Oral history

Gerringong to Bomaderry
Princes Highway upgrade

ORAL HISTORY RECORDING
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# Quality Information

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## Revision History

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Forward

The Roads and Traffic Authority (RTA) has a rich heritage suitable for oral history study. The Oral History Program was initiated in 1996, under the guidance of the RTA Heritage Committee. The first project undertaken was a 1997 study of the Sydney Harbour Bridge Maintenance Cranes, prior to their imminent removal.

The Oral History Program is administered by the Environment Branch, and forms part of the RTA’s broad interests and responsibilities in the heritage field. Information obtained in oral history interviews provides a useful background resource and assists in the achievement of the aims of the Heritage Strategic Plan.

Oral history has been described as 'a picture of the past in people’s own words'. It is told by the people who are often overlooked in ‘official’ documented history; those who were actually there and involved.

Unlike the written word, oral history comes to life in the colour, passion and inflection of the human voice. It tells us about relationships, perceptions and social and political climates of the past. It gives a voice to minority groups and the disadvantaged.

In this way, oral history complements the formal written record by giving in addition the personal, intimate, human and social account of events. It revolves around what a person believes to be the real story. Their version of an event may differ from another’s, or even from the documented history, but it is no less valid.

After all, all historical records, including written words, photographs, paintings and maps, may contain some degree of error and bias. Oral history can also overcome the bias of some traditional history sources towards big events and high-profile participants.
1.0 Introduction

Maunsell was engaged by the RTA in December 2006 to carry out an Options and Routes Selection Study, Concept Development and Environmental Assessment for upgrading the Princes Highway between Gerringong to Bomaderry.

The northern extremity of the project is in the vicinity of the Mount Pleasant Lookout (north of Gerringong at the termination of the four lane configuration) and the southern extremity of the project is the intersection (roundabout) of the Princes Highway with Cambewarra and Moss Vale roads at Bomaderry. The project will provide a bypass of Berry.

The study includes development of route options and identification of a preferred route. A concept design and environment assessment will be carried out for the preferred route. Results of each of the main stages of the study will be put on public display.

Community engagement is a key aspect of the project. The broader community has had and will have the opportunity to make a demonstrable input to the process and to ensure that the requirements and aspirations of the community will be adequately and appropriately addressed.

Several studies have been undertaken since the early 1990s to identify a preferred route to upgrade sections of the Princes Highway between Kiama and Nowra including a bypass around the town of Berry. Key contributors to the need for the upgrade is the three per cent growth in annual traffic numbers and 10 fatalities occurring in nine traffic accidents between 2001 and 2005.

The RTA has set out several objectives for the Princes Highway. Generically these include:

- Provide a flowing highway alignment that is responsive and integrated with the landscape;
- Protect the natural systems and ecology of the corridor;
- Protect and enhance the heritage and cultural values of the corridor;
- Respect the communities and towns along the road; and
- Provide an enjoyable, interesting highway with strong visual connections to the Pacific Ocean, immediate hinterland and the mountains to the west.

Objectives for the project have been determined as follows:

- Improving road safety by improving alignment, controlled access and standards in new road design and construction;
- Improve efficiency of the Princes Highway between Gerringong and Bomaderry;
- Support regional and local economic development;
- Provide value for money;
- Enhance potential beneficial environmental effects and manage potential adverse environmental impacts; and
- Optimise the benefits and minimise adverse impacts on the local social environment.

The existing highway will be upgraded to include:

- A high standard highway with two lanes in both directions with median separation;
- Controlled access; and
- A bypass of Berry.
The preferred route will be selected based on balancing impacts on social and community interests, the environment, economics, and engineering requirements.

1.1 The Oral history project

While oral history recordings are undertaken to obtain information that is otherwise unavailable from any other source and have a specific target topic in mind (in this case the Gerringong to Bomaderry Princes Highway upgrade), they invariably elicit broader local, regional and often geographically wider information. Indeed, such information is the core reason for undertaking oral history recordings – to place the interviewee in context and to obtain their personal memories relevant to a particular area and topic.

In order to provide such memories, the interviewee must be confident in the knowledge that the information imparted will be used towards an understood identified aim. The interviewer should be equally confident that such information will be similarly used. That aim always being to further historical knowledge of a combination of past activities, lifeways, persons, and/or places – and not restricted to a single subject, such as the Princes Highway itself.

The RTA undertook this project as part of an integrated community approach to the Gerringong to Bomaderry upgrade. Specifically, the project sought to:

- Obtain information that is otherwise unavailable from any other source, with an explicit target topic of the Gerringong to Bomaderry Princes Highway;
- Elicit broader local, regional and possibly geographically wider information in relation to the Highway; and
- Obtain individuals’ personal memories on other topics.

Following discussions between representatives from the RTA, Maunsell, Navin Officer Heritage Consultants and a cross-section of local residents, interviewees were selected in order to provide a:

- Wide geographical range across the area;
- Characteristic sample of the history of industry, places and activities within the area; and
- Diversity of responses to possible impacts of the upgrade throughout the area.

Twelve interviews were conducted involving 15 interviewees. The first interview was undertaken in late January 2008 with subsequent interviews being carried out from mid August to late September 2008. The majority of interviews was held in interviewees’ homes with two being conducted at interviewees’ workplaces.

The following section, Section 2, provides a thematic overview of the predominant subjects arising from the interviews. It draws together and touches on participants’ views regarding:

- Dairying;
- The timber industry;
- Community;
- Local Government;
- Horse racing;
- Local Aborigines; and, of course,
- The G2B Princes Highway upgrade.
Section 3 gives a transcript of each interview, and the final section, Section 4, provides an RTA release document completed by each of the interviewees.

The table below provides a list of those people who were interviewed as part of the project. It also shows their locations and particular areas of interest.

