb's property at Hindmarsh Valley. But I think it was a Manager who ran the property. And there was a home, you know, a small home there. Still there. And I don't know whether I'd remember it now, oh, if I went past I might. But, I haven't been back there very often. That's a long time, sort of about forty years ago, isn't it? A life time. And, as I say, so much happened to me since then, that it had gone right out of my mind until, when you said that, even the Dolling girls, you know, although we grew up alongside of one another, I'd sort of forgotten about them. Although, as I say, I do see Alison occasionally at the theatre or something. I don't know that she'd even remember me now. But Margaret, Betty I think, went to America. I don't know whether she… And Alison is a journalist, writer or that, now, I think. I see articles by her occasionally. Of course, her parents are dead now. They were quite long lived like mine were.

Were they in the Land Army with you?

I think Margaret was. She was, you know, whether she was even younger than my sister. My sister's six years younger than I. I think Margaret, I think Betty was about Gwen's age, and Margaret was several years younger than that, sort of thing. And Margaret's the one I remember most, I had most to do with. She married a market gardener at Cherryville. And when my girl was getting sort of towards the end of Gurton, hers was starting.

What was her married name?

I don't know. I can't remember now. I should, but I don't. My sister might. She, you know, she had more to do with them than I did. I always working at home, with Mum you know. Oh, I think she went to school with them too. I think they went to MLC together.

Go back to Berri. Do you remember the Loveday Prison Camp?

No. I remember there was a prison camp there, but I didn't see or hear anything about it. I can't you know, recollect. Actually, I saw it on television the other night. Oh, yes, I've been watching that on TV.

The Cowra Outbreak?

No, not the film. I didn't watch that. I can't stand, I hate injustice, and my nervous system's taken as much as it can take. No, I didn't watch it, because I sort of get, you know, it upsets me, and I can't sleep. And no, it was all about the migrants. The Italian migrants out here. And oh, you know, the injustices and the hard times they went through. And they were settled at Loveday. That's where they were put, some of them, when they first came here. And I sort of pricked up my ears and my eyes, but I didn't know anything about the camp. No.

What about Aborigines? Were there any? Did you ever see any around here when you were working?

I can't remember any, no. We worked with the Greek boys. I think they were the only foreign, to us. We called them foreign then. They weren't new Australians or anything else, they were just foreigners. Greeks. No, I can't remember any other nationality at all. No Aborigines. But I can remember when I was little going down to Victor Harbour, and there used to be Aborigines camped on the shore there at Victor Harbour. We always used to visit them every time, you know, go down to see them whenever we went to Victor Harbour, because they just fascinated us. But, you know, they were very, very shy. I just have this faint recollection of them. But other than that, you know, I've never sort of been anywhere near any Aboriginals. Except, I did have a little Aboriginal girl, she was a Ward's Maid, when I had Ashley. That was just after the war. And she sort of took a liking to me. She used to come in and she'd stand by the bed and look at me. And, of course, I was terribly… because I'm fair skinned anyway, and Ashley nearly killed… I was sort of bloodless. And I was sort of white. And she used to stroke my legs, you know, and embarrass me. She'd say, "So white", you know, she'd say, "Aren't you beautiful." Of course, I was terribly embarrassed, and I didn't know what to do. And so, I suddenly had an inspiration one day, and I said "Yes", I said, "I spend all the summer trying to look like you," and I said, "and you want to look like me." And she laughed. She thought that was a huge joke. Which was about something I never did. I can't stand being out in the sun very much. But I thought, at least that lets me off the hook. And you know, I was just so embarrassed, I didn't know what she, she was very sweet you know. She used

to look after me. But every, when she went missing, they always came looking in my room for her. That's where she'd be.

> What about your wages at the different jobs? Do you ever remember doing piece, you know, working for piece wages?

No, I don't think we did. I think we had to have a fixed wage. It would be in the book here. I don't know that I'd ever looked at this till I found it last night. I think there's something here about wages, how much we… Oh, that's the date. Oh, that's the uniform. I did finally get a uniform, but I don't think I had it very long. I gave it back. Something wrong with my eyes. Probably it was the onset of the arthritis. I used to get shocking pains, I still do, but the discs in my neck have deteriorated. Apparently I was having trouble, because I don't remember, you know, it was only when I was much older that I got glasses to wear. And that's only because I'm long-sighted I can see anything, but I can't see well enough to read close up. You'd probably do better.

