Australian War Memorial

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ORAL HISTORY RECORDING

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TITLE: Dora McNeill as a member of the Australian Women's Land Army (AWLA), 1942-1945

INTERVIEWEE: Dora McNeill

INTERVIEWER: Sue Maslin

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SUMMARY:

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Firstly, I might ask you a little bit about your early years, where you grew up.

Orielton, Southeastern, on a farm and when the Depression came Dad sold the farm and we moved to a smaller place. I went to the Sorell School and my grandmother lived opposite and spent most of my school weeks with her. I didn't travel by bus. Then when I left Sorell I went to Oakleigh High for another four years to school and when I finished that I was very keen to do millinery work and I started work as a junior milliner, just finished my apprenticeship when I had to do Manpower.

Can you tell me a little bit about the early life on the farm, what sort of farm was it?

We had sheep and cattle and poultry and pigs - it was a mixed farm, more or less. Dad used to grow a lot of crops and Mum used to have about 300 turkeys, the same with ducks and a lot of fowls and we used to have to help dress those. At the early age of five we had - we were milking about 40 cows by hand. We had to all milk and churn, separate. I was just five when I started milking and all work. There was no play. I can assure you of that, Sue, there was no play whatsoever. We didn't know what it was. We had two days off a year from work. It was Christmas Day and Good Friday. You had to churn you had to separate, plus the milking. We had to feed the pigs.

How many are in your family?

I had a step-brother and a step-sister. Mum was married twice. That's before my father. Then there's my sister who just rang me. She is the eldest, then there's myself and then there is eight years break and I've got three younger brothers, younger than me.

Did you all grow up together?

There was three families - two families - well the step-brother and step-sister and my sister and I then there was the eight years break. I was 18 when my youngest brother was born. Mum was 44 when she had him. He's a lovely boy though. He's in business. They are all in business really. He is in business. When we first went to school we had to walk. We were living six miles then - we had to walk six miles there and six miles back a day and even when we came home, we used to come out of school about 3 o'clock those days but we didn't always get home within the hour that we were supposed to and we used to have to get our uniforms off and get straight into work.

Would your mother be working on the farm?

Yes, yes. She was a great worker; still is even if she is 85. Yes, she was a great worker and when the Depression came lots of families walked the roads because they had no money and they couldn't pay rents and I know we had three families there before Dad sold the farm.

What do you mean you had three families there?

Walking the roads and they had nowhere to go and Dad took them in. He was a great - very kind man. He used to help people and Mum used to feed them, because Dad used

to make all his own - grow all his own food. We used to grow all the vegetables. We had our own meat. We had our own milk and Mum made all the butter and what we didn't use Mum used to sell that for 1 and 6 a pound. I always remember selling the butter for 1 and 6 a pound. Because we used to sell the butter to help on the farm. It was about 1935, '34, we left the farm. That was when Dad sold it and we bought a smaller place of I think it was 10 acres and for a while he didn't do anything. The 10 acres was in a bad shape of repair. Nobody had done anything to it and he got it all ploughed up and he decided he'd do market gardening. We found that the work with market gardening was a lot harder than with the animals and when got the garden going us kids - he used to be away all day. He used to go at half-past-three in the morning and he'd cut 10 ton of wood and he'd be home at half-past-three in the afternoon. They used to sell the wood for 5 shillings a ton and then about two years after we got that place he went in the Public Works so then Mum - and he used to be away sometimes a fortnight or three weeks at a time - we used to have to do all the gardening on the weekend and sometimes, it depended what the season was. Around about the 18th of December we used to plant about 1800 cauliflowers. That was all by hand, of course. He would plough the ground and then we'd have - the biggest crop of tomatoes we had was about 1200 plants. At that stage we used to pick them in November and send them to South Australia and so that the frost didn't get them we used to have big heaps of chip dirt all around the paddock and at 2 o'clock every morning you had to go out and light those so the frost wouldn't cut the tomatoes and the heat from the smoke blowing across, drifting across, used to stop the frost from cutting the tomatoes. At 2 o'clock every morning you went out and

lit those frost fires whether you liked it or whether you didn't, Sue. I suppose I grew up and then when I - - -

Can you tell me about when you left school and you decided - did you decide that you wanted to become a milliner?

Yes, I did, I wanted to do it. I love craft work and first of all I was going to go nursing and then I changed my mind, which I was always sorry about later because in Dad's family his sisters were all nurses and my grandfather, he was the one that took me to high school, Dad's father, and I always wanted to do nursing then I changed my mind on the spur of the moment. I decided I wouldn't go nursing, I'd do millinery and doing the millinery, when I was doing the training, apprenticeship, you learn to do bridal headdresses and bouquets and all that sort of thing too. It was very interesting work. You'd get just a piece of felt and you'd have a block and you used to have to mould the hat into a shape with steam. It was all done by steam and you could make some beautiful hats because I love hats. It's one of my pet loves is beautiful hats.

What sort of working conditions did you have there?

It was good because when I first went to work I got 5 shillings a week. That was my wage and I boarded in Hobart with a cousin and she had seven children and I used to bath the children every night instead of paying board and do the washing, because you couldn't pay much board out of 5 shillings a week, but the working conditions - there was a lady by the name of Miss Fay Huxtable. She is still alive. The shop was known as

Maisette's Millinery and it was all exclusive head gear - nothing shoddy, she had nothing cheap - and very good working conditions. She was a lovely lady - very hard boss but I always thanked her for being so hard later on because she taught us to do things the right way and probably the young people today wouldn't be able to survive with a woman like her but the conditions were good and depending on your work, how you worked, how well you worked, she gave you a raise. I was only there three months and I got 7 and 6 a week. I thought I was made and then when I went into the Land Army I was on 2 pounds 15 shillings a week and that was a good wage. That was because I was completing my apprenticeship and she put me up. At that stage I used to have - she thought I had a flair for talking ladies into buying expensive hats and I used to go in the shop and when the Cup times were coming around or any big event the well-to-do ladies and the Governor's wife, there was a Lady Clarke, he was the Governor at the time, she used to come in and she used to get me to serve her because she thought I had a way with me that I could them into buying - making the most profit - and if you did that you always got a good bonus. She gave you a wonderful bonus on the percentage of your sales and then if a lady bought a hat and she wanted some alteration that's why she trained her own milliners so that they would know how to do it and she felt that they were being looked after more personally. Then from there that was when I joined the Land Army.

Where did you first hear about the Land Army?

Well I had read about it and it was in the back of my mind but I didn't know whether my father would let me join, whether he would say 'Oh well, that's not for you,'

because as a child I was rather delicate - not delicate, I had diphtheria and I had always had a blood complaint, an anaemia, and I was my father's daughter and I didn't know whether he'd think it was too much for me, although I'd done the same work at home and I always worked alongside Dad when I was at home. I would never do household chores when I was young, never. I would be the first one outside to volunteer for work because I liked the outdoor work better than the indoor work and at that stage I hated cooking. I learnt to cook after I came out - well I could cook but I only did cooking at home when I was made do it and I was always outside with Dad. When he was killing pigs or anything I used to help him scrape them down, after he scalded them scrape them down, get them ready for dressing and the same with the sheep. It never worried me. It was just that I liked doing it and then when I did - I read about it and then when I went to the Manpower they had all these notices, the various things you could do when you registered for Manpower so I just decided on the spur of the moment and I went to the Land Army headquarters, it was just over the other side of the street where it was, and asked for the papers and took them home. I took them to Grandmother first because Dad was away and she was a dear - that was his mother - she was a dear old lady, but such a short little lady and she said 'Goodness me, your father wouldn't allow you to do that,' so I took them home to Mum and got Mum to sign them for me because I wasn't 18. I was just a bit under 18. You had to register at Manpower at 16 and I was a bit under 18 you see, so I thought well I can't get Dad to sign them and Mum signed them and he came home. I went through a medical examination, was accepted and he came home, it was about eight days later when I told him on the Friday night that I was going in the Land Army and

I had to go and have a couple of teeth out first and he never said a word. He just said 'If that's what you want to do.' He said 'You should have been the boy in the family' and that's how I came to join because we had to register for Manpower, for National Service. That was to release the men to go to the War, so that's how I came to be in it and my sister, she went off in the Air Force at the same time, that's about the same time - it was my step-sister really - and her brother - my step-brother didn't do anything. He'd been injured on a motor bike before the War. He was mad on motor bikes and road under the tray of a parked lorry and broke his kneecap so he wasn't accepted for anything. The other boys, of course, weren't old enough. They were only little boys when the War was on, tiny little fellows.

Did you ever think you might want to join one of the other services?

No, never, never at all. I was always very proud to be a land girl, very proud.

You joined up in 1942?

Yes.

Were you issued with the uniform?

No, not straight away, we had jodhpurs and jumpers then. We got the jodhpurs and jumpers first. That was our dress and we had an Land Army badge. Have you seen the badge, the one that we were issued with? I have got mine here. The Government decided to issue us with uniforms and ours were better uniforms. I always remember ours

were better quality uniforms. Ours were made out of what the officers in the Army uniforms were made out of. We had beautiful overcoats, not the old rough overcoat that the AWASs had. They had a rougher uniform than we did. We had a beautiful uniform. We got those and we had a summer button through biscuit colour.

Khaki?

It wasn't quite a khaki though. It wasn't the green khaki. It was a little bit lighter. It was more of a tanny brown colour. It was quite nice, Sue. We had those. We still had the Army regulation before we got issued with our good uniforms. We had to have our hair off our collar because I used to have very long hair and we had to have our hair off the collar.

Did that mean you had to have it cut?

Yes, it never worried me. Some girls it did - you had it cut or put it up, but I had it cut. Mrs Hodgeman, she was our superintendent when we got the uniforms and she was a stickler. A couple of occasions a lot of us went to the barracks to march. I forget what that was about. We were put through our paces to march up at the barracks one night up there. We were going around and around the parade ground marching. It was an Army officer taking us because Mrs Hodgeman's husband was a Colonel Hodgeman. I think that might have been the reason that she thought we needed trimming up or something. The uniforms were nice, Sue, very nice.

When you first joined where did you go?

I went out to Mr Vincent's.

Did you go training first or did you go on to a placement first?

No, training, I was only at the research farm a bit over a month.

Which research farm was this?