Table 1-1: List of participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewee</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Area of interest</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mrs Margaret Binks</td>
<td>Broughton Village</td>
<td>Broughton Village and historic house ‘Sedgeford’.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mrs Helen Chittick</td>
<td>Gerringong</td>
<td>Local history.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mr Bill Jorgenson</td>
<td>North Nowra</td>
<td>Timber and dairy industry, and local history.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr &amp; Mrs Bruce &amp;</td>
<td>Berry</td>
<td>Dairy industry, local government, and local history.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nora McIntosh</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Mrs Mary Lidbetter</td>
<td>Berry</td>
<td>Local history of Berry and surrounds.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms Sally Lindsay</td>
<td>Berry</td>
<td>Berry community activities and historic house ‘Constable’s Cottage’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Messrs John and Angus (Gus)</td>
<td>Berry</td>
<td>Dairy industry and local history.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miller</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Mr Terry Robinson</td>
<td>Far Meadow</td>
<td>Horseracing industry and local history.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr Ray Rutledge</td>
<td>Berry</td>
<td>Berry historic precinct, Pulman Street.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr &amp; Mrs Colin and</td>
<td>Toolijooa</td>
<td>Dairy industry, Berry Show and local history.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nora Sharpe</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr Sonny Simms</td>
<td>Bomaderry</td>
<td>Nowra LALC, Bomaderry Children's' Home and local history.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs Lilly Toohey</td>
<td>Berry</td>
<td>Local history of Berry and surrounds.</td>
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2.0  Thematic overview

2.1  Dairying

The area from Gerringong to Bomaderry, largely owned by the Berry family from around the 1820s until the early twentieth century, was peppered with small-scale dairy farms during the early and middle years of that century. Dairying was the raison d'être for Berry's original acquisition and, to a large extent, continues as the predominant industry in the region.

With the subdivision of the Berry Estate, dairy farmers and prospective dairy farmers purchased land across the district, from five acres at Broughton Village to 100 acres at Jaspers Brush, and began producing small quantities of milk, cream and cheese. At that time, milk was taken by sledge to the farm gate and then by horse and cart to any number of small milk factories across the region, including at Gerringong, Toolijooa, Foxground, Broughton Village, Jaspers Brush and Berry. After arriving on horse and cart to the Berry Milk Co-operative, as Gus Miller noted,

“… the first milk to Sydney all went in those factory cans, 10 gallon factory cans. They used to put them on the train. When they brought the railway through from Kiama down and then picked the cans up the next day”.

One Bruce McIntosh recalled,

“There were 127 suppliers to the Berry factory, in those days, and now there are five”.

Bill Jorgenson tells of a prescient moment after starting work for the Bomaderry Dairy Farmers Milk Depot in 1948 when there were:

“between 350 to 400 milk suppliers”. “There was an old fellah named Harry Silverside, … He said [after they had finished washing out and cleaning the 10 gallon cans], ‘Look boy’, now this is going back about 1945, he said, ‘One day,’ he said, ‘There’s going to be a big truck going around over the other side of the river there [the south side of the Shoalhaven River] picking up milk with a tank on the back of it’, and he said, ‘there’d be about 12 farmers’”:

At that time there were about 60 farmers there and now there are only 12, as Harry predicted 60 years ago.

Since then the number of farms has declined dramatically. For instance, there were 76 farms at Milton (now seven), 76 in Kangaroo Valley (now six), and only four remaining from Meroo to Jaspers Brush, and none left in Cambewarra.

Through amalgamation, farms have also become larger. A fact attested to by Bill Jorgenson:

“There’s more milk coming out of those farms than did out of the 400. I’ll just give you an example down here [around Bomaderry]. There’s one fellah down here milks 1200 cows, they couldn’t fit his milk on the big tanker for the one day. My son-in-law, when he took the farm over the fellah was producing about 10 or 12 cans a day, that was pretty good, not bad farming in those days. He’s now getting 200 cans of milk a day – that’s 10 gallon cans, in litres it’s about eight/nine thousand litres. There’s another one down there getting about 17,000 litres a day and they milk about 700. They’re massive, they’re big, and there’s more milk coming out of them areas than what there was previously – they all had to get bigger. When the deregulation came in they said you’ve got to have 12 cans of milk to survive. Twelve cans of milk now is like a billy can full – they couldn’t survive on it”.
The two most prominent factors that appear to have influenced changes to dairy farming in the area and probably throughout NSW, were the introduction of the quota system in the 1950s and industry deregulation in 1991.

As Colin Sharpe explained,

“The quota system was to make sure that Sydney had an ample supply of milk. At times, Sydney up till then was short of milk. Particularly in the winter time when they just didn’t have enough milk and it meant, well, that they just went without”. “They actually rationed it. If you had children and babies you could get milk everyday but others could only get milk every second day in the winter time because it was more expensive for farmers to produce the milk in the winter time so a lot of them let their production fall down in the winter time”.

To overcome that unsatisfactory supply cycle the Government introduced a quota system, which meant farmers had to produce a certain amount of milk all year round and

“there wasn’t that fall of production in the winter time”.

Farmers were given a yearly price. They could organise their finances and knew every month what their income was going to be.

“And so it made a big difference”. “Also it made a difference to breeding cattle too; people had to be more accurate with their breeding so that they had cattle calving right through the year to produce that amount of milk. Whereas before it was more a springtime calving and then going through the summer and then it would go down during the winter time”.

Colin also noted that industry deregulation, which was introduced in 1991, had a similar impact on dairy farmers.

“… It meant virtually that there were no state boundaries. Milk could travel anywhere. And with Victoria being the biggest producer of milk they were producing milk a lot cheaper than what we could at that time and it meant that the price of milk dropped dramatically, and it meant that the big producer, those who could produce a large amount of milk, were able to virtually stay in”.