> So your wages would have gone after the work you were doing before you joined the Land Army?

Money was sort of immaterial to us. I sort of, I think when we boarded out we paid our own board. I don't think, I can't even remember whether we paid it, or whether it was paid for us. That's right, the people we worked for had to pay it I think, because they were supposed to board us on the property. When they couldn't, oh dear, the Hobcrofts, they didn't have any children. She was a funny old thing. She was that jealous. And he was a dear old, a real old matter-of-fact Australian, you know, I don't think he would have strayed in a million years. She was terrified that he was going to get off with one of the Land Army girls. Oh, dear, she was funny. And, she even came down and worked with us. She couldn't bear him to be down there on his own, with us girls. Of course, the Greek boys from next door, I think they worked between the two of them, you know, shared the labour. But still she had to come down and see. I think first of all she used to bring lunch. Of course, she could have been lonely, I don't know, and just fascinated with the conversation and that. She used to come, in the end instead of just bringing lunch down, she used to come down and work too, just to be with us. Oh. and then, great concession, she allowed my sister and I to go on her back verandah, and we thought we were being asked into the house to eat, but no, we were given a little table to eat out on the back verandah. Of course, her home could have been put in the corner of ours and, oh dear.

Was that all difficult for you?

No we just took it, we just thought it was funny. It didn' t mean a thing to us. We just saw the funny side of it, you know. Occasionally we just had a little dig back, you know, in fun.

Was it very hard, the work? You weren't used to outdoor work?

It was hard manual work. Yes, it was hard work, but then hard work never hurt anybody.

You were launched into it suddenly?

Yes, that's right. We… time, we didn't want to do much, but go home and have a bath and go to bed. Except weekends, you know, of course it was still, go to the pictures was the great outing then. There was no television or anything like that. We made fun amongst ourselves. At the Holmes, one of the girls could play the piano. Oh, this little toughie, she was a hill-billy singer, and thinking back now, she was really quite good. Of course, my sister had a beautiful voice, trained voice. And, of course, we nearly had hysterics when this, we'd never heard this hill-billy singing before. At least we were polite enough to keep a straight face, and that sort of thing. But we used to have fun around the piano, and make our own fun. And there was a co-op store that they would open for us. After a while they, you know, we could go and get cold drinks. Because it was in the worst part of the summer that we were up doing this work. But when winter came we came back to this factory. And, oh and, that must have been when we went out to Hobbs doing the celery and that. But money-wise I sort of… that really didn't mean anything.

Were you asked to join the Union at any time during your work in the Land Army?

No, we belonged to the Land Army and that was it. We had to abide by their rules. What they were, I think the owners were supposed to board us. If he couldn't have, well then he saw that we had board. And we had to do as we were told that was, you know, they just sort of expected us to take over where the others had left off. But there was nothing really that we couldn't do. I learnt to prune orange trees. No, I don't think, we did prune grape vines once. Pruned an orange orchard that had been neglected for years. Oranges and lemons. That was down the Hindmarsh Valley.

How do you feel about that period in your life?

Oh, I thoroughly enjoyed it. I think it helped me get through, you know, a difficult… suppose you had to do something, and I've said I would rather have gone in the Army or Air Force, but what I could have done, I wouldn't know. I could sew, I suppose I could have gone in the tailor end. I couldn't drive, but I suppose they would have taught. But I was so convinced that my husband wouldn't want me to, because he had rather a jealous nature, that it didn't occur to me. But I thought, oh, the Land Army with my sister, you know, he can't object to that very much. It must have been after, because if I'd joined while he was in Singapore, I could have written and asked. But it was after Singapore fell. And it was quite well on into the war I think, because the Land Army came up, when all the boys had gone, and even the eighteen year olds had gone. See, it got down that the boys were only eighteen that were going, towards the end of the war. And see, the pilots, most of them, were eighteen when they went in to be trained. There was just nobody left on the land, only the old ones, and broken down ones.

Do you think people had heard of the Land Army at the time?

No. No, we were a curiosity I think.

Did you ever wear your uniform in the city?

I think so.

Do you remember people's reaction?