Cressy, at the research farm, no, I've told you '42, it was '43, the year I joined, not '42. It was '43. I've told you the wrong date. I was thinking about that the other day. It was April '43, not '42. I've told you the wrong date. No, it was the research farm at Cressy we went to and I was only there about six weeks and they were short of girls and when I went out I went actually out at first relieving the girls that needed a holiday or wanted a holiday. I went to a vegetable production - no, then I went to Seven Mile Beach, I'm sorry, to Mr Blackwell, and he had an orchard, this little old man he was. He had apricots and apples and pears and I must have been there about eight months and then I went from there - I was transferred from there to Glenorchy because the girl at Glenorchy on the vegetables - I think she got married and they had no one to send and Mrs Hodgeman asked if I wanted a change and I said 'Yes, I wouldn't mind' because I didn't want to work so close to home. I thought - my ambition was to go up north or the north-west to work and I went to the vegetable production and I was there about three months on the vegetables. I was only relieving there. It is a bit hard to think back so far - 40 years. We mainly used to plant and harvest the things. He had a contract for the Brighton camp. That

was the Army camp where all the soldiers were trained for the War. They used to come every morning with a big Army International lorry and the crates. Usually one of the Army girls used to come. Sometimes there was always Army girls and we used to have to put the veg - they would leave crates one morning and bring us the empty crates the next morning and take them. We would have them filled and they would take the vegetables to the Brighton camp. It was quite interesting because, of course, I'd done vegetable work nearly all my life and I was a little bit sick of it and then I went from there, it might have been three or four months, and I went from there down to Mr Calvert at Rokeby. The name of his property was Signal Hill and I worked there. I was quite happy there. I was there over a year and we did everything there from sheep dipping - he had an orchard and he had a large orchard, apple and pear - and you did the general farm work there. That was where I first really worked as a farmer there, ploughing with the tractors, harrowing, even sawing down trees with an old cross-cut saw and sheep killing. I ended up killing the sheep there every week. It didn't worry me. At first it was a bit hard learning how to punch the skin off them but I got round it in the end. He was an elderly man and Mrs Calvert was - she was a nursing sister and they were married quite - I suppose he would be 50 when they got married and she would be about 34. They had two children. She was the lady I told you went to school with Errol Flynn. She was a nursing sister and she came from Kent and she went to school with Errol Flynn. I enjoyed the work there. It was varied work. You didn't do the same thing all the time. It was mainly really orchard work. It was the pruning, the hoeing, the spraying and the picking and I didn’t do very much picking, only if I was waiting for

them - I used to cart them into the packing shed with a tractor and trailer or horse and wagon, whichever was applicable, whichever he decided to use, and you did the spraying. The hoeing was always done when the fruit - after the pruning you hoed around the trees after the orchard was ploughed. We used to plough the orchards. Then we used to go on to general farm work. He had sheep and cattle - not dairy cattle, fat cattle - and he had a lot of sheep. I think he had about 3 and-a-half thousand sheep and there was - you had to hand feed them, dip them, crutch them, bring them, and he had two properties - another part of his property was down at South Arm and some mornings, if he wanted to bring the sheep home there was no house or no shed, there was just land, we used to have to bring the sheep home for shearing and dipping and crutching and all that sort of thing, and some mornings we would go at 2 o'clock to drive them home.

So who was working on this farm with you?

Just me and a married man. He lived on the farm. That was all. Just the two of us - Mr Calvert didn't do any work at all. We ran the farm for him. He was too old and, of course, the son was only five years of age then and we did the farm work between us. He was a very nice man to work for, a very good farmer. She was a very nice person but I liked Mr Calvert the best.

What were your living conditions there?

Very good, we lived in the house and Mrs Hodgeman, they always saw to it that we were treated the same. When I first went there the front of their house faced out into

the orchard and I had a room in the front and as you went in the back door, straight from the farm, that yard around the house, one end was the sunroom and the other end had been built on and was unlined and she had put a bed there and a chest and she thought that's where I was going to sleep. Her husband told her straight no way, we had to live in the house. He met me at the bus and he said no, we had to live in the house as well as the family but I think that she came from a very good home. Her people were big farmers at Kempton and she thought I was the servant. I used to do quite a little bit of housework for her. I used to help her but we didn't have to do housework if we didn't want to. We had to maintain our own room and our own laundry and, no, the living conditions were always very good. Then when they started the mobile camp that must have been towards the middle of '44, or the end of '44, I'm not sure when it was started. We used to get our transfers in a long brown envelope and Mr Calvert came this day with a brown envelope in the mail, when he got the mail. I knew he was going to the little township to get it and I opened it and I'd been transferred to the mobile - they were starting the mobile unit up at Deloraine. I was really thrilled. I had two days' leave when I finished up.

Why were you so thrilled?

Because I wanted to go up north. It was my first experience of going up north. I wanted to really go up north and I was just pleased that I was going up north and we were going on potato work, which didn't worry me greatly because we weren't going to work for the one farmer. We were going to do contract work and we worked on such a lot of farms and we were there until the end of

War. What we used to do, we camped in the Oddfellows Hall - I think there were about 30 of us altogether. Has anyone told you how many was in the mobile unit?

No.

I think there was about 30 girls, Sue. I am trying to remember. It's a bit hard to remember. Years ago I used to know it all off by heart, you know, and there was about 30 of us, but I was one of the first girls that went but there wasn't a lot of them when they finished had been there. They were changed around, depending on circumstances, on whether you all got on together.

So how often would it change? How often would you get new people coming in or did you tend to work together in small groups the same?

We had two groups to go to work on the farms. The farmers used to supply us with a tractor and trailer. That was how we went to work. Sometimes the farmer brought us in. He would come and get us of a morning and take us home of a night but there was always two groups. There were so many girls. When we went out in the paddock we had a potato digger. I did a lot of tractor driving when I was up there and I did a lot of picking up too. It depended who you worked for. They would allocate who drove - they'd just say 'Well you drive the tractor.' It wasn't that I'm going to do it today. We used to sometimes like to share the work and have a change around because it got very monotonous and our contractor was Mr Johnson. He was about a mile out of Deloraine. He was a dear little funny old man. I tipped a bucket of milk over his head one day.

How did that happen?

I'd been ploughing potatoes out the day before and the back ride digger - it was a piece of machinery that you pulled along behind the tractor, of course, and the links were about that wide. It was like a conveyor belt throwing the potatoes and it had a blade that you put in the ground with the power take-off and sometimes you might - you had to try and straddle the row so that you didn't cut the potatoes and sometimes you might cut a couple of potatoes when they came out and, of course, he found about a bucketful of potatoes I'd cut. It was the morning time when I threw the milk over him not the night, I'm sorry, and when I went out the next morning one of the lads that used to milk the cows for him, one of the local lads, Mr Johnson was chipping me and I started to laugh and he was telling me how much money he was going to lose because of this half bucket of potatoes. I told him he had oodles and oodles of money and didn't know what to do with it and I said 'If you don't' - he worked us into the dark, that's how it was. I said 'You didn't bring any candles out' and he told me not to get smart and so this young chap, we used to call him Dickie Bart, I never ever knew his other name. He was only about 16. He was coming past the dairy and I grabbed the bucket of milk and I just turned it clean upside down on his head and it was the funniest sight I've ever seen, to see this little short old man standing there with all this milk running down all over them, but afterwards he came and we laughed about it that day. He didn't tell the boss - didn't tell Miss Lathey - in the heat of the moment, I was an impulsive person and I just thought bring the candles out tonight if we're working

late and I'll tip the milk over his head, but he used to work us - long hours we used to work, Sue. Mostly we used to leave on a fine morning - we'd leave camp about 6 o'clock and we always left on the same note, our gang did, and we always returned home on the same note. We went up the street singing 'Around Her Neck She Wore a Yellow Ribbon' and we came home singing 'Around Her Neck She Wore a Yellow Ribbon'. Why it was our theme song I'll never ever know.

Can you remember the song? Can you sing it for me?

I can't sing at all. I can only make a noise. 'Around her neck she wore a yellow ribbon for her lover who was far, far away.' No, I can't remember it all, Sue. I'll tell you what, my daughter in Hobart has got a little songster book with it in.

Perhaps you could write out the words for me.

I'll write out the words and send it to you. I could never sing very much but we could always make a noise. We used to take our lunch with us. We had to get up and prepare that before we left. We used to have to cut so many slices of bread. If young people had to eat today what we had for lunch I think they'd starve. We used to have cut so many slices of bread. Would you remember seeing the old fashioned biscuit tins that they bought the biscuits in, Haywards and Snacks or whoever sold them, well we would pack all this bread into these biscuit tins and we'd take - I suppose we had butter - I don't remember ever having butter and there would be a bag of saveloys, some bottles of tomato sauce and, of course, we never left home without our favourite jam.

The Army - well I suppose it was supplied by the Army to the Land Army for the camp - plum jam and raspberry juice, plum jam and apple juice, plum jam and fig, fig and plum jam, fig and apple jam - that was our jam and the tins of jam we rolled along the road going to work of a morning and coming home of a night that was never ever eaten. That's all we got. We used to get terrible jam and we used to sit down with bottled tomato sauce, we'd boil big - we had a big boiler. We would make our fire, we'd boil our saveloys up and we'd stick it between the bread and put the sauce on it and never had anywhere to wash your hands. Your hands would be black and you were really workmen and you'd sit down with all the black on your hands, the potato dirt or tractor dirt and sometimes you would be eating - I suppose we ate more dirt than we ate food. It was a bit hard on the girls that had come from a city life and we had an Iris Abbott with us. Her father had a cordial factory at Launceston and she had been to a college all her life. She was quite a bit older than us girls and she didn't really know - why she joined it I'll never ever know. She used to bring a face towel and a washer with her to wash her hands. In the end she got acclimatised. She ate dirt and all and I used to say 'Well, they say you've got to eat a ton of dirt before you die well we'll have all ours. We'll have our share. We won't have to worry later.' But it was really great. I showed you the phot where we were all sitting around the bags of potatoes. That's how we used to sit down, open our biscuit tins, get our bread out, boil our saveloys up and Miss Lathey for our morning and afternoon tea, she used to make us a beautiful buttermilk loaf. We had our buttermilk loaf. We had our buttermilk loaf every day for morning and afternoon tea. It was nice but it was the old fashioned buttermilk loaf and for

breakfast of a morning one morning we'd have fried bread and tomato sauce. Some mornings we'd have brains on toast. Sometimes we'd have tripe for breakfast. We didn't get eggs very often. We'd always get toast and we always used to have a hot meal at the end of the day. It was lights out at 9 o'clock and you were allowed one night a week out until 9 o'clock and one late night until half-past 11 of a Saturday night.

So what sort of things would you do for relaxation and leisure?

A lot of things Miss Lathey never knew about. I made a lot of friends in Deloraine. People were very nice there, particularly with a family of Scotts. Old Mrs Scott was a dear old soul and I used to go there. When we were allowed out for a weekend I didn't come home, I used to go to Scotts for the weekend and one of her sons used to have an orchestra and we used to go dancing. They used to take me and she had twin daughters. One was married. One was called Darky and one was Fairy. That was their nicknames. The dark one was the single one and her and I became very good friends and we used to go with her brother and the orchestra dancing. I was a dancing fanatic and we had a concert in Deloraine for the Red Cross. We performed at that but mainly dancing. Horse riding - I used to horse riding out at Mr Griffin's place. We had done contract work on his place. He was a man that came from England after the Great War and he had a nice farm and the Bonneys. They lived next door. We used to go and borrow horses and go horse riding and I used to do a lot of bush walking.