The years of known and regular income disappeared and,

“for quite a few years the farmer, he was absolutely struggling”.

Innovation has also been a feature of the dairy industry in the area. In 1948, Bruce McIntosh’s father,

“was involved in a group of farmers who were fairly progressive farmers forming what they called the Better Farming League, and that promoted the better farming practices. And even by today’s standards they were well advanced back then. They were skilled in pasture management, and they improved thousands of acres of pasture around here [the Shoalhaven area] by the methods they indoctrinated to other farmers or gave them the ability to get establishing, and they were responsible for introducing into the government of the day a proposal to establish an artificial breeding centre. It was the first in Australia and that came about because of my father; who was a fairly progressive farmer; and he was chosen by the [NSW] State Government of the day to be one of six people selected to go to the UK with the Minister of Agriculture on a stud stock buying delegation to improve the standard of stud stock – not just cattle, horses, pigs, sheep and chooks – six of them went over and my dad was one of them. … That stud stock buying delegation still has the reputation of putting NSW on the map in terms of upgrading stud stock and therefore the seed stock of all the broad commercial foods in NSW and beyond.”
The artificial insemination centre established at Graham Park, Berry, which closed about 20 years ago was, according to Bruce McIntosh,

“a very, very thriving and important aspect of cattle breeding in Australia”.

Unfortunately, it appears that it suffered from mismanagement while other more commercially successful centres flourished throughout Australia. Bruce lamented that it,

“should have been [commercially successful]. One of the bad features of our local history here, it offered so much”.

2.2 The timber industry

Timber getting and sawmills were an important part in the development and economy of the area from the arrival of cedar getters around 1811 and Alexander Berry’s first timber milling, and later sawmill, site in 1827 until the housing boom of the mid-1900s.

Sawmills once proliferated throughout the area, including at Gerringong, Woodhill Mountain, Kangaroo Mountain, Berry (at least three), Bomaderry and Nowra. Bill Jorgenson recalled,

“… they had two or three bullock teams, and the real old timers in Berry told me years ago it was nothing to hear the Jorgensons at two o’clock in the morning coming along Beach Road that runs into Berry and which runs past the David Berry Hospital, cracking the bullock whips bringing logs into the sawmill”. Except for a few remaining ones, “They’ve all gone now, you can’t fell trees now”.

Ray Rutledge noted,

“… Some of the timber was shipped to Sydney and that by rail and they cut a lot of mine timbers out between here [Berry] and the beach, Seven-Mile Beach, and that was trucked away by rail trucks. Most of the timber, the sawn timber went around to the Wollongong area, particularly after the war years [1950s] when there was a lot of housing going on in those places up there. Several people around the place had trucks that carted the sawn timber”.

Around that time, Bill Jorgenson recalled, the Bomaderry sawmill, which didn’t produce housing timber,

“… cut all their own timber for the boxes and everything. Fish boxes, cherry boxes, that’s what they used to make there”.

The trees used were

“sassafras, maiden’s butt – what they’d call it, there was leatherjacket, there was all different softwoods. Of course, they wouldn’t let you cut it out now. They wouldn’t let you do it now”. 
2.3 Community

Small, self-contained centres were the focus of community life in the region in the early and middle years of last century. Now only localities, centres such as Toolijooa, Broughton Village, Far Meadow, Jaspers Brush and Meroo Meadow had their own small, single-roomed, single-teacher primary schools, and sometimes a community hall and a church. Gus Miller noted,

“The school was the community”

Margaret Binks observed that individual teachers,

“... had such an influence on the community as a whole that it just branched out into families”.

Horseback was the standard method of getting to school and each had its own horse paddock, although occasionally someone had a pushbike and would be, according to Bruce McIntosh,

“the envy of the whole school”.

All of these schools have long since closed and most have been removed.

At a time when vibrant communities, involved in cricket clubs, debating teams, picnics, ping-pong and roller skating, were active in those small centres, Berry was variously described as being ‘very quiet’ to ‘dead’, where, as Helen Chittick recalled one of her neighbours remarking,

“You could fire a double-barrelled shotgun up the street and not hit anyone”.

Margaret Binks reported that there

“were busy days because the farmers would come in with the cattle and of course during the wartime Red Cross would be serving meals to raise money for the soldiers, but generally Berry was dead”.

Similarly, Margaret recalled that Gerringong was,

“a sleepy little town, like Berry” and “Bomaderry hardly existed. … Bomaderry was nothing”.

Two, possibly related, matters appear to have revived the community of Berry in the 1970s. First, as Mary Lidbetter recounted,

“Up to then Berry was going backwards. We had four empty shops and about eight empty houses in town, and the Chamber of Commerce had been trying to get light industry and they had two or three start and fizzle. So, after the Captain Cook Bicentenary celebrations [in 1970]” they decided, “Right, we’ll stop trying for industry; we’ll become a tourist town.”

Second, at that time Sally Lindsay and her family arrived and were part “of the first push of people from the city” and regarded as “out of town hippies”. Sally started up a community centre and organised cultural activities. As Sally noted, that centre is,

“still in a small way surviving today”.

These factors stimulated the influx of tourists and ‘new settlers’, and, as indicated by Sally,

“about the middle of the ‘80s … the money started to come down here and buy big properties, and farmers started to subdivide”.

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Similarly, both Gerringong and Bomaderry (and Nowra) experienced new found growth through tourism and residential development during those years.

Today, community focus now centres on those towns in the region, which continue to experience economic growth. Tourism has largely replaced dairying as the economic and social base, and the small, single school-based community has since become a memory.