That I can't remember. I think by this time they were so used to uniforms that one wore, and it was a bit like the Army uniform, if I remember. You know, it was drab. I don't even know whether we… I think my sister must have the photographs, the few that were taken. Because you weren 't into cameras much in those days. And I know my sister had one. Why she wanted one I don't know, but she did. And the few snaps that were taken, she must have. I thought I had a copy, but I've been through every photograph I can find, and that's the only one I can remember. And I found this one which I think this must have been taken in Renmark. And I think that girl, she was in the Land Army. I think her name was Iris Ritchie. And I think that must be Win and Lou Holmes there beside us, and that was one of the Militia boys. What his name was, I wouldn't have a clue.

He must have been tall.

Yes, because I'm five foot nine, well I was then. I think I might have shrunk a bit now, and he just towers over the top of me there. But my sister has taken that you see. She isn't there, and that's the only reason she isn't there, is that… Oh, that was the badge. And I don't know why. I see in the book we're supposed to have given the things back. But apparently they allowed me to keep that. But I think clothes-wise and that, when we went in, we paid our own. It was very much, I'm sure we paid our own fares, you know, away. But as I say I think my sister would probably remember better than I, because I had so much on my mind anyway. It was really an, you know, just an escape for me and such a lot of things have happened to me since then. You know, sort of living with a POW, sort of each time the Anniversary of the fall of Singapore came around, he started to get bereaving, and I thought, "Oh, no here we go again". And, although he's marvellous, you know, but he wasn't, you know, it wasn't easy. And sort of I think perhaps they resented, I think he had the idea I had a whale of a good time and that. We never went out alone, you know, sometimes the boys took us to the pictures, that were billeted with us and that. But they were looking for female company, as much as we were looking for male company. You know, just different from girls, sort of thing. Not for anything else, as far as I was concerned anyway. Because I was married and that was that as far as I was concerned, not like the young lasses today. Although I've sort of reconciled myself to that these days. But I think he rather thought that I'd been home here having a good time, while he was being a POW, and I think he sort of rather thought that I had to make all that up to him, which made life a little bit difficult at times. Although he was a darling, you know, everybody loved him. He was everybody's friend.

Did you have picnics?

What in the Land Army, or home?

No, in the Land Army.

In the Land Army, no, we didn't. Didn't do anything like that. We were so darned tired, we'd go to work, and we had to be at work at seven o'clock, and home again. And by the time you bathed, and of course, if we insisted on washing our clothes, and having clean clothes and things like that, by the time you attended to those things, and had a meal, and I think we had to wash up after that, we were ready for bed. And sort of as I said we'd laugh and talk and play around the piano, go down to the Co-op there, or go for a ride on the ferry, he wasn't allowed to do it, but he did, let us break the monotony. But that was it, we never had any picnics or anything like that.

Were you ever in a hostel?

A hostel, no.

Bern Hostel?

Bern Hostel, no I didn't know there was one. But, no we were at Renmark, we weren't at Bern.

Did you ever have any contact with anyone who was in the Land Army?

No, not from the time we left, although it was sort of from, I don't know, they just weren't around us. And I seemed to be a few years older than the other girls.

Were you a Welfare Officer?

I used to take everybody under my wing I think, but no, no I was just you know.

Did you know any other married women in the Land Army?

Not that I can recall. We were more or less in our own little groups, you know. And as I say my sister and I moved together. Sometimes some of the other girls came with us. I can't even remember how long they were with us, you know. But I hadn't realised I'd been in so many places. Hindmarsh Valley, and Hobbs.

Which job did you find most pleasant?

I loved it all. The factory work I suppose, the chap there made it as unpleasant for us as he could possibly, but we had fun there. Oh, he and I, nothing, he was, well, he know I wasn't scared of him. Because we were the Tregonning girls, and you know, we lived in the big home up the road. And they knew my father had a big engineering works, and they were sort of a little bit, you know, didn't quite know what to make of us, or quite how we would react. But, as I say, he tried his best to make life unpleasant. Oh, yes, they decided that we had to scrub out the toilets.

At the factory?