With the other girls?

It was usually about two or three of us would go off together but most weekends that we had off - you could have most weekends off but you didn't always go home because you didn't get leave to go home and we only got 30 shillings a week and 1 and 6 tax a week was taken out of that for tax. We were supplied with clothes but that was mainly just our Army clothes, our overalls and our boots and our working clothes and our uniform and we used to buy cigarettes at the cheaper rate - the Army ration. Did we buy those or were they given to us? I can't remember, Sue.

I think they were possibly rationed.

I think they were rationed, yes, they were. There was an Army ration we used to get. That was after we got our uniforms we were supplied with them.

Did you start smoking when you were in the Land Army?

In the Land Army on full strength cigarettes, only because I was the only one that wasn't smoking. They used to reckon I wasn't game. That's how I started.

Can you remember the first time they got you smoking?

It didn't have any effect on me. I just had a cigarette and once I bought a pipe and smoked that for fun - a very big old pipe. I've still got it here somewhere. It was only for foolery, just this pipe. I don't know why I

started that, but I was always - I changed later on in life. I was always full of life.

What sort of things would you get up to you mightn't tell Miss Lathey about?

There was a big football ball at Westbury. That was about 12 miles away from Deloraine. It was on a Friday night and, of course, we went to bed and we got up. We put mops in our bed, pulled the blankets up around them. There were three - four of us - and we had bought evening frocks and the chap that had the railway station, we asked him could we leave our cases there and we caught the train from Deloraine at 10 o'clock that night because the ball was going all night. There were two orchestras playing non-stop all night. It was like next morning. We weren't game to miss out. There was the four that liked dancing most so we boarded the train, took our clothes and we got off at Westbury. We went to the Westbury Hotel and we got dressed up in our long frocks. We went to the ball. Miss Lathey didn't know that we had been to that ball until we finished - the day we broke camp at Deloraine we told her and another day it was too wet to do potato work and we had a girl by the name of Pat Ross and she had an old car - an old T-model Ford car and we waited all day to go to work so we decided we'd all do ourselves up. We'd all a bath when Mr Hall - we were working for Mr Hall at the time and he came and told us it was too wet. He abandoned work about 2 o'clock. There'd be no need to go to work that day, it was no use. It was very foggy, very wet. So Miss Lathey told us we had the rest of the afternoon off. What were we going to do? She said 'You can go bush walking but you're not to go out of Deloraine.' So there were about

nine of us piled into a T-model Ford car. I had overalls on, boots, the hair in the old fashioned rolling pins and the butterflies and a scarf in my pocket. We went down to the service station. We knew Mr Best there. We used to con petrol out of him, so we went down to Mr Best and we got enough petrol to go to Launceston. Then we all went to Launceston and had a look around as we were and we were very lucky we didn't end up in the paper, the *Examiner*. We darted in doorways. We were going to be - we just couldn't have that because we would have all been in hot water. So we went back and told her we'd been up Great Lake and got lost. That's the sort of things we used to do. We used to get a bit fed up I think. But we weren't very popular with the local girls in Deloraine because we used to sneak their boyfriends from them. I suppose the uniform and new girls in town. This used to happen mostly wherever you went.

What sort of comments would you get from the local girls?

They just wouldn't talk to us. They just wouldn't talk to you, the young girls, but everybody else, it was a fantastic town to work in, Deloraine, the people. I went back in 1956 for three weeks' holiday, my husband and I and the two girls. The boy wasn't with us because he was younger and my brother-in-law took him and had him and I hadn't long been out of hospital and we decided to go on holiday and I said I'd like to go back to Deloraine. Well, the Johnsons and - not the old chap, he was dead then, but the sons - they came in to see me at the hotel and everybody still knew me. It was really lovely to go back and I think I'd like to go back again. I suppose a lot of the older people would be dead now and there was

Eade family there - there was an old Mr and Mrs Eade right opposite the Oddfellows Hall. They had a blacksmith's shop and we used to go over there when we were waiting for work every morning. It was right opposite, because it was cold. Deloraine was a shockingly cold place and I've never seen frosts in all my life like it up there. We've been out in the paddock all day waiting for the frost to thaw and it just wouldn't thaw - just freezing, absolutely freezing cold. You couldn't pick potatoes and that because they would have got cut as they came out and we stopped about 3 o'clock and then the boss would send us home. The contractor would send us home. But we worked all around. Our gang worked mainly around Deloraine, Mole Creek, Chudleigh, Moltema, Montana, Red Hills, Quamby, Golden Valley - they are the little outlying centres.

Were you always working on the potatoes?

Well we had a period off them when it got very wet and I think we had just about finished them. I think the camp was about to wind up, if I remember right, and they were stuck for employment at the Hagley Flax Mill. That's where we went doing work. They were very short of labour at the Hagley Flax Mill.

So you were still living in Deloraine?

Still living at the Oddfellows Hall and the Hagley Flax Mill, that was producing - farmers throughout the State were growing flax because they were using the flax hemp for uniform material and the linseed for oil and whatever and some of the gun cotton was used in the ammunition and they had two flax mills - one in Hagley and one in

Deloraine - up north - and there was one at Campania down south. We went to the Hagley Flax Mill and you worked on the flax. They were short of labour. All the girls weren't there. Some were still on potatoes, finishing off, but I was amongst the ones that went. We used to do a 12 hour shift. I mostly did the night shift. I preferred the night shift. I know I worked three months on the night shift before they made me change over. I didn't want to change but they made me. They reckoned I was getting tired and nervy and cranky and they made me change over. I was working the night shift. It was through the frosty weather, through the winter, because some mornings when we came off at 6 o'clock in the morning they used to have to use a blow lamp to get the engine to start. The frost would be so heavy. No, mainly potato and flax work we did there. That was the whole purpose of the camp was the potatoes and the flax work. Once some of the girls - I think I went to Beauty Point - we had to go and pack potatoes in eight-sided cases, slat cases, I was thinking to the prisoners of war were going to get them but they never got them. They sent them over there to the Islands, but the Japs got those. They never got them. Some girls went into do that and then when we - sometimes when we didn't have potatoes to dig out if they weren't quite ready up there a lot of farmers dug big pits in the ground and we pitted potatoes and we used to take them out and pit - they used to just all go in just as they came out. They would all be bagged up and carted and put in the tips - the pits - mainly Mr Griffin, Jack Griffen. I worked on his place with the pits. I remember that quite well and we used to get them out and grade them and first, second chats, that's what they were - first grade, second grade and chats - and we used to grade those. I used to mainly

grade about 15 bags a day. I know I was top scorer and I used to work pretty well, Sue. I used to be an utter slave driver but I used to work pretty well. We used to do that if it was too wet to get the potatoes out and sometimes the men would get the potatoes out of the pits and bring them into the barns and we would pick them over there. They would shoot them out in the barns, but mostly in the open paddocks where the pits were. They would pit them and they would put a layer of straw or a bale of straw on top of them and then a layer of potatoes - a few bags of potatoes and they kept them and you just graded them when they wanted to sell them. But that was about the only work I did up there, was potatoes - raw potatoes - and flax mill.

Can you describe to me the work at the flax mill?

Well I went into a shed. There were several sections. I went into - it was the scutching shed I was in. The flax was stored - it was carted in when it came from the farmers into this shed. That was the first stage of it. It came into the shed and it had the seed and everything in it. They had it all set up. When it came to me - you know how they put sheaves of hay in a barn - the old fashioned farmers used to do - this is how it was taken to this great big shed. One of the girls would pitch it down on to a conveyor belt. It was a continual thing. You didn't work fast but you had to work continuously, and this would come along a conveyor belt and as it started to come there was
about - there were four girls on the table I was on. I think there were about two along further on the conveyor belt. They used to have to spread the flax out thin, cut the band and spread it out, the twine, and spread it out

real thin, and by the time it got to me you would only have one straw going through. You couldn't have two or three heaped on top of each other because it was so highly inflammable. It would set the machinery on fire. Flax is very highly inflammable. When it went through my machine it would take the seed out of it. That would go down on to a conveyor belt and that would go right along the other end and into bags. The flax stalks would go overhead and along the other end and that would be carted out. As it went off the conveyor belt it would be re-tied, so it was re-tied, and then it would go out into the paddocks - no into the pits, I'm sorry, into the pits and it was treated with something and it would spend about seven or eight days in the pits and it would come out and you'd take it out into the paddocks and you would have to stand each sheaf up and the little string that was around it holding together in the sheaf, it would break when you stood it up and you'd have to wind it around your leg and stand it up like an umbrella to dry out. Well from there it went in - no, I was in the de-seeding shed - it went into the scutching shed and that's where it broke it all down into fibre like - you know how you see wool-work when they are spinning it, it would be rough cotton and then it would be sent away to Victoria - very interesting work. The seed all used to come out and go underground on a conveyor and the other used to go overhead, the shed I was in. I didn't do much. I mostly worked in that shed. Occasionally I'd been out in the pits when we were waiting. We used to have to wait until the farmers brought the flax in. If we ran out of - our shed was the first. If we had no flax to work on we went to the other sheds or helped wherever we could. We used to have to have a lot of fire drill practice.

Was there ever any fire there?

Yes, there was one there one night. It didn't do a lot of damage but we used to have fire drill practice about three nights a week when we were working so that each one had a place to go to and you had your fire extinguishers. There was a terrific amount of fire extinguishers there because it was so - flax is highly inflammable, Sue. I used to have some flax down at Mum's. I don't know what happened to it. I brought it home after it had been through our shed and you wouldn't ever think it was just a straw growing out in the paddock. It was like coarse cotton or coarse wool when they first bring it off a loom when they are spinning the wool. That was very interesting work. I would have liked to have continued on that.

How long were you on the flax for?