2.4 Local Government

In 1946, the NSW Government formed the Shoalhaven Shire by the amalgamation of four municipalities and three shires, and, as Bruce McIntosh described,

“the areas didn’t want to be amalgamated, and they fought like you wouldn’t believe … seven of them … and they darn well didn’t want to be together so they fought and fought and fought. Finally the Government recognised that this wasn’t going to work and they dismissed them and put an administrator in – a fellow called Keith Hawkshaw. He was here for five years and did a great job he pulled the whole thing together. He was a very good administrator, and that was what he was trained to do”.

In those days, Shoalhaven Shire Council was called Shoalhaven Council. Bruce noted,

“It was exactly the same area – runs from part way between here [Berry] and Gerringong in the north and over to the other side of the Barrengarry on the west out the top of Barrengarry Mountain and then down to a few miles this side of Batemans Bay. It’s a big area, and lots of towns in it. It’s quite a big and difficult council to run”.

Bruce recalled,

“The Government finally called an election in 1959 and Berry didn’t have anybody standing and I … happened to be president of our local Apex Club, which we just formed, and we were saying well look, ‘Berry needs a representative’, and nobody put their hand up and I was railroaded into it. They said, well you do it, and so I was the last person elected in that seven man council and the only farmer on it, and I was pretty young. I was 30 years old then and I was there for the next six councils [18 years], so it sort of gets in your blood a bit”.

During that time, the term of a councillor was three years but is four years now, and has been for the last decade or so. In those days every councillor was supposed to be representing the whole of the Shire but, as Bruce stated,

“In truth my main interest was in the farming community because I knew it best. The other councillors knew that I knew it best, so I suppose in that sense I played quite a role on behalf of the farming community, which was still very much the main occupants of the country. I suppose, certainly the main bread winners of the Shire. We should have had more, although as time went on, we did get another one or two farmers on [the council], but for the first three years I was the only one”.

Although Bruce, and soon after other councillors, promoted improvements to farming and the dairy industry, wider influences were in play.

“It really wasn’t the effect of [their] promotions [it was] evolvement of the industry far outside of local government, it’s been a commercial activity really and over a period of time it became obvious that small farms couldn’t cope with increasing costs from all sorts of things, costs of feed, costs of, you know, just simple living”.

Amalgamation of small farms followed and the rest is history.
2.5 Horseracing

The late Kevin Robinson was instrumental in establishing and developing a successful horseracing industry in Berry and surrounds; an industry that still flourishes in the area today.

Kevin’s son, Terry, recalled,

“… my father started out as a harness racing trainer / driver and that’s where I started with him when I left school. We also ran the riding school here and through that riding school we all grew up, all of us children all grew up at some stage through it, and sometimes managing it, most of us have managed it at some stage throughout our lives until the insurance put us out of business. I continued working with my father in the harness racing game then we gradually got into gallopers, a thoroughbred business – we were training those and riding them since I was 18 and we gradually turned over into thoroughbreds. Dad was very successful in the harness racing game he ended up winning the Sydney premiership”.

Kevin is now,

“one of five they call legends of the game”.

Kevin’s passion was the horse; he wanted to be a jockey. Terry noted that his father,

“used to have a race track in Berry, which was on the railway side of Berry. … The old race track, which is still sort of there. You can still see it. … they used to bring horses down [from Sydney] on the train in the old days and race there … they’d only have a couple of meetings a year”.

The Robinsons used to train horses on the Berry Showground. Kevin,

“was right opposite the showground gates and it was just convenient for him, he’d been there all his life, trained horses there all his life”.

However, in 2007, Equine Influenza forced them “out of training at Berry”. Terry has since developed a self-contained training complex at Bolong Road, Shoalhaven Heads, on land that his family had owned for some time, and as he noted,

“… the weather is a lot better out here, being right on the coast. Berry can get so hot in summer where you’ve always have a nor’easter here and I think my horses appreciated it”.

2.6 Local Aborigines

Recall of Aborigines in the local area is largely restricted to their historical contact with Alexander Berry in the early 1800s and limited knowledge of their seasonal work on farms in the mid to late 1900s. However, Sonny Simms’ recollections of the Bomaderry Children’s Home – “the birthplace of the stolen generation in NSW” – reveals the very personal tragedies of those affected.

Historically, as Mary Lidbetter recounted,

“In 1822, Alexander Berry came to the Shoalhaven and his friend, Charles Throsby, from up on the tablelands had sent his Aboriginal guide down to act as guide to Alexander Berry. His name was Broughton. His Aboriginal name was Thotit or Toodwick but he wouldn’t have spelt it. But he sent Broughton down to act as guide to Berry”.
Mary noted that Berry had originally thought of building his administrative centre at Backforest but when he saw it he realised that it wasn’t suitable for farming because of all the swamplands around it and, 

“… so Broughton said, ‘I’ll take you to the place where I was born.’ And he brought him up the Shoalhaven River into the entrance to Broughton Creek, walked him up Broughton Creek till they came to where Broughton Creek branches into two branches – Broughton Creek, which goes towards Gerringong … , and the other branch comes through the town [Berry], that’s Broughton Mill Creek. Now in that land in between was the Aboriginal’s camping area”.

In more recent times, in the mid-twentieth century, Mary continued, 

“the Aboriginals would come over here [to Berry] pea picking, and they would be brought in from Bomaderry Mission and left in town for the pea-pickers trucks to come [in from various farms in the area] and pick them up …”.

At the end of each day they would be brought back to Berry. The ladies would wander into Mary Lidbetter’s shop for

“their reel of cotton or stickybeak or what have you”
and the men would congregate in Tom Lidbetter’s saddlery shop. Apparently, the men were told by their elders, 

“While you’re waiting for the truck, you do not hang around the street, you do not go to the pub, you go to Lidbetter’s shop”.

The Bomaderry Children’s Home was opened in 1908. Sonny Simms recounted that, 

“When they [Aboriginal children] were removed from their parents either on missions or reserves by the Aborigines Protection Board, then the Aborigines Welfare board, they were brought here [to the Home], as being so called neglected, and were under the auspices of the United Aborigines Mission [Organisation] (UAMO)”.