At the factory. Now, what happened over that? Oh, I can't remember. I know there was something. Whether they wanted us to do them, and I drew the line at

that. Then in the end they had to get cleaners in to do it. But also, they used to make tomato puree and all those sorts of things in this factory, and I remember, they'd shifted a load. I think they might have been done before we'd arrived And the boss's daughter came down one day, and one had spilled all over the floor, and there was a terrible mess. And she ordered me to clean it up, and I had been doing some dirty jobs. And so I just looked at her I said, "If you expect me to get down there on my knees", I said, "you do it yourself." I said, "I'm not going to do it." – "You have to do it", you know. I said, "Well, I'm just not going to do it." – "I'll go tell father." I said, "You do that." I never cleaned it up. But, it wasn't my job to be down there doing it. And it shouldn't have been allowed to happen in the first place. But I remember one Saturday morning, as I said this Foreman, there was a girl, she was one of the workers there, pretty blonde girl, and the other girls told us that they were having an affair. "We still will (?)" And I'm telling tales out of school. Any rate she wasn't. We turned up for work this Saturday morning, I don't think we were supposed to work Saturday mornings, but they had these olives that had to go through. And also there were the trays from dehydrating the food. These huge trays had to be scrubbed. And my partner was about this tall, and we used to work together, and we used to have to sling them up onto this thing. And anyway this morning she came all dressed up, and the Foreman said, "Oh, no you can't do that, that's too dirty." And I've forgotten what she got to do, but it was some clean job. Of course, the girls were furious, they were all up in arms. So I said "Right, next Saturday", I said, "the next Saturday we're asked, we're all coming dressed up." So, they weren't game, but I went down there in a pale grey Milan skirt, with a very pale grey pullover on that, to me it was just something I wore around the house. And he said, "You do … Oh, I don' t suppose you can do that." And he got the hint in the end anyway. He never tried it again. She had to do the same as we did.

> Were you surprised that some of the others didn't stick up… you know draw the line with the working conditions?

No, they were terrified. They needed the money I think, the people who were working there. And they were terrified they were going to lose their jobs. And there was no way that they would have. Because another incident I remember, I know, they'd got an apple core, well, this is when we were dehydrating the thing, and I had to work this, how I didn't put it through my hand, I don't know. Because I'd never done anything, never seen anything done like this before in my life, but I, you know, intelligent I hope. But any rate I was working this, and word went around that the Inspector was coming. So, oh, you know, and they were terrified, "Oh, the Inspector was coming to look through the factory. Oh, God"

you know. Well, when the Inspector came, my sister sang in the Perry Street Choir in the big church in town, and it was one of the members of the Choir, the Inspector. And, of course, "Oh, hello Gwen, how are…" you know, we were talking. And the others, you know, sort of an open mouth, nearly died of fright cause we dared speak to the Inspector. Sort of that, Gwen and I couldn't understand, you know, why they were so terrified of him. He was just an ordinary man. And sort of, you know, they thought we were very much out of line, talking to them, as one human to another. But, it's, but I think it was because they really needed the job. Of course, it was near where they lived, and they were terrified that they weren't, and of course war time you put up with what was there. It was no good making a fuss, because that was the best they could do anyway.

Do you think there was a continual consciousness of war during that time, or because you were in the country doing the jobs?

I was. I used to be glued to the television, the radio at night. And I'd sit up till midnight to hear the last news, just to sort of get one, I had that sort of at the back of my mind. But well, we really had fun while we were working, you know, with the other girls. And that, you know, I can't remember sort of the war. I thought of something else, but it's gone. Sort of when the end of the war, no, no it was sort of when I got home it sort of all came back again. But sort of, we kept ourselves busy all the time. As I said, the week-ends the soldiers and Air Force boys came out well we had to do all the work, you know, cook the meals and everything else. And, sort of our time was fully occupied like that.

Apart from your sister, you mentioned your brother.

Yes, he was in the Navy.

Was there any others in the family?

No, only a brother and sister. Oh, there was, the first boy died, between Jack and I, at eighteen months. Only one brother and one sister. No, he was Corvettes. He was based in Western Australia. He used to go around, you know, up around the Islands and that.

Did he join up?