I think we were on the flax for about five or six months and then we went back to Deloraine. We weren't back long on potatoes. We were working for a Mr Hall. He died a few weeks ago. His death was in the *Mercury* and we went back to potatoes, to finish his potatoes and it was pouring with rain. We were up waiting for work and he came in and saw Miss Lathey and told us he'd be back at 9 o'clock but to be sure and listen to the wireless. Peace was declared and we finished off with him. The flax work was interesting. We went back to Mr Hall's and finished the work off but the day peace was declared we did no work. We did no work for nearly a week. We had five days' celebrations in Deloraine. I suppose you would never re-live it again. I have never been to

celebrations like it. Immediately I ended up in a bath of cold water. I was the first one to go. It was a funny little town. It's a lot bigger now they tell me but there was a Mr Hoskins, Johnny Hoskins. He had an electrical shop and he had a little Ford Prefect touring car. He was in bed but we went and got his car and we pushed it out and we pushed it up and down the street. Everybody went silly, Sue, and then we went to the butcher's shop and we got saveloys from there and sausages. We just asked them could we have them. Nobody cared, and we tied those behind the car - these string of sausages and saveloys, and dogs chased us everywhere. Miss Lathey told us we had to settle down after about three hours of all the nonsense so we settled down and we were allowed out that night and I think we mainly just went - I know that is the first time I've had an alcoholic drink was the night peace was declared because the policeman came to the hotel and asked several of us - we were in the Village Hotel - how old we were and we just said we wouldn't be in this if we wasn't 21, because needless to say I was nearly always the spokeswoman. I had to be. You have got some very shy, timid little girls amongst you. I said 'Constable Lockett' - his name was Lockett - I said 'Constable Lockett, we wouldn't be in these if we weren't.' That was our uniform - just used to pass it off like that, so that was all right but the next day we were organised. So many girls had to go here. There was six of us. We went to the bakehouse -I can't remember all the other girls and we scrubbed bags and bags and bags of potatoes with brushes. I wouldn't know how many bags now, Sue. Do you know what they were doing, and this was for the barbecue on the third - second - third night, along the banks of the Meander River, and we had to roast these potatoes in the baker's

ovens. We did that and some of the other girls - there was all different things to do. We were organised but I know our group, we did - there might have been half a dozen of us - we did the potatoes. We scrubbed, washed these potatoes because they were cooked in their skins, baked in the oven. Then the farmers supplied beasts. They were dressed and put on these big poles and they were barbequed on these
spits - roast sheep, pigs, cows, you name it, cattle - and the celebrations went for three days and three nights when they got going. It was a real gymkhana. I think everybody for miles and miles and miles around - I had never seen anything in all my life like it. We really had a ball. We went for three days and three nights. We were allowed the whole time to join in the celebrations. We were told we were not to do anything wrong. We were not to be bad girls and we had to honour our uniform. We danced in the streets - we did everything, Sue. We really did. We had the old fashioned - the young chaps that came in could sing cowboy songs. They come in on their horses and their guitars and they rode up and down the street playing their guitars real cowboy style. It was really a fantastic occasion. I have never forgotten the peace celebrations in Deloraine. We folded camp on the 18th of October but on the Sunday night before I asked could I go to the Scott family for my last farewell. I'm sorry I did. I had never drank wine in my life and I had 18 little tiny glasses. Sue, I have never felt so ill and I was all right before they took me home and the fresh air hit me in the face. I was totally under the weather, Sue. We were leaving Deloraine the next day - on the Monday I think it was. Yes, we came down on the Monday, the 19th. We had to be in Hobart for the Hobart Show. That's where we did our final march and

finished up, but next morning at breakfast at half-past-five, fried bread and tomato sauce and us girls - there were several of us that had been in this over at Scotts - and you ought to have seen the fried bread and the other girls because they were hungry, having their second helpings of fried bread and tomato sauce.

We are talking about the Duke and Duchess of Gloucester.

The Duke of Gloucester was the Governor General during the War out here. They came to Tasmania and they came to Deloraine. We had to form a guard of honour. It was the only time I have ever been close to royalty in my life and shook hands with them, and we formed a guard of honour and at the Deloraine Hotel we had a luncheon with them. She was a gracious lady but he was a real old bully, really was, gruff, a very gruff man, but she was beautiful. They were just passing through and they came and we formed a guard of honour - the Land Army girls did - and then we had a luncheon put on at the Deloraine Hotel. The council put that on and we were invited as guests for luncheon with them. There wasn't a great deal about that. We just sort of met them briefly, shook hands with them and then went about having our luncheon and then back to work, out of our uniforms, our dress uniforms and back to work, Sue, but it was an occasion to meet royalty and that was while he was Governor General here.

Did they come out and have a look at you working?

No, just in the town, no, they were passing through. They visited Deloraine, then Burnie, then they came back

and into Western Junction and flew back to Hobart because they came up north first. When they first arrived they came up north and the council had arranged for them to come to Deloraine and we were invited to be guests of the council and form a guard of honour when they arrived and to have luncheon with them. We had a buffet luncheon at the Deloraine Hotel. It was very nice but as soon as the luncheon was over we were whisked back to camp, out of our uniforms and back to the potatoes. We never had much time off.

Can you tell me a little bit about Oddfellows House.

It was a hall.

Hall, sorry.

It was an Oddfellows Lodge hall. There was the big hall part where - I think they used to use functions, probably have functions to raise money or something, I don't know - but we slept in that part. We just had a bed, the same bed supplied by the Army, and a mattress and our Army blankets. I don't even remember whether we had sheets or not. I don't remember, Sue. We just slept so many up one side - 15 up - there was 30 because there was 15 up one side and they supplied us with lockers to hang our clothes in. They were up the middle of the hall, back to back the lockers were. Then the back part where was our kitchen we used to have a long trestle table and an open fireplace where you were rostered - we had to do the housework there too. We had to wash up the breakfast things before we went to work. We had to make the toast of a morning. Yes, there was 30 of us because we used to have to make 60 slices of toast. Each girl had two

slices of toast. We used to have to make the 60 slices of toast. We had to wash up. You were rostered for home duties while you were there. You came out of that and there was a little porch - there was a little room which was the ticket office. That was Miss Lathey's bedroom. She slept there on her own, right next to the big hall we slept in. Then you came down this end and there was just a little skillion part and we had two baths they put in. I don't know who put them in but somebody put them in. They were there when we got there. You had a chip heater that sometimes went and sometimes didn't. You more often had a cold bath than a hot bath. You used to have to take it in turns to have your bath when you came home from work. But what we did, we used to just have a quick bath. You'd get the dirt off and then the next one would be in and then so many would bath before tea and so many would bath afterwards because you had - with the chip heater getting the water hot and the girls that didn't make the toast, they used to have to cut the bread for the lunches. It would be week about, we'd be changed, the home duties, and they'd have to cut the bread for our lunches and we did have butter or margarine or something I suppose. We used to have dairy butter off the farms and we used to cut the slices of buttermilk loaf. That was our main morning - I never remember having anything else for morning tea or afternoon tea, only buttermilk loaf. But fortunately I loved buttermilk loaf because Mum used to make it. Sometimes we used to buy ourself biscuits or something like that, Sue, and take with us, or a bit of shop cake, but there used to be a lot of shop cake around in those days, or fruit.

So how did you find working and living in a large group of girls?

Good, fantastic, you were inclined to have separate - there were usually about four of us. There was Edna Paul, when she came - she wasn't there all the time; myself, and I'm being rude now, Marie Stanwicks from Launceston, she was a nice girl; Norma Brown; Gwen Webb came but she was a very young immature girl. I used to try and mother her.

How old was she?

She had only just turned 18 when she came in but she wasn't in a long time before war ended because nobody knew the War was going to end. She had joined up as she became older, old enough to join. Joan Webster, she was a great pal of mine. She ended up marrying a cousin of mine. Margaret Field was there. I'm just starting to think of some of them now, but it is a bit hard to relate to. I can't remember who the lot of us were that first went there. I know I was one of the first. The one I had the fight with, Margaret Harris, she came later. Edna Paul came. I think Edna did go with us.

So would you have a smaller group of friends or would you have all gone?

No, you wouldn't all go together. You would be I suppose half-a-dozen perhaps in each group because you'd really be bosom pals and we'd go out together, but we all got on very well together really.

Did the other girls come from similar backgrounds to yourself?

No, strangely enough there wasn't a lot, the ones I was with, that were off farms or country girls. There was Iris Abbott, Helen Falconder, Marie Stanwicks. There was a lot of girls came from Launceston that had never been on farms but they thoroughly enjoyed it.

How did they get on? Did they have problems with the work or did they fit in?

They settled down once they knew - they had been to something else before they came. I don't know how actually they first faced up to the farm. The first girls I knew that came to Cressy when I was there - one was Lee Park; I don't know where she is now. Actually, I don't know how she got in because she was stone deaf but I met her about 10 years ago in Launceston and I was talking real loud to her and she said 'You don't have to now, Dora.' I said 'Why?' She said 'I was the first person to have micro-surgery in Tasmania on my ears' and she said 'I can hear you after all these years.' I thought well how lovely but she came - she was the youngest of six in the family - and she came from Launceston and I don't think she had ever seen a cow in her life but she came to Cressy, because we used to be rostered in our training. We had men to teach us what to do. They had milking machines and she came. She was put on dairy work with me the first week she was there, because I'd done dairy work and she came. I think she might have come about a week after I got there and she said this morning, she came into the dairy, we were introduced and we got to know each other a bit the night before, and I said to her 'We've got to do the cows.' Of course, we go over to the dairy and being me, she said 'Well what am I going to do?' and I said 'You've got to

wash them first.' So in the room where the separator was and all the milk buckets and everything we used to - there was quite a lot of towels that used to be kept there for washing your hands and stuff and a couple of face washers - I was going about putting the cups on my cow and I'd done my cow and I come to Lee, she is washing the cow bodily. Well I let her finish. Sue, I let her finish. She has often laughed about it afterwards. She thought she had to bath the cow. I laughed until I was hysterical and so did the men because the man that was in charge of the dairy, he thought it was the best joke he'd ever seen. I just said 'You've got to wash the cow first' not realising that she would start washing the cow bodily and drying it with a towel, if you please. I've never seen anything so funny in all my life. Some of us used to have to split wood. I was a champion at breaking axe handles but I only used to break those because I hated splitting wood, Sue. I used to break them on purpose. We were only allowed out of a Saturday night at Cressy and we were about 3 miles from the township and we were supposed to march there and march back, even if our officer wasn't with us. We were allowed to go to a dance one Saturday night but we were supposed to be home by half-past-ten but four of us got home at half-past 12 and the officer wasn't too pleased. I know I was working in the dairy on the Sunday morning so we had to go to church. We didn't finish in the dairy until half-past 10 and we had to be three miles into Cressy at the church by 11 o'clock after we had a shower and got into our overalls and our best shirt, one of our good working shirts.

You would wear your overalls to church.

Yes, that's all you had, Sue, then when you were training, was your overalls and your shirt and your shoes and - no, we had boots then. We were issued with two pair of boots, so this morning the four of us got there. It was 20 past 11 and I thought I'm not allowed to go into church late. That was my own law, so we met some of the young lads from the town who we knew coming down - they were coming up the street or down the street, whichever you like - with an old horse and they were taking it out in the bush to shoot it because it was too old for anything else and they were going to shoot it. One of them said to me 'I bet you're not game enough to ride this horse up and down the street bare-back while church is in.' Well Dora was game enough. So I rode the horse and we all had a lot of fun. None of us went to church, the four of us that were late. We didn't go to church. I knew that we were going to have a barbecue out in one of the paddocks near the bush when we came back and I knew I was going to be asked what happened at church. I wasn't that silly so we got rid of the horse and we were outside the church when one of the other - they were all coming out - and one of the town women, a Mrs Herbert, I knew her and I said to her 'We were too late for church and I'm going to get into awful trouble,' I said. I said 'We were late finishing in the dairy.' I said what happened and she told me about these babies being christened and what went on in the service so when I got back sure and behold Dora was asked what happened in church. I told it and Miss Lathey never ever knew that we didn't go to church, but we told her coming down on the train. We thought we would wait our time until we were coming down to the Hobart Show because we were as good as finished and she couldn't do anything to us then. But we used to have fun, Sue.