Sonny’s father was among the first five children taken to the home – he spent 14 years of his childhood there. Sonny noted, 

“They were still bringing kids here, we [the Nowra Local Aboriginal Land Council] purchased this property on 16 October 1993, I brought the front fence out the front there with fellahs on [Nowra] council back in 1974 and it still went for about another eight years after that, they were still bringing kids here. So the kids were still coming here in the ‘80s”.

The property is now heritage listed and contains the Nowra LALC office.

On 24 May 2008, Sonny stated, 

“we … celebrated 100 years of the former Bomaderry Children’s Home. Kids come back to this place and a lot of those kids never saw each other for 40 years, even one lady from America come back to meet with her sisters for the first time in 40 years. … We had over 1,500 that come back. … None of the UAMO Home people come to it – they were fearful of the word compensation. Like I said no one’s going to point the finger, we’re here to celebrate, which we did. But I was pleased”.
2.7 The Gerringong to Bomaderry Princes Highway upgrade

Most of the long-time resident interviewees recalled the parlous state of the roads in the area around the middle of last century. ‘They were all dirt roads’, ‘just ordinary dirt roads with a bit of gravel on them or whatever’, or just ‘grit’. Although subsequently sealed with bitumen, some interviewees also recalled their danger, as Bill Jorgenson noted,

“You know before you hit the Foxground there’s a bridge and you go over the bridge and you come around that bend, I know that people have been killed there. A fellah named Luke McGuire with a big timber semi-truck he used to rev it up a bit of a night, big bloke he was, one of the wood chopping mob from Tomerong, he forgot to go around the corner there one morning and that was the end of him. He was sitting there with a load of timber on, he was walloped but there I think there was quite a few there. … It’s not hard to clip someone there if you don’t watch yourself. That’s a bad part of it”.

Most, if not all, interviewees have also been involved with proposals to upgrade the Princes Highway in the area since the 1990s, and many were aware of similar proposals from the 1960s.

In the early 1990s, as Helen Chittick recalled,

“We went on bus trips around and then they had working parties, and over the hills were walked, you know. They did a lot with this committee then. But see most of the people that was here 21 years ago, most of them have left or died. I notice that there are hardly any of the same people that was at that meeting [for the recent upgrade proposal]. … It’s really a waste of money, isn’t it? … Do all this work and then swipe the lot”.

With regard to the current proposals for Berry, Sally Lindsay noted,

“The people of Berry were really, I think, hoping for a true bypass of the town rather than a road that goes along the edge of the town. A bypass is greatly needed. Since I have been here [early 1970s] we have had at least two, three, processes where the road has been looked at and various routes have been discussed and there have been arguments to and fro in the community … so people have become rather tired of the process and a lot of people are unwilling to be involved particularly people who have been here a long period of time because they are cynical. They don’t believe it’s going to happen”.

Sally continued,

“I think a lot of people who might have spoken out against what has been the ultimate choice for a new highway, didn’t get involved because this has happened before and its very, very stressful, extremely stressful for people, and even this time and I know the RTA has done as much as they could to make the process as comfortable, I suppose, as possible for people, it still sets people from one side of the town against people on the other side of the town and people in the middle of the town. It’s a very difficult process. … Really, I suppose what I’m saying is that nothing has ever changed in all this time and the route seems very much the same since the first time anything was first suggested and it doesn’t seem to me to be really taking into account the changed circumstances of the town and the needs of the town and the needs for sporting facilities and green spaces and things like that. … And I think a great modern highway like that at the edge of an historic town where there’s plenty of nineteenth-century buildings that are still intact and well maintained is going to destroy the character of Berry. … I think it is unfortunate that this route was chosen. Although I do give credit to the RTA for considering the historic precinct as a valuable asset in its entirety”.
Nevertheless, as Mary Lidbetter emphasised,

“Certainly we’re desperate to get the trucks off the shopping centre area”.

For those whose land and homes may be directly impacted by the current proposed upgrade, such as Margaret Binks, Helen Chittick, and John and Gus Miller, they are saddened and have either resigned themselves to it or remain uncertain about the future.

For some, like Colin Sharpe, it is inevitable,

“… whether we like it or not it has to be upgraded. I am prepared to accept that it must be upgraded. With the amount of traffic now and the state of the roads, particularly between Gerringong and Berry, where there is virtually no passing lanes and with the amount of traffic it just has to be upgraded”.

For others, such as Terry Robinson, the proposed upgrade represents opportunity,

“I think a bypass is a necessity for any place. To have the highway all the way around Australia it would be the greatest thing in the world – a two-lane highway and you could bypass any town. It’s a lot quicker – it just seems so obvious – to me, that you keep the traffic rolling and it’s a lot safer. I’d be an advocate for it anywhere”.
3.0 Interview transcripts

Interview No. 1  Margaret Binks, A495 Princes Highway, Broughton Village
Interview No. 2  Helen Chittick, RMB 353 Princes Highway, Gerringong
Interview No. 3  Bill Jorgenson, 134 Yurunga Street, North Nowra
Interview No. 4  Mary Lidbetter, 16 King Street, Berry
Interview No. 5  Sally Lindsay, A15 Princes Highway, 'Constable Cottage', Berry
Interview No. 6  Bruce and Nora McIntosh, 'Woodside Park', 94 Tannery Road, Berry
Interview No. 7  John and Angus Miller, 'Broughton Mill', 117 North Street, Berry
Interview No. 8  Terry Robinson, 539 Coolangatta Road, Far Meadow
Interview No. 9  Ray Rutledge, 1 Pulman Street, Berry
Interview No. 10  Colin and Margaret Sharpe, 295 Princes Highway 'Bryn-y-Mor', Toolijooa
Interview No. 11  Sonny Simms, 59 Beinda Street, Bomaderry
Interview No. 12  Lily Toohey, 31 Albert Street, Berry
MARGARET BINKS

Interview details

Interviewee: Mrs Margaret Binks (cited as MB in this transcript)
A495 Princes Highway, BROUGHTON VILLAGE, NSW.