No, he was at University and he couldn't join. They wouldn't allow him to join first. And also, they protected industry, having the engineering works, and he was doing engineering at the Uni, and they wouldn't allow him to join up. But any

rate he nagged and nagged and nagged, and of course being Dad's only son, until finally they allowed him to go into the Navy. I can't remember how long he was in there, because he was sort of. I think Bob must have been a prisoner when he joined, because that was only twelve months after the war started and that. But he was sort of away from home most of the time. And then he got married over there, so he never really came back to home. Oh, yes we did, we all lived together. Oh, that's right, he came back with a wife and son. And I was home with my husband. That's right, and I was pregnant with Steven, that's right. We were all home there together. Mum and Dad. Oh, yes, I'd forgotten that. Yes, we did. 'And then they bought, Dad bought him a big two-storeyed house down on Tails Road, lovely garden. It's all, he sold it later on, came up to Leabrooke(?). It's all sort of industrialised around there now, and you can hardly see the house for other, you know, I don't even know what condition the home is in now. It was a beautiful old home then. No, yes he was away most of the time. Of course, that was after the war. And he came back here to live when he was discharged. They came back here. Because Marie was a Perth girl. Oh, we all lived, oh Lord, did we have some fun then. I was in bed, not supposed to move. Of course my mother was deaf, she couldn't hear. And it wasn't till after the war that she got a hearing aid, she could actually hear our voices for the first time. She didn't know you could hear. She was walking down the street with me one day, she said, "What's that music?" I said, "That music, Mum?" She said, "Oh, I can hear something. It's beautiful." I listened, and "Oh", I said, "it's the birds in the trees." She'd never heard them before. Yes, here was I lying, very pregnant and not supposed to move, or I might lose it, and Mum came in, "Where's Jonathan?" Marie had gone out and Mum was minding Jonathan, he was just a little toddler. "Where's Jonathan?" I said, "I don't know Mum. I can hear him somewhere." Of course, there was eleven rooms in the house and there was an attic upstairs. And I said, "I can hear him." And then all of a sudden, there was a door from the attic out into the ceiling, which was all timbered, you could have built, Dad was going to build a big billiard room out there, before he could decide. And the doorway was there, but there weren't the rooms. I realised that Jonathan somehow or other was up in the ceiling. And of course there were gas bars and fireplaces, and there were holes like in the ceiling. Well, I was out of that bed and up those stairs. I had a long white satin nightie on, that came right down to the ground, and I was up that staircase and out on that. Of course when Jonathan saw me he ran to the front of the house. Me, you know, I had to walk on the ceiling, I couldn't balance on. But I didn't know. I just flew across that, and I grabbed him, and sort of, you know trying to get back, and hoping I didn't fall through. And he bent down, you know, they have transformers with wire, he bent down and caught hold, "Play trains, Aunty Win." I said, "I'll play trains with you." Hauled him down. Well, I got him down to the bottom of the staircase, and Mum decides to have a heart attack, oh, so I'm rushing around getting stuff for her, bringing her around. And then when she came around she said, "Where's Jonathan?" And I thought, "Oh, Lord, where's Jonathan?" He was out raking, we had a coal hot water service, he was

raking the red hot coals all out all over the laundry. And here am I, you know, roaming around in my white satin nightie, very pregnant. The Doctor, oh, was he furious when he came. He said, "You could have killed yourself. You could have lost the baby." He said, "Why didn't the fool of a woman come out on the street and get somebody to come in and look for the child?" And I said, "Look Doctor, the minute I realised where he was", I said, "I was up there, without a thought." And oh, I'll never forget chasing Jonathan across that ceiling. He was the most adorable child too, you know, big rosy cheeks and great big blue eyes, and blonde hair. He was lovely. I'll never forget that. That was when we all lived together after the war.

> Do you ever think that the Women's Land Army should have been a Fourth Service?

A forced Service?

> Fourth, Fourth Service.

Well, apparently it was quite necessary. You know, we were a little bit annoyed that, you know, we were beneath the interest, nobody was really interested in the Land Army girls. I don't think very many people knew anything about it anyway, who hadn't sort of responded to the notices that were, I think it was notices in the paper about it.

> The Land Army never received any repatriation or Post war benefits like the other services?

No, we paid our own, medical and everything.

> How do you feel about that?