Can you tell me when you first went to Cressy, when you first arrived, what it was like.

It was horrible, because I'd never been so far from home. I had had two teeth out the day before and being - a week before but they bled at the last minute. We went up by train and we were met at Campbelltown by the bus driver and he took us from Campbelltown on the bus and he was delivering mail. It was a Saturday. He was delivering mail, groceries and papers. We seemed to go miles out in the bush and I think we spent about 3 and-a-half hours on this bus after we left the train at 12 o'clock and we finally got to the research farm. Val Fatherlay was the girl there. Nobody liked her. That's the girl's name. I just thought of it. She wasn't particularly nice. We were just raw recruits as far as she was concerned. She was section leader. We were taken - a lot of farmers lived - a lot of the men that worked on the farm lived in these houses all dotted about that taught us how to do things. There was one house where Miss Lathey lived, or the officers in charge, and Val Fatherlay lived over there, and that's where we ate and had all our meals. We were in another house where the rooms were just dormitories and your hot water came from those - you feed it on - they used to call them black jacks, was it black jacks?

An Aga or wood - - -

I don't know what it was but you had to feed wood into it and get it hot. You had about two minutes to shower. Sometimes the water was hot; sometimes it was cold. You were out of bed about 5.30 in the morning. It was all

very Army style, Sue. We were all young girls. I don't think any of us had been far from home before. We all felt very homesick but once we got over the weekend. I think if we had went on a Monday we would have been better because we would have went straight to work but once we got out in the paddock with the men - the men that taught us to do things, they were all married men but they were all fantastic. There were so many to do ploughing, so many to feed the sheep, sheep feeding. I know I went on ploughing with a Dick Blake. That was my first job. I wasn't ploughing, I was harrowing and he slept all day because he didn't know - at first - he didn't know that I could harrow because I'd done it before at home right from when I was about his high I used to go with Dad with one team of horses and do it and he would do the
other - and I was harrowing and he used to sleep. They used to have fun, the men, because they didn't do much work I might tell you. Once they told us what we had to do, and if you went on sheep feeding, hand feeding, you used to go out with a horse by the name of Tommy Quick. He was a deadly horse and you had a little cart like a milk cart and you would cart your feed out and then come back. That's what you'd do because they had a lot of sheep and then if you was in the dairy you had to be responsible for doing the pig work. They had a lot of pigs and you had to clean the sties out, feed them, castrate them, you were taught how to do that, put rings in their noses and then - what else was
there - there was sowing the crops, ploughing - you were taught everything, Sue, but once we initially got out into the paddocks and out working it was beaut and you soon settled down. It was just the going from a home life I think on the Saturday, Dad took me to the railway

station in Hobart and I had to be there at half-past 8 to catch the train, I was given a rail pass and just told to board the train but I was feeling very miserable because I'd had the teeth out a week before and they didn't bleed - and this was what used to happen with me - and they bled afterwards and I felt terrible and we were all tired because we had actually travelled up and we'd travelled all this way around back to these little farms and we'd gone from home, I think, a home life, but after the first day working we were too tired to think any more about it, Sue. We soon settled down. It was really beaut.

Was the training useful for you, because you'd grown up on a farm?

It was in a sense because I learnt more things. Although Dad was a good farmer and a man that could turn his hand at anything you learnt more scientific things. There was different things. You could never leave off learning about farming and what was the greatest part was seeing how other people did things, Sue, after being used to one person showing you how to do things. It was having a lot of other people to show you the different ways of working a farm. It was useful. It was very interesting because you learn other people's ideas and it was more or less a research farm. They were - I suppose the whole procedure - they were researching things and they used to have different grasses there they used to grow under cover, experimental plots and that, which was very good.

Was Mrs Hodgeman there at the time?

No, she used to come up from town. Sheila Hodgeman wasn't there. She used to come up from town and see us.

I don't think we did any exams. I don't remember. I don't think so. I know when I left I got a Weekly Times Farm Handbook. I don't know what that was for. I don't know why they gave me that. I don't think we did any exams. I never remember, Sue, but you either passed - they must have - I suppose the men made reports on how you worked.

Did the other girls come mostly from a background similar to yours or were there many city - - -

I would say more city girls, Sue. The girls I worked with, there was one girl from Campania, Phyl Workman, her father - he had about 50 acres. A lot of the girls I was with - Edna Paul was from down at Huon - down Huon way. She had come from an orcharding place. I don't know whether her people had an orchard or not but she would come from an orcharding place, she'd come from the country. She would have a fair idea, but most of the girls I was with - I'm just trying to think - Norma Lipman was from Hobart - there was quite a few Launceston girls. Strangle enough they'd all been to Methodist Ladies College in Launceston, which struck me as being rather funny to think that you had college girls, but I don't know about the early ones. When you were here on the farm you were more or less excluded - on your own you were excluded from a lot of the other girls because you just didn't ever meet them. They weren't always at the Hobart Show if you were there. I was fortunate enough, when I was working down south I went to the Hobart Show each year and I looked after the animals in the pens of a night and then Mr Neville Lucas, I usually used to look after his dairy stock because he used to have prize dairy stock and I used to lead his. He was always grand

champion with the bull and I used to lead his in the parade. That was work I liked doing. One year I drove a tractor for Mr Calvert. He bought a new tractor and I drove it up from Rokeby to Hobart, to the Hobart Show. I went - took the tractor on the Tuesday and I drove at the grand parade on the Wednesday. When you were working on your own without any other Land girls near you you sort of were isolated. I didn't get to know a lot of the girls only when I was in the mobile camp. That was why I was so pleased about it because I was going to get to meet more of them. We were going to be working as a group work instead of on your own and we didn't have - there was nothing going that you got together to meet them because you were all too busy working. You would see them in Hobart - if you run into them in Hobart or Launceston you would always make yourself known and say 'I'm so-and-so' and quite often some of the girls I've met in Hobart if I was on leave, but I never had a lot of leave, Sue. You just went on working because it was a war effort and you didn't get much leave, Sue. It was just work, work, work, work, work - which I thoroughly enjoyed. I've always said it was the best days of my life, in my working life that is. I really enjoyed it, even though it was hard work. When I was at Mr Calvert's I did - some of it was my own fault - because I volunteered but I was working in the summer-time down there 18 hours a day from daylight until well past dark.

What were you doing on that job?

Orchard work or sheep work - lambing time was the hardest time actually, not so much the orchard work because you had to go around in the early hours of the morning and then late of a night and you had all your other work to

do in between, whether it was ploughing or sowing crops, you would have so many crops for the lambs coming in and you'd have to have more crops planted for the sheep as they grew older and you would work a full day.

So you worked on this placement before you got to Deloraine?

To Deloraine, yes. Deloraine was my last placement.

You were at this place for about a year?

Yes, a bit over a year, Sue. I know when I finished up down there because my father had pneumonia and pleurisy in the same time as - was President Roosevelt or President Eisenhower - Roosevelt.

Roosevelt came in later.

He died just before the War finished in Europe.

Then Eisenhower took over.

Dad had pneumonia and pleurisy and Mum sent for me to come home and I rang Mrs Hodgeman and asked - because there was a lot of vegetables in - could I have a week off and they gave me a week off. That was in March 1944. I went back and I was only back there about eight days when I got my transfer to the mobile camp at Deloraine. That's right because Mrs Hodgeman rang me and asked me was I happy at Calverts and I said 'I was happy but I wouldn't mind a change if there was one going' and she told me about the mobile camp but I didn't let myself think about it because I didn't think I'd get it, Sue. I

was surprised. I was only back at Calverts about a week. I forget who took my place down at Calverts, but another girl took my place and I went to the mobile camp at Deloraine but I know it was the time President Roosevelt died because Dad had pneumonia and I had a week off. I went home. I presume I was cutting cauliflowers and taking them to Hobart for him to the market where he used to sell them and to the shops if my memory serves me right and then I was back about a week, say roughly a fortnight, and I had about two or three days leave and I went straight to Deloraine.

So while you were at this place at Rokeby you didn't have a great deal of contact with other Land Army girls?

No, I very seldom saw any of them. There were some girls not far from me. Sheila Cooper was there at Acton at Cambridge. They used to call him Cocky Rogers. He lived in Acton House and they lived in Acton View. I think there might have been half-a-dozen girls working there. He had the two properties, but if we went to a dance around in the area of a Saturday night I remember one occasion when we went over to the old airport, Lanhurn Airport, the Air Force had a dance over there and we went. I can't even remember some of the girls now. There was a girl from Blackwall at Seven Mile Beach that took my job. Some of the girls from Acton and myself - the worst night I've ever put in in my life, Sue, and where the new airport is there used to be a swamp across there. I'd been told about it but of course it was about 2 o'clock in the morning we're going home and we suddenly found ourselves on the edge of a swamp. We had to walk a wire fence through the middle of this swamp one at a time

and I had some screaming girls. I was just as frightened as what they were because we didn't know how deep the swamp was but finally - we were frightened the wire was going to break - but I said 'Well we'll walk it one at a time.' It seemed to me, it probably was from about as far as here down to the corner but we thought it was 10 miles, and that was the only time - but I didn't go out very much at Mr Calvert's because I was always too tired when I finished and you had to walk because they didn't have any social life. They just stayed at home and it was too far. It wasn't much fun. Not that you minded walking but you were too tired after your day's work. Another night - why did we camp out one night? At the foot of - you know as you go into Hobart from the airport, they altered the road since then but there used to be the old road going up around the Tunnel Hill. We camped out under trees there one night. For the life of me I can't think why we did that. It might have been some exercise we had to do or whether we were just going home for a dance and got tired and camped under the trees and slept out in the open. I can't remember, but I had very little contact with other girls.

Did you feel isolated?