Photograph: Mrs Margaret Binks in front of her home, ‘Sedgeford’,

Interviewer: Dr Lindsay Smith (cited as LS in this transcript)
Navin Officer Heritage Consultants Pty Ltd
4/17 Leichhardt Street, KINGSTON, ACT.

Time of interview: 10:30 am
Date of interview: Monday, 18 August 2008
Place of interview: A495 Princes Highway, BROUGHTON VILLAGE, NSW.
Subject of recording: Local history of ‘Sedgeford’ and the Broughton Village area.
Also present: Mr Phillip Bragg and Ms Caroline Ridge, local residents, ‘Glenvale’.
Interview transcript

Recording Start: 00:00 minutes

LS: Can you tell me your full name and when and where you were born?
MB: I am Margaret Eliza Joan Binks and I was born at Jaspers Brush.
LS: And when was that?
MB: The sixth of the tenth 1928 (6 October 1928).
LS: And Binks is your married name?
MB: It is.
LS: What’s your maiden name?
MB: Strong.
LS: Where were your parents born?
MB: My mother would have been born at Newtown [in Sydney] and my father was born here at Broughton Village.
LS: Are they still alive?
MB: No, they are not alive?
LS: And your spouse’s (or ex-spouse’s) name?
MB: Alfred John Devire Binks.
LS: Where was he born?
MB: He was born on this property.
LS: And when was that?
MB: 1916.
LS: Do you have any children or grandchildren?
MB: I do. I have two. We had a son and a daughter, five grandsons and now four great-grandsons. And one of those great-grandsons has lived here as a sixth generation until December last year.
LS: Do most of them live around here or have they all moved away?
MB: My son lives in Dubbo but my daughter lives in Berry, and the children are scattered.
LS: When did you come to the area?
MB: I came here as a bride in 1948.
LS: And you’ve been here ever since?
MB: Ever since.

LS: Are you retired now?
MB: Am I tired?

LS: Retired (or both).
MB: Both tired and retired.

LS: Have you ever worked in the past?
MB: I have. Farm girls didn’t usually leave the farm but were generally needed at home, so I didn’t work until I was a married woman and my children had left home. I went to tech and did a secretarial course and I got a job at the Berry Sawmill. I worked there for nine years in the office.

LS: Is the Berry Sawmill still there?
MB: No. It was gone in the late 1970s.

LS: Where was it?
MB: They would call it the Princes Highway as you enter it from Princess Street. So, it was bounded by Princess Street and George Street.

LS: I forgot to ask you when you got married.
MB: 1948, I said I came here as a bride in 1948.

LS: Did you come to this house?
MB: I did.

LS: And was your husband already here?
MB: He was, yes.

LS: Can you tell me a bit about the house and/or the property since as early as you can remember?
MB: Well, the house was built in 1902 for the family, and the family were whom we called grandfather and grandmother, and they had 11 children but some of those had married and moved on but there was quite a family left, including the eldest son, who was my husband’s father. So they moved in in 1902, it was a dairy farm and the grandfather went in for cheese making as well. He was a pretty illustrious old guy.
LS: What was his name?

MB: His name was Thomas [Binks] and he came ..., he was a mariner actually. He left his boat at Figtree, Port Kembla, and he set out for the goldfields on foot and he slept his first night under the big fig tree that's not there now at Figtree and then continued his walk south to the goldfields until he got to Gerringong and a Mr Hindmarsh picked him up in his horse and cart, gave him a job and he didn’t go any further.

Recording Time: 5:21 minutes

LS: What was he doing? What sort of job?

MB: Well, dairying. The Hindmarsh’s property is still up there at Gerringong. So he worked for him for some time, married granny and then of course there were properties that were opened up down here in this area and so he picked up a piece of land here.

LS: This land here that we are on?

MB: Yes. Well, these five acres was on it, on a piece of 200 acres. They were all smaller acreages that were held by Alexander Berry. So they had a small acreage there, I think two children might have been born in Gerringong and then the next lot were all born here at Broughton Village, up in the gully, in a house that was built into the side of the hill, where the kids jumped off the side of the roof I understand and got into trouble. So, the Binkses have been here on this property for a long, long time.

LS: And dairying all that time?

MB: I guess they were doing a bit of dairying. Not much on that many acres but then you could gather a bit more, you could lease a bit more from the Berry Estate – it was not an estate, Alexander Berry, it wasn’t an estate until later.

LS: In relation to Broughton Village itself, do you have any recollections of it being a village as such or was it just a locality as it is now?

MB: No. I haven’t myself. The school was removed.

LS: Where did you go to school?

MB: I went to school at Jaspers Brush. But there was Broughton Village School, a Broughton Village Church, which was Anglican; there was a milk depot / factory around there in that village area.

LS: Do you know if there were many people living in the village itself?

MB: Well, they were all big families. I can’t tell you how many people would have been resident.

LS: In relation to going to school at Jaspers Brush, can you tell me a bit about that?

MB: Yes, wonderful. A one-teacher school and a wonderful teacher taught children and their children before he retired there, he was there for many, many years that man, and he retired there. When I think back it was wonderful to go to school there, the privileges we had at a one-teacher school, so we could learn to do everything.

LS: Was it a single building?

MB: One building. Yes.
LS: And how did you get there?