Well, you didn't think about those things in those days. We paid our own medical expenses, you know. I was brought up, you paid your own way, and at least, your parents sort of, the family looked after you, and that was it. It never occurred to me that anybody else should be doing anything for me. Yes, I'm sure Miss Marshall had a very uphill battle to get the Land Army going at all. And, well I know nobody wanted to know anything about it, because I think the Services were, oh, "if you want to do it, go ahead and do it, but don 't bother us". There was no acknowledgment of our work, or I can't remember any write-ups. As I say, I was quite intrigued when they suddenly decided to let the Land Army girls march in the Anzac Parade, because you know, we'd heard the English Army

girls, they were, Land Army girls, they were always on the news at the picture theatres, and things like that. But there was nothing made of the Australian Land Army. Actually, like on odd occasions I had mentioned it, "Oh, I didn't know there was a Land Army!" And I said, "Oh, yes, we belonged to it.

> So you feel today there is a similar attitude, similar ignorance about the Land Army as there was then?

I don't know that anybody ever thought of a Women's Land Army, or ever thinks of it now, in relation to, I'm sure they don't in relation to the Services, you mean, the Army and the Air Force and the Navy. I'm sure they, soon as the war was over, they forgot about it. That was it, you've served your purpose. But they hardly acknowledged we were there anyway.

> How did you find your employers? Do you feel they trusted you could do the work, or did you feel that they…?

I think probably they were very weary. Or course, I was all so confident that I could do it anyway. Because I was used to working at home, and you know, helping at home. I'd never gardened or done a thing in my life. You sort of have to use your own intelligence. They just said, "Pick the oranges, like this", or lemons had to be snipped off. Twist the oranges and they'd come off, and try not to pull the skin out. We were told to prune a citrus tree you kept the centre clear and cut out dead wood. And they sort of came and had a look at what we were doing, and that was it. No, well, as I say, Mrs Hobcroft resented that we were girls and not boys. That was the only, that was highly amusing though. She was really a character. But she sort of, you know, nearly had us in hysterics. That was the only effect she had on us. We were willing to do anything they wanted us to do, and do it to the best of our ability, which was better than the boys anyway. You know, all the girls, that I was with, with that many I suppose different ones, but you know, everybody hopped in and got the work done. And you know, they seemed to take pride in getting done properly. No, I think some of the owners were probably very surprised at the jobs because they were used to, oh, what shall I say, you know, the itinerant workers that went from place to place, doing odd jobs, and weren't very fussy anyway. You know, they were used to that type, and I don't think they quite knew how to cope with a person who sort of greeted them on their own terms, on their own level. I suppose they were probably used to people addressing them - because it never occurred to me I was just a workman, that sort of thing. So perhaps I'm not a very good, well, to me everyone's important, it doesn't matter what they do, it all has to be done, and there's no reason why that person should be degraded because she's only picking fruit or doing something like that. If she's a nice person, she's a nice person, or he's a

nice person. I sort of never could stand, oh, you know, "I'm better than you", and all this business sort of thing. But I think possibly that was. We sort of greeted them like, and talked to them as though they were our own parents. And probably they were used to being addressed as employers, and a little more importance paid to them or something, I don't know. You have to ask them that. But they were all very nice, you know. Places where we boarded, you know, they were sort of a bit. And oh, the place where we boarded in Renmark was an old soul, and she had one son. And her daughter had been married, and we had the daughter's room. And it was spotless. Absolutely spotless. And there were linos all over the floor, and you know, mats. And our room had to be scrubbed out every Saturday morning, whether it needed it or not, which was how I was brought up anyway. The house had to be cleaned through every Friday, whether it needed it or not. From the top to the bottom. She started off sort of very much trying to keep us at a distance, and then ended up spoiling us rotten. You know, doing everything. Oh, that was, we happened to say we liked sultanas. She had to pack our lunch for us to take out, and we happened to say we liked sultana cake, well we got sultana cake from there on in. Not anything different. But then, sort of, she let us do all sorts of things that she was sort of, I don't think she knew quite how to cope with us. We were just pickers. Of course when you get, you see the people. Like when we met the people on the bus that were normal pickers, you could understand why she wouldn't want them in her home, and she was sort of laying down the laws, you know, you have to be clean, and the room has to be cleaned every week, and so on and so forth. Well, we would have done that automatically anyway. But, she sort of, as I say, towards the end she, I think she really missed us when we left. She'd really taken us under her wing.

> What about health? How do you feel your health was affected by the Land Army?