I did really. That was why I wanted a change. I loved being down at Mr Calvert's. He was a great old man to work for but it was common knowledge if you could work for Calvert you could work for anybody else in Tasmania because they were slave drivers. They were too but I didn't mind, Sue. When you joined up you knew you had a job to do, as far as I was concerned, and I'd always been brought up by Dad that if a job wasn't worth doing well give it up and let someone else do it. He used to get a

bit cheesed off at times, mind you, particularly one day when I went and had lunch and we were picking apricots and I had to wait for a load, to get a load to cart to the packing shed, so I used to have a bucket and I'd go and help some of the pickers pick instead of just standing around. I didn't have to pick. This smart picker that I hardly knew, he used to come in and pick every year - there's no doubt that he killed the snake - but he put it in my bucket and there was two or three apricots and I thought well I'll have an apricot to eat before I start. I put my hand in the bucket and all I got was a snake. I couldn't tell you what I said to him because when I was seven I was bitten by a snake and I've got a thing about snakes and I didn't work any more that day. I just took myself up to the house and I went to bed and Mr Calvert came and asked me what was wrong - I went and lied on the bed - I said 'I will not work with anybody that puts a snake in anywhere near where I'm working.' But he didn't come to work the next day. I said I was sorry but I just wouldn't work, Sue. I said 'No, I won't work while he's in the orchard.' I said 'I'll ring up Mrs Hodgeman and tell her I'm finishing here.' I am so petrified of snakes. Something happens to you. I can remember being bitten, you see, so I remember how it was and I was so petrified of snakes. It's the one and only thing that I am petrified of in this world so much is a snake. I just freeze. I couldn't kill one.

So other workers would come in.

The fruit pickers would be employed. They would be, what do they call them - - -

Seasonal.

Seasonal workers, that's the word, seasonal workers. They would come and pick the fruit. The chappie that worked with me, he would cart the empty cases or help me with the cases. We used to have - sometimes he would have a tractor and trailer or sometimes I would have the horse-drawn wagon. It depended who got there first in the morning and who got their thing ready first. It didn't worry me whether I had horses or a tractor. I was just as happy with the horses and we would take them.

I was wondering in all the different places that you worked which employer or which employers did you like working for most?

I would have to say Mr Jack Griffin at Deloraine, although he was an Englishman. He had a wonderful sense of humour, very good.

Why did you like working with him or for him?

He was so easy to get on with, Sue. He used to always ride out to us on his horse. He was so direct in what he wanted doing, appreciated what you did. He could see that we were really working, you know, as men, very appreciative he was, although he was a typical Englishman and I used to feel the cold a lot and I bought myself a lambskin sleeveless jacket and he always used to call me 'mother's little cotton wool darling' because I used to wrap myself up warmly in the winter-time in the cold frosty mornings. No, he had a wonderful sense of humour and some of the farmers you worked for, or some of the men, were inclined to think that you were cheap labour

for them and they didn't respect you or the female species.

Can you remember any particular incidents where that sort of attitude came out?

Yes, we were working out at Red Hills for a Mr Fear. That was where we had some Italian POWs working there. When you dug the potatoes out and they used to cart them back to the sheds you had to load them on the lorries - the full bags on to the lorries. I had a bit of a spat with him one day because a couple of Italians came over and wouldn't let me lift the bags. They wanted to do it because they thought it was wrong that the women should have to lift these bags. We had a real argument him and I and I said they struck me as this - that our own men stood back and watched us lift them - because he had other Australian - the ordinary worker working for him as well but they used to think it was funny to see us girls struggling with the big - if they were big bags of potatoes and most of us didn't have much problem with them but when you got them on your shoulder and had to throw them up in a lorry or back up to the lorry and lift them off your shoulder, and we got into trouble for - I did - for allowing the Italians to help me.

Do you ever remember there being a rule that as a Land Army girl you shouldn't be required to lift any more than 35 pound bags?

No, never, never, Sue. Did they have it on the mainland?

Yes, some of the girls spoke of that even over here.

Over here, no, I did - I never ever turned down a job with the lifting and I used to carry hand fill - I've loaded bales of grass hay off my shoulder to shoulder out of the shed and carried them and loaded them on the truck. Probably some of it was my own fault or enthusiasm because I could always lift well and I'd been used to it at home, lifting. It didn't worry me a great deal except that when the Italians - the POWs, there were two of them working there - said 'Come on, we'll help you. We'll do it for you' and I stood back and just moved the lorry up he came and ticked me off because I was letting them do my work and I just admired them for it.

So what happened when you stood up to him?

He just walked away and I just said 'Well if they want to do it they do it as far as I'm concerned,' because the District Rural Agriculture Office up there, they had some control over the Italian prisoners of war, but there was an Army base up there, a Lieutenant Lane and, no Lieutenant Frank O'Shea and Colonel Lane was in charge of the POWs around Deloraine and he was going to report them and I said 'Well you ahead' but I said 'I don't think it will make any difference because we used to go around there and do some of the - they used to have Army rations for them, cigarettes and that and chocolates and when their mail came in two or three of us used to go around of a night and help them put them together, for them to take them out and distribute - and I said 'I'll tell him for you.' But they never minded. I saw no reason because they were prisoners of war they had to be treated harshly by farmers and I had been used to them down home because down where I came from the farmers, two or three

of the farmers down there, they were the first ones to get Italian prisoners of war. There wasn't a great deal of them out here but they got them and one particular place, my step-brother, his wife, her father had two and even when she got married, I was in the Land Army when she got married, but even she requested they be at her wedding breakfast which I thought was - because they worked there they were to come in and she requested that they sit down at the table at the wedding breakfast.

Did you have much social contact with the prisoners of war outside, just walking?

No, no, not unless working with them. I only struck one nasty one and that was out at Quamby Bluff. We were talking one morning in the paddock about - just after Mussolini was killed and he belonged to the Fascists and he was a bit nasty. The farmer came. I can't think who he was, the man that had Quamby Bluff. We didn't do much work there. He came and took him to another part. He would have been a nasty type. No, no social - we weren't supposed to have any contact but this one that was at Mr Fear's - we used to sit over in the paddock and we might be sitting over there having our lunch and they might be sitting over here and if they got their mail the day before from Italy they would, or photos of their children when the mail came through or their wives, they would show us their photos and they would be that excited and thrilled. I can imagine now after being married to a prisoner of war that was treated differently by the Japs how it must have been for them to be so many thousands of miles away from home and get photos and that. They used to ask us to try an teach them some of our language and at this particular place this Mr Fear, this Antonio, we

were working there for about six weeks I think and one Sunday morning he turned up to take me to church because I used to try and teach him to talk English, and Jean Slattery went crook. She thought he was getting - he was married with two - he was just a friendly type. There was absolutely nothing else, Sue, he was just friendly and I was trying to teach him English in a different part but they mostly worked in a different part, so if there was 10 girls picking up potatoes and they were picking them up too we would plough them out up one side and down the other and you would move to the middle until you cut the potatoes out and they would be that side working and we'd be this side. Really the only time we'd meet was at morning tea or when we sat down to have our dinner - mostly lunch-time because Mr Fear used to go back to the home to have his dinner, but I didn't work with them a great deal, only up around there, but I did down home around Orielton there were quite a few and we used to see them but nobody down there took any notice of them. They were just ordinary human beings as far as we were concerned, just that they were put into a situation that they didn't possibly want to be in like our men and they were captured and they were sent out here.

> Just getting back to employers, you were talking about this particular employer, this Mr Fear, were there any other employers that you think might have treated you differently because you were a woman doing the job?

No, most of the others were all good. As I said. Mr Calvert and Mr Blackwell - they were both very good, but Mr Calvert was the hardest working man. It was a common thing because Calverts, down in the south-east, South Arm

way and Sandford, that was the home of the Calverts, and they worked from daylight until dark and there was an old saying amongst the old pioneers 'If you could work for Calvert you could work for anybody' because they were slave drivers. Mr Calvert did - I suppose he thought of you as a man. I remember once we had to cut some blue gum trees down, this man and I, and on the end of this cross-cut saw, three foot
cross-cut saw, and blue gum in Tasmania is the toughest tree that you can come across. It was hard work but he made no allowances - Mr Calvert didn't make any allowances for the work that I was told to do. I was given work the same as the man, who was in his '40s. He just treated me as a man, not as a woman. If I had to go and dip sheep I had to dip them. If I had to brand them or I had to help crutch them - that's all there was about it. You did it. It wasn't because you were female you didn't do those things.

Was there ever any job that you felt you shouldn't have been asked to do?

When I told Mrs Hodgeman I'd killed sheep she raised the roof. I said it was my own idea. I wanted to learn how to do it because I said I hadn't ever killed a pig at home but I'd helped Dad dress the pigs and I said I wanted to learn, Sue, and she told me well I'd better cut it out. I wasn't supposed to be doing it. When we were up at Deloraine, that was only one afternoon, in the lunch break, there was a killing shed at the back of the paddock - Mr Best's killing shed, where we were working this paddock of potatoes of Mr Johnson's was this killing shed and we went over in our lunch break to have a look and we climbed up and they used to bring them in in a

race and they used get uplofted, shoot them between the eyes, and I actually shot one. That's not a thing I'd want to do a lot of. It was that they asked me did I want to have a go and I suppose being young, yes, I haven't done this. I'll have a go. No, most of the men, most of the farmers were very good, Sue. But Mr Calvert was the only one that expected you to work as a man, really work hard. That was the hardest work I ever did was working for him and he didn't have much up-to-date equipment. It was all old. He bought one new tractor after I went there, but it was the old Fortune tractors and the old fashioned spray pumps. That was the thing we had to do, was spray the fruit trees. They were old fashioned spray pumps and with the old Ronaldson Tippett motor that would go sometimes. No.

Did the spray ever affect your skin or affect your health in any way?

No, I don't think so. I used to guard against the spray the same as I do when I spray the fruit. I've sprayed the fruit trees ever since we've been here. We used to - Mrs Calvert used to supply us with gauze, the white gauze they used to use in the olden days to make dairy butter to get the buttermilk out. We used to just tie that loosely around the back of our head and I always used to wear a hat and I always used to wear gloves spraying and I still wear gloves because the fruit tree sprays can affect your skin and give you very nasty dermatitis, Sue. He told me that all before I began to spray. I don't think so, Sue.

Do you think that the work in the Land Army affected your health in any way - for good or bad?

I think so, Sue. I think so. It mightn't have done until we got around I would say the 45 year age mark, but actually I suppose I've been very fortunate because when I had lung surgery they gave me up for dead and I was 4 and-a-half months in hospital, just everything went wrong because I was a bleeder.

Did your work in the Land Army affect your health at all at the time?

I don't think so, Sue, no. I was the healthiest. I put on weight, ate like a horse and I had a whale of a time.

You were telling me before how much weight you put on.

I was 6 stone 1 when I went in and when I came out I was 12 stone. I doubled it; incredible. I really did. I doubled my weight. As a child I was very short and very fat. When I was 10 I was about that high and I was about that wide. See Belinda is big now but that's just family history repeating itself. My two girls were both like that, except that Belinda's mother, she thinned out and after she had Belinda she put it on and she's never lost it. She is about Belinda's size, a bit bigger. But no, I don't think so, Sue, I
just - - -

Was that all muscle?

There was just muscle - actually I didn't look a great deal of difference in size. I've never had fat arms. I've always had the skinniest of arms. My father had

thin arms - a lean build - but what I put on I sort of put it on here, more around here than anywhere, across here. I used to be very broad shouldered when I had lung surgery and of course taking the ribs off the side, I've got no ribs on the side at all, that did away with it. They were very very good to you. I had wonderful meals.