MB: Well, when I first started I sat in amongst milk cans with a horse and cart that took the milk down to the depot at Jaspers Brush railway siding. Then when I was seven my father bought me a horse, so I rode and all schoolhouses had a horse paddock because that’s how the kids got to school, so you’d leave the horse there for the day and saddle up and come home. Then, of course, I went to high school.

LS: In Jaspers Brush?

MB: No, catching the train on Jaspers Brush siding to Bomaderry then bus from there to Nowra Intermediate High School. So, when I was of high school age, I was given a pushbike to ride to the railway station [at Jaspers Brush] because there was nowhere to leave a horse.

LS: So you have fond memories of going to school?

MB: Oh yes, very fond memories.

LS: What sort of things did you there, apart from learning, did you have recreational activities?

MB: Well, one of the things was pulling out the Paddy’s Lucerne on a Friday afternoon.

LS: That was part of the school curriculum?

MB: Well it needed to be pulled out and we were all there so, and we might get a game of rounders, but then, ‘Come on children a bit more Paddy’s Lucerne out’.

LS: Did you get paid for that at all?

MB: No, we just had fun.

LS: When you left school what did you do immediately after?

MB: Well, I was at home on the farm [at Jaspers Brush]. It was war time and there were no men around to do the work on the farms.

LS: And your father owned that did he?

MB: He did.

LS: How big was that?

MB: 100 acres.

LS: That’s a pretty big place.

MB: Oh, not really.
LS: Did you have many cattle there?

MB: Well, whatever was needed. He died when I was 13 so we had to knuckle down. I was the eldest in the family so we all worked together to continue the farm on and an income for our family.

LS: And that was successful?

MB: Yes, as successful as you could call it. I don't think people thought about successful. It was really surviving in those days during wartime.

LS: How was the dairy industry at that time?

MB: I think it was just reasonable. My mother used to talk about it, because she came here in 1924. She used to talk about milk being four pence a gallon – four pence a gallon.

LS: I don't know the relationship of money at that time but that sounds reasonably cheap for a gallon.

MB: How many litres in a gallon?

LS: 4.5 I think.

MB: So that's about a penny a gallon.

LS: Yes, a penny a litre – that's not bad. Then you moved from there [Jaspers Brush], once you had been working on the farm there and you got married and moved here [to Sedgeford]?

MB: Yes.

LS: What sort of work, just generally, did you do?

MB: Well, I was a farmer's wife and moved beside the farmer. So there would be milking to be done. If it was hay time there would be the whole milking to be done. Feeding the men. Just general outdoor duties as well as indoors. Anything you can do I can do. That's the way women were. Not … we didn't breed them up like that. We didn't want that to become something to go on and on with.

LS: Fair enough. I guess when you were younger Berry itself wasn't a very big town?

MB: Berry was dead. It's lovely now, there's people around and it looks alive. Saturday and Sunday there was absolutely very little around. The middle of the week, I think Wednesday, was sale day – there might have had a Friday sale day too. They were busy days because the farmers would come in with the cattle and of course during the wartime Red Cross would be serving meals to raise money for the soldiers, but generally Berry was dead.

LS: A small rural village I guess.

MB: Yes.
LS: What about Bomaderry, for instance?

MB: Bomaderry hardly existed. Because when we went to school there was a couple of shops up the street. Isaacs Milk Bar. If you had enough time and a couple of pennies you could get an iceblock on a hot afternoon. Bomaderry was nothing.

LS: Not compared to what it is now.

MB: Oh no.

LS: Again, what about Gerringong?

MB: I didn’t know much about Gerringong. Can’t talk about Gerringong. My husband could though, they were pretty Gerringong infected ’cause they went to school there for a little while.

LS: And Jaspers Brush was that ever a large, going concern.

MB: That was a community.

*Recording Time: 15:01 minutes*

LS: What was there?

MB: A farming community that’s all. Except, we had a school, which my father fought to keep because that was good for the economy to bring people into the area. We also had a School of Arts where there would be dances or concerts or a place of meeting, church through the week on a night. A good place of meeting for community.

LS: It had a train siding as well did it?

MB: Yes, it had a train siding, which is gone now, all those little ones have gone – Toolijooa, Croom, all of those.

LS: Did it have a station master’s house?

MB: No, it had a gatekeeper, who was also the Post Office.

LS: You would have seen some changes in transport and the roads over the years here?

MB: Surely.

LS: I understand that the current Princes Highway is just about on the same alignment that it used to be since maybe Alexander Berry’s time when he started to build the roads.

MB: No, this will be the fourth.

LS: Can you tell me a bit about that?

MB: Oh, I can only show you where they were, because the alignments are still there. I’ve got a photograph here that Phillip [Bragg] gave me of them building the ‘[Big] Dipper’ here in 1936.

LS: Where did it [the Princes Highway] go before 1936?

MB: Oh well, I’ve got a picture of that too.
LS: Did it go further to the east?

MB: No, this house faced the main road [towards the east]. That's why it's facing this way.

LS: So the road was much closer to your place [that is, closer to the front of the house, 'Sedgeford', than it is now]?

MB: Yes, just around the front.

LS: So there have been several changes to it [the Princes Highway]?

MB: Yes.

LS: You were mentioning before that most of the changes these days, since maybe the 1960s or 1990s that options have been going through your place – is that correct?

MB: Yes, 1991, this option that they're using now went through.

LS: But nothing's happened since then?

MB: No.

LS: Alright, thanks for that. What sort of road was it in the old days? Was it a dirt road?

MB: Grit, yes.

LS: Then they upgraded it to bitumen?

MB: Yes.

LS: Then the cars started coming?

MB: Oh yes.

LS: Did you have a car here when you first came? When did you have your first car?

MB: Well, a car was here when I came, I didn't come to Woop Woop. We had a 1937 Plymouth – a big, black, sleek car.

LS: Yes, that fits lots of people.