Well, I didn't think the Land Army affected my health. Now, possibly it didn't do me any good, because working in the factory in the cold, you know, I have rheumatoid arthritis, but of course whether that contributed to it, I don't know. I don't think the doctors would even know. But we really worked hard, and it was hard work. You know, these great trays we had to sling up, great heaps. And, of course, as I was taller than my partner, it meant that I suppose I carried the load. Then we were climbing trees, and reaching, you know, picking things. And in the cold and the wet, it probably didn't do me any good. And like the land we were walking on at the Valley, you put your foot on it, it squelched, you know, the watery stuff. And so it probably, but we never thought about that. But, of course, we were used to our parents taking care - you know, if anything was wrong, well, the doctor was sent for, and that was it. And nobody sort of thought that it was anybody else's responsibility.

Did you ever hear of anyone while you were in the Land Army, was there anyone sort of sick, or any accidents?

Not that I know of or can remember. I think we were enjoying ourselves too much to have accidents or get ill. But, you know, we just seemed to be a happy crowd working together. You know, there was always somebody that would come up with something funny. Find something funny to laugh at.

What about nick-names? I hear there was a few nick-names about?

I can't remember any. As I say my sister and I were always known as the Tregonning girls, although my name was Dodsworth then, but they still called us the Tregonning girls. No, I can't remember having any nick-names. But probably the girl down at Hindmarsh Valley, as I said that was so very, very funny, she probably called us all names, but I can't remember being called by anything else.

You know that we're making a film on the Land Army. I'd be interested to know what things you'd like to see in it. Like what messages you'd like to communicate to the general public about what the Land Army was.

Well, if that situation occurred again, all the young men went from the land and there was no-one there to do the work but the girls that were left behind. And I should think after this experience that it would be better organised, and they'd co-operate more with the leaders who were trying to organise it, you know, to get it into line with the other services, because I suppose that the WAAFS and WAACS who stayed in Australia, they didn't do any more to hinder their health or anything, or as much, as we did, health-wise. But, of course, those things weren't thought of in those days. You know, Unions and all that sort of thing. Of course, I'd never had anything to do with the Union. I can't remember, you know, it there were anything to do with the medical side of it, I didn't know of it. We just naturally went to our own doctors. The bills were paid. Never thought of thinking that the Land Army should pay it or anything else. Hope it doesn't turn out that they did. Well, I don 't think so.

Anything further that you'd like to add about the Land Army?

No, it seemed, it was so long ago. It was sort of, just a happening, that came and went, and then I was sort of overwhelmed before and after, you might say. You know, I should hope, well, I hope it never occurs again. But then, of course, there's no reason why a girl shouldn't work on the land like we did, normally. I

suppose, well like yourself, you are doing it these days. Well, I hadn't thought about the Land Army till you rang me up. Like, if it had to be a war time thing again, I should hope it would be a recognised service along with the Army, Navy and Air Force, because there were a lot of, I suppose you could hurt yourself and all the rest of it, you know. I think some of the, I don't know whether very many of the girls rode tractors or anything like that. They might have in the other States, but I don't know of any here that did. But as I say my sister might be able to tell you more about it than I did, because she went in after. Being younger, she'd probably remember better than I did do at least. So I hope there's never any need for a Land Army again. But I can understand girls liking to work, you know, I loved it out in the country and doing things. It was most enjoyable. But then again, I suppose I was doing it from a privileged position you might say. It wasn't my life's work, and it wasn't, I wasn't earning, you know my livelihood depended on it or anything. It was really just another period in my life.

> Do you remember whether your sister suggested it, or you? Any discussion about it?

I can just sort of vaguely remember. She belonged to the WANS, and whether it came up through that. I was the eldest of the family and I wasn't allowed out. I always had to help Mother. And sort of she was the one who was out and about more than I was. And so whether when it came up we thought it would be nice to do something, that was it. We got together and decided to go. I know it was very early stages when we joined up. Progressed a lot further, you know, after I'd been and gone. Gwen stayed on at the factory. Oh, whether the Land Army finished and she stayed on for a while afterwards, as the war women down there. She'd be able to tell you that. As I say I was so busy with my husband home, I don't quite know, sort of, what went on with her there. It wasn' t something we ever got together to talk about.