I was wondering, before you were telling me a little about how I think some of the girls had been sent off to the Scottsdale Camp and you were telling me a bit about that, can you go over that again?

If you were naughty you were sent to Scottsdale. I think that the field officer too was very severe - very stern. It was only a thing that I'd heard about it. The toughies were all at Scottsdale. That's what they used to say. I've never been to Scottsdale Camp and had nothing to do with any girls who were there but it was the commonest known factor. Miss Lathey used to make it known at Deloraine if you played up you went to Scottsdale and you'd really know all about it when you got there, but I think she was a very severe - she was more of a middle-aged woman and a very severe field officer and I think most of the girls up there - they had the reputation of being tough girls. I don't know why, Sue. I didn't know whether they meant tough workers or tough morally.

Can you remember ever there being an incident of a Land Army girl being asked to leave?

I remember Betty Connolly left but I don't know what she did. I never ever did know, Sue. She was only in about five months but I knew her beforehand and she wasn't a

very nice girl. I should imagine it would be all over men. Another one, Hazel Patmore, I knew her before she went in. I knew of her and she was a very flighty girl but she was into demob. She had lots of cautions. Mind you they had their moments - you had your moments that you were chastised and you had morals to keep up and naturally being in uniform when you were out in uniform, well I always behaved myself, Sue, because I knew that I had to and it was much the same as the upbringing as a child. As I said, my father was very strict. When you went out you always knew if you misbehaved he would know before you got home because everybody knew that he rules with an iron rod and if they saw us doing anything wrong they'd tell Dad. It was just a thing that grew on me, Sue. I mean I wasn't perfect. I broke camp. When I went to, for instance, when I told you about going to the dance and we did various things such as going out, sneaking out and going to dances or going to a picture show and going to Launceston that they never knew anything about and the Sunday night before we finished in Deloraine we had a celebration and we drank too much wine, Sue, and we got fried bread and tomato sauce for breakfast next morning which wasn't real good. We were very ill and I'll never forget that train trip to Hobart that day. I was ill, Sue. Of course, then we had to go to the Hobart Show for the Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday where we wound up. I don't remember any girl but, of course, as I said working and isolated on a farm on my own I didn't have a lot of contact. Occasionally the girls that you trained with you would see them or you would ring them up but I never wrote very much to any of them, if ever. I never seemed to have time, Sue.

Did you used to get the *Land Army Gazette*?

Occasionally, Sue. That didn't come - I don't remember how soon that came out. That didn't come out when I was first in. I think it was the only thing that came out about when the welfare - they had a welfare committee - and I think when they started raising money down in headquarters they used to sell different things I think to raise money for the welfare fund, in case any girl was off sick and needed money and when we disbanded, I don't know how much money they gave us now, as a gratuity. It wasn't very much.

They actually gave you some money?

It might have been - I'll say 25 pound. It wasn't very much. It was what the Government, whatever they had in the welfare fund when War was over and we were disbanding the State Government or the Agriculture Department gave them, subsidised them for the same amount as they had so that there would be more. We were paid pro rata for the year's service. I just can't remember. It might have been 25 pound; it might have been 30 pound. There wasn't a whole lot to go around the whole 132 girls that were left, Sue.

Were you given any other sort of help?

No, none whatsoever and a couple of times I have written. I wrote to Bill McMahon and asked for a pension, to consider paying the Land Army girls a pension, and he wrote back. I've still got the letter here somewhere. I could look it up and send it to you if you are interested. I've got it. He wrote back and said unfortunately, owing to the fact that we didn't serve

outside Australia, we weren't entitled to it. I think that was his wording. Then who else did I write to and asked them to consider? But we've never been - the answer to that was we weren't a recognised service and we came under Manpower but yet the Red Cross workers got a pension that were serving in the War, whether they were in Australia or outside and some VADs got a pension but we got nothing, nothing at all, Sue, and I've always thought that was most unfair that we didn't receive a pension of some kind, because my word we worked hard.

Looking back over the years do you think that your work in the Land Army and the contribution to the war effort was acknowledged or has been acknowledged?

I think it was acknowledged by the State Government but not by the Federal Government. We were just another part of Australia and to me they didn't think we played any part at all, Sue, to be quite honest. We were by the State Government. Basil Plumber was the Director of Manpower at the time - B.O. Plumber - and Mr S.R. Adams who - later he retired and lived here between Orford and Triabunna at Barton Avenue. She was one of the patronesses of the Land Army, Mrs Adams, and he was something to do with it. It's in one of the books I think. He was the man that got this going, the Manpower - I said national a while ago - it was the National Service Manpower.

What do you think about the community, the broader community at the time? Would you get comments say if you wore your uniform into town?

Yes, mostly in the smaller townships, Sue. You were more or less looked upon by most people as doing a wonderful job and the only time that I felt that we were looked down was when we used to go to the YMCA Hostel when we came into town and stayed there overnight. There was the Army, the Navy and the Air Force girls. They would be one side of the room and the Land girls would be confined to the other side. They thought we were beneath them. They thought we were a different class of people because we worked on the land and, mind you, we used to give back as good as what came. Not all of those other uniform girls but just some of them.

> Can you remember the sort of comments that you might get or was there any particular answer? I was just asking you about any comments or attitudes that the other women's services might have.

When I was doing the vegetable production they would come with their lorries for the vegetables and they would expect us to load it because we were the lower type of worker. They were in the Army and we were just the farm worker. They would expect us to load it although it was their job to load it if they came with the truck. We only had to get them ready to be loaded and put them in crates and Mr Vince would never allow me to load them there. He owned the vegetable garden and production and he had the contract and he would never allow me to load. If the girls that came on those lorries didn't load them they stayed there, but after a lot of hassle they used to finally end up loading because I wasn't allowed to load for them. He only had to grow them and put them in the crates, but they thought because I was the common farm worker I loaded them and they didn't. They just drove

away with them but it never happened with him. Just mainly at the hostels - I never had much contact with them apart from that. I used to go the YMCA - if you came into town we always used to go and stop there. The Services Canteen Trust Fund if you went there they used to sort of thing that we shouldn't be there because we were only farm workers. It never worried me greatly, Sue. I was proud of what I was doing.

What sort of comments might you get from the other service women?

Mainly we weren't as good as them and the farmers - they didn't say that. They used to say that the cockies only employed us for their own uses, not farm use. They were more along the lines of what I got, but it never ever worried me greatly. Perhaps broad shoulders carried it off but I was proud of what I was doing and I loved the land and that was all I was concerned about, that I could hang in there and do it and learn a lot while I was doing it, which I did. I must say I learnt a lot more about farming while I was in the Land Army than I would have ever learnt if I had just been on the one place and, after all is said and done, it was experience I was after. The more you know the better you get on.

Did you always consider yourself as a civilian service or was there any time when it felt like a military service?

No, more a civilian service. No. Actually our own Mrs Hodgeman and Mavis Brits, I thought they were terrific people. They were just two of the girls, as far as I could see. We had to have a superintendent. We had to

have somebody up top and Mrs Hodgeman, she was just beaut. She was one of the girls. When I went to a Land Army dinner at the Great Northern - it could be four years ago, it could be five years ago - that's the last dinner I've been to, Mrs Hodgeman came down from Queensland, because she is in Queensland now. She came down from Queensland, a white-headed lady much older than me, but still the same Sheila Hodgeman. We had a great time, at that dinner at the Great Northern in Launceston. That's the last one I've been to. We had a great time. She was so up with everything and how much she missed us all. We were actually - to me the girls in the Land Army when you did get together, even if you didn't know some you all become one great big family and you'd all sort of stick up for each other, although there was only roughly, I don't suppose there was ever 192 in it altogether. I don't know what the figures were. There must have been 132 when the War ended because I counted them up last night. There was 132 when we were demobbed. So it is one big family, isn't it?

Did you have much to do with Mrs Hodgeman at the time? Can you remember much about her?

Not a great deal - she used to visit us. She used to come to Deloraine. I think on the whole she had about four visits to Deloraine but when you were out working. She came up to Deloraine about four times. At the Hobart Show I saw her and I saw her once at the Launceston Show. She didn't come down to the farm to me, never. I never saw anyone from town. If you had any problems you were always to ring up and if you had any worries you rang up. If you felt you were working too long hours and you didn't want to do it because you were supposed to work

your eight hours but no farmer works eight hours, Sue. It's never done on a farm. I had nothing else to do and I was quite happy. I was told when I was at Mr Calvert's I had to cut down the working hours because they thought I was getting tired. I suppose I did cut them down for a while and then I started back up again but I was quite happy to be doing what I was doing and I had nothing else. It's not like now that you had a car and you could get in a car and drive away and go somewhere. If I didn't do that - I spent a lot of time when I was off of a weekend down at Calvert's, if I didn't work all day Saturday and Sunday, which I seldom worked all day Sunday. I used to work Saturday morning if he wanted anything doing. In the fruit season I'd work Saturday and Sunday because the pickers worked and I thought it would be pretty mean to say I'm not going to cart Saturday and Sunday, because the seasonal workers, you had to get fruit off when it's ready. But in the other times - the children were 5 and 9 when I was there - and of a night if I had time I'd have a game of cricket with them or take them for walks or ride in the tractor or trailer or something. You know, something like that to fill the time in. I was quite happy down there. It was a lovely area to be in. I was close to Hobart if I wanted to go and when they used to go to Hobart and I think we were entitled to a day off - or was it a day a month, now I can't remember what it was - it wasn't very much. I'm not sure of the time off. Have you got it there?

No.

It wasn't very much. You got leave about every three months I think if my memory serves me right. You'd have

more or less about a four day long weekend. They would ask me if I wanted to go to Hobart with them. I think I went on one occasion but I was quite happy to stay down there. If they were going to Hobart on the Friday and they thought I wanted to go to Hobart they'd ask me if I'd like to go. I suppose - you had no use for ordinary civilian clothing and if I wasn't home there was no point in me going to Hobart. I was very close to a beach and if I had - that's where I used to spend a lot of my time of a Sunday was down on the beach. It was a beautiful beach. I used to take the children with me. We used to go down there. You would go to church of a Sunday if you wanted to, with them. I think I went to church a fair bit at Deloraine. Yes, I did, a Sunday, but to me it didn't matter what church I went to because I was brought up to go to church because I came from a mixed religion family. My mother was Catholic and my father was Church of England, so you had to learn to live with it, Sue. I was the Church of England side. Some of us were Catholics and some were Church of England. But if I went to church and there wasn't a Church of England church I would always go to a Catholic church, if I thought I needed to go.

> Just while we're at Deloraine, and the War ended while you were at Deloraine you were telling me before about the last day, what happened after you finished your celebrations?