MB: Eight cylinder, I think.

LS: Just generally, do you know of any historical places around here other than your place here? You might tell us a bit about that too, about the house and how it was [heritage] listed.

MB: How I listed this house, in the ‘90s?

LS: Yes.

MB: Which I did do with the Shoalhaven Council. And that was fine and until …
LS: As I understand it some people came out?

MB: Yeah, John Flett came out with other people and then he was from the Nowra Council – Shoalhaven Shire Council – and then he sent people out to look at the trees and they came out and so it was all listed and I was told that if it went on the heritage listing that there was no way it would come off.

LS: And then subsequently it did go on to the heritage listing?

MB: It did, yes.

LS: And then later on in …

MB: Yeah, late 2006 it was evidently removed, and ratified by Council in 2007.

Recording Time: 19:58 minutes

LS: When did you find out about it?

MB: Well, that was July paper and I probably found out two weeks after that in August [2007], but my councillors hadn’t notified me.

LS: Sorry, once again when was your house de-listed or de-registered?

MB: Well, a friend rang me from Nowra who had read it in the South Coast Register of July [2007] and this was now August. This piece that was in the paper, and I have it in my hand now and it said, “Outside of Huskisson ‘Sedgeforth’, a federation weatherboard house at Broughton Village was removed because its listing might inhibit the proposed Princes Highway upgrade between Bomaderry and Gerringong”.

Now, I don’t buy the South Coast Register and I was unaware of all that happening until this friend rang me and asked me had I read it in the paper, which I then went away and bought – no, I didn’t buy it somebody gave me one because they had read it also and so there we are.

LS: It’s got ‘Sedgeforth’ [in the newspaper – the South Coast Register].

MB: Yes, it should be ‘Sedgeford’: f-o-r-d.

LS: But it’s certainly the same place?

MB: It is the property. There’s no other ‘Sedgeforth’.

LS: OK. Thank you. Do you know of any Aboriginal people or places around here?

MB: No, I don’t. There’s never ever any of their artefacts been found here on this property but then I always believed that the Aboriginal people would be along creek banks where they’re close to water and there’s no water on this side of the road [the west side of the Princes Highway where Sedgeford is located].
LS: And you didn’t have any Aboriginal workers working for you in the past?

MB: No. We’ve never had Aboriginal people here. My mother used to when we were out at the farm [at Jaspers Brush]. We had peas during the winter time and many times they would be the pickers, there’d always be Aboriginal people wanting to earn a little bit of money and they would go out picking peas. And they were a jolly lot of people. They’d come up from Nowra area and go around the places picking peas and earning a little bit of money. Next year the same group would come around again.

LS: What period was that?

MB: Well, that was during wartime.

LS: And they really didn’t turn up much after that?

MB: No, no. Well there wasn’t anything for them to do really. That was something they could do pretty easily and just turn up and generally go home. I don’t think they ever camped and stayed on the job. They’d go back the next day.

LS: So that was helpful to you and helpful to them?

MB: Oh yes, yes, because, well there was no manpower around and the Aboriginal young people, well they were available.

LS: In relation to the area around here where you’ve lived for so long, what are some of the other families and how did they all interact in the area?

MB: Well, I moved into a wonderful, wonderful area, Broughton Village, everybody cared for each other. It was a wonderful experience and I’m glad that I had this experience. Neighbours where what neighbours were meant to be and help was always available. People just visited each other. It was a natural thing to be part of each others family. The good times and the bad times. We had many relatives still living in Broughton Village. Our friends like the Johnstons, the Thompsons, the Tomlins. Yeah, many Thompsons because families stayed on and married and bought a bit more land and it was a wonderful area to live in Broughton Village.

Recording Time: 25:04 minutes

LS: All those families were agricultural families?

MB: They were all dairying families. So everybody had a similar interest.

LS: And did you help each other out in heavy times of work?

MB: Yes, there’d be times when people would need a little bit extra and neighbours would jus turn up. That was just the way it was. Very friendly and what would I say, co-operative – yes, not just neighbourly but family really.
LS: And at that time Broughton Village was probably only a very small part. Can you remember or do you have any reminiscences of your parents and their knowledge of Broughton Village?

MB: Well, some of it, yes. My father would speak about … because he was born and lived here and moved away in around about 1899 to Jaspers Brush and so at the school they had ping pong, so that was a good outlet for the young people. They also had roller skating. Charlie Johnston was an expert roller skater, I believe. So there was those areas besides debating teams, I believe. A cricket club. It was quite an area.

LS: Quite a vibrant community?

MB: It was a vibrant community, yes.

LS: And as far as the agricultural side, I guess everybody helped each other and they came and helped you working on your farm in times of a lot of work. What sort of things or incidences may have happened?

MB: Yes, when I first came here we only had horse-drawn vehicles but as the few years went by we were able to buy a tractor. John bought a crawler tractor to be able to be safer on these steep hills. That brought a lot of interest from a lot of people. I was only thinking the other night of how progressive he really was because he grew lucerne on hills. Now, the only place they grew lucerne is on flats but he managed to grow lucerne on these hills and made a good fist of it. So the men they busied themselves with other curricula like the Better Farming League or the Foxground / Broughton Village Farming League and so they would have competitions on raising good pastures. The Pasture Protection Board came into being.

There was a lot of things going for men as well as for women. They would have a particular day in Foxground. Women might make the best sponge cakes or the most beautiful floral arrangement. So there’d be some things going on like that where the community would come together up there in Foxground in the park. So Foxground integrated into Broughton Village as well. When we talk about one we can’t eliminate the other because the community just was like that.

LS: Was Foxground a village at all?

MB: No, it wasn’t but there was a Foxground / Broughton Village school and that was even a subsidised school at one stage. A lot of the young men they really honoured the teacher there, a Mr