We went back to work for about - we had about a fortnight or three weeks' work to finish before. We had to go back to work until headquarters decided what they were going to do with us. The potatoes were nearly finished so we would have been finishing soon up there to go somewhere

else to do something if we were wanted, being a mobile camp. We were to set up. I've got an idea we were going somewhere to do something further up the north-west coast if we were needed, but they started bringing the men home very soon. Some of the men were home before we left Deloraine. See it finished on the 15th of August, wasn't it, somewhere there, the 15th of August, well we finished, we had August, 15th of September, we had two months' work to finish before we finished - a bit over two months. By that time some of the men had come home from the Middle East, who weren't prisoners. They automatically - it was a real, what can I say, mix-up. The men came home that were discharged and they had to have jobs so they tried to fill them as quickly as possible, put them back in employment as quickly as possible, as soon as they could. We finished the potato work we were doing, the contracts, and I suppose the Manpower, it would be Basil Plumber and the Manpower Department just decided that we would terminate our jobs on the 18th of October up there and mostly everybody was finished by the main Hobart Show Day. We went home and we were entitled to wear our uniforms until we got our discharge. I think mine was the 30th of November, Sue. I'm pretty sure it was the 30th of November and we wore our uniforms. We could wear our uniforms but I didn't do anything except spend my time going backwards and forwards to Deloraine because I loved being up there. I don't think we were prepared for the War to end so quickly and left quite a lot of us - my feeling was it left quite a lot of us without making any plans for what we were going to do when the War was over. I for one thought it was something that was going to go on perhaps for another 10 years and thought well I'll be here and I'll be stuck with it for 10 years. That's good. I've

got a job. I'm quite happy with what I'm doing. It was a bit hard to adjust afterwards but we just came down to Hobart on the train. The train we came down on we all had to stand to Hobart, which we didn't mind because it was full of returns - that was the first release of prisoners from the Japanese camps - but they were ones that hadn't been prisoners very long and they were all in good condition. Really for what they'd been through, fighting and that, they were in good spirits and good morale. There was a few sick ones amongst them but they weren't too bad, the first lot that come home. But all the ones that were in Changi and that they didn't come home by train and plane. They came by boat to Melbourne and they kept them there. I'm just getting away from the subject. I know my husband came home in the September. We had to pack everything up and we were all very sad because we were leaving, naturally, we'd had such a wonderful camp up there. It really was a wonderful camp. We used to have bits of arguments but who doesn't when there's 30-odd girls together?

Did you have any idea at all about what you wanted to do?

None whatsoever, Sue, except I'd been offered this job to go to Warragul and I had the job to go hauling logs and I spoke to my parents about it and Dad thought I was quite mad but said 'If that's what you want to do, do it. You won't last very long. You'll be homesick.' Then they rang - wrote - and said they were very sorry that they had men who had served their country and had had jobs before - families that had jobs before over there. If we could find something else they would like to give these returned men a chance to start up a life. Nobody would

stop a man that had been away at the War taking a job. No, I had no idea what I wanted to do, Sue. I just roamed around for a while.

What was the job at Warragul? What did that involve?

Hauling logs out of the bush into a mill, a saw mill. It quite fascinated me, the idea of it, that that's what I'd like to do, was to go over there. No, I had no idea when I left. I couldn't think of a thing I wanted to do except for outdoor.

So what did you end up doing?

I ended up doing three months waitress work here at a place in Hobart. I only worked casual until I came up here and I did some cooking at a private hotel. My sister was a cook at a private hotel in Hobart and she wanted to have a holiday because she hadn't had a holiday for about 12 months, no, 2 years - it was two lots of holidays. I went and I cooked for her for six weeks. When that was finished I decided I was moving to the country and there was an old lady alive that was a friend of the family and she was at Mum's when I came home from Hobart, when I finished that job, and she asked me what I was going to do next and I said 'I'm going to be like a gipsy, roam the countryside until I find what I want to do.' She said 'Why don't you move up to Triabunna with me.' I came up here and I met my husband. Then I ended up staying up here. I worked at the hotel until I got married and that's just how I've finished up, but in between coming out of the Land Army, I had a friend - a very good friend in a shop at Deloraine, a Mrs Lloyd.

She had a fruit and confectionary and sweats and what they call takeaways now, and I used to go back and stay with her and help her in the shop, just because I was lost, I was completely lost without - you missed your overalls, your boots and your shirt and your dirty hands, sitting out in the paddock eating your dinner. That's what I missed most of all and the companionship of the other girls because all the girls that you grew up with, most of those were married that didn't go into anything. They all had lives of their own and they weren't interested in you any more and you found it hard to fit in, Sue, when you first come out of anything like that. I think we did. I don't know about all the girls but I did. Probably most of them knew what they wanted to do when they came out but I didn't have a clue and I just came up here and then I met my husband and got married and here I am, still here. I came for three weeks and it's been the longest three weeks I've ever spent in my life, but I settled and when I went home and was going to get married Dad said to my husband, he said 'It won't last because she's too fickle minded' and he was such a quiet man and I was so - not rowdy but full of life. It was a bit hard at first, let me tell you, because I suppose they were so tired after the ordeal they'd been through but he was always in bed by half-past 7 of a night and I thought well I've married a book. I used to sit by the fire and read. I made all my own children's clothes. I used to sew a lot and made their clothes and that and knitted. When I started sewing I'd sit up all night sewing. Once I start sewing I'll sit up all night sewing.

So did you keep involved with the land or keep doing land work at all or growing - - -

No, only with Dad, because my father was getting older and he kept up the market garden but as he got older he became - he used to grow a lot of peas. He could put them in but he couldn't pick them. He would swell up all over if he picked them. He could eat them but he couldn't pick them. Once he put them in the ground that was the end of it he couldn't touch them again until he was eating them. I used to go home and help him if he was pea picking. He had peas and he wanted the peas picking I'd go home and pick all the peas for him. I've been apricot picking. Yes, I have. I tell a lie, I've been apricot picking. I used to go apricot picking. I've even done that since I've been married in the last few years. What else have I done? Cooking for shearers. I suppose I have been involved with the land, haven't I? That's the land, isn't it, I forgot about that. I've been cooking for the shearers. That's a job I really like. What else? I've worked in the fish sheds here.

At the end of the War did you take part in any Victory Day march?

Yes, we marched in Hobart, the Victory march. I don't know whether there was many Land girls there or not but I don't think we were rostered for that, Sue. I can't remember but I know I marched. I know there was a few of us marched, but that was all services together. I don't know whether they sent out circulars. I don't think there was any thing such as 'you turn up'. You were issued with an order to turn up. The Victory march was on and it was just publicly that all ex-servicemen were entitled to march, but I have marched every Anzac Day down here bar two.

With your Land Army badge?

Yes.

That's been acceptable by the RSL?

Yes, most definitely here, Sue. I wasn't going to this year because it was just after my husband died but when I got nearly to the Cenotaph - well they stopped me in the car down the street and they said to me 'Are you going to march, Dora?' I said 'I don't know' and they said 'Come on. You've gone this far now. You can't let your husband down now, let Don down now' so I got out and I marched, Sue, and I'm glad I did now because I felt better after I did. No, I've always participated. No, they have always accepted us here and at the RSL dinners. I'm accepted at the RSL dinners as a Land Army girl not as the wife of an ex-serviceman. It was only yesterday that one of the guild members said to me as I was coming outside, coming out of the shop, she said 'There's an RSL meeting on Friday night.' I said 'Well I'd like to come but I'm going - I'm supposed to be going to Burnie with Pat for weekend.' You met some wonderful people. I made a wonderful lot of friends in Deloraine. I really did.

It is a really special time.

It was, yes, because I'd been isolated before and it's not much fun being on your own. As I said, Mr Calvert was a man that was - well he was a lot older than Mrs Calvert and she was a very reserved woman.

How did she feel about a Land Army girl being on the place?

She didn't mind when she got used to it. It was a bit strange for her and a bit strange for me. It's a bit hard when you first meet the farmer. The farmer is easier to meet than the wife, always. Possibly what I used to think they wonder if he's going to run off with the first bright faced young Land Army girl - that was what I thought. I thought they resented us at first but then afterwards that's not there. I suppose they feel a bit ill at ease or something. Probably they thought they had to entertain us but when I was finished my evening meal and if I had nothing to do I always used to let them - Mr Calvert liked to let his horses out of the stable of a night, his draught horses, and I used to always go up at 9 o'clock and let them out of the stables for him, because he was a dear old fatherly chap really, even if he did work me hard. I would say 'Oh, I'll let the horses out' but I had my own wireless. I didn't impose. I was always welcome in the sitting room of a night. Some nights I used to sit in there because there was no TV. There was only the wireless to listen to, but I had my own wireless and I used to read a lot, Sue. I used to knit a lot. I used to make a lot of clothes for my three younger brothers. I used to knit all their jumpers and Dad jumpers and I always had something to do. If I was tired I'd go to sleep. Many a night I've lied on the bed and gone to sleep and woke up next morning and I'll have a bath of a night when I finish work and I'd still be in my clothes because I lied on the bed. Sometimes I was just so tired I'd lie there. I wouldn't even get cold and I'd wake up and I'd laugh next morning. Mrs Calvert mostly used to say to me 'Did you sleep well?' and I'd

say 'Yes, on top of the bed. I lied down after I went in and I was still there this morning when I woke up.' 'You didn't get undressed?' I would say 'No, I was tired' and I still do that to this day, if I'm dog tired I'll go to sleep wherever I am. If it's only half-an-hour, Sue, I have it if I'm dog tired.

> As you know Sue and I are making this film about the Land Army. Are there any particular things that you would like to see go into the film or anything that you would like to see expressed about the Land Army or the work that you did to people who don't have much of an idea about the Land Army?

Well for one thing I'd like the Federal Government to recognise what we did, that's first. I think that if the Federal Government could recognise what the Land Army girls throughout Australia did do it would be a help. Even if we don't get a pension it would be a help to our morale. I think we should be paid a pension for services rendered because there's a lot of girls that have had a lot of sickness and I don't know whether it's been due to the causes of war-caused disabilities, I'd have to say, or not, but we're not recognised by the Veterans Affairs in no way whatsoever. We're not entitled to a thing and the other thing is I'd like people to appreciate that we weren't just girls dressed up in a pair of trousers and overalls to work around farms and make out we were doing something because we did - I'm sure everybody worked as hard as I did and I know I worked hard. I did my part. If I was younger and the same thing came again I'd have no hesitation about it if I could join up again, none whatsoever, because it was good. It was good for us. You gained a terrific amount of experience if you were

interested, and I'm sure most girls were, that was in it, if not all of them. No, just to mention that we worked hard. We did our job and we worked as men, not as women. In all aspects - whether we were on the farms, whether we were in the mobile unit or Scottsdale girls - they were on vegetable production for the Army - wherever we were we worked hard, Sue, whatever we did.

Are there any other things that you think we haven't possibly covered or you'd like to tell me?

I can't think of anything off-hand, Sue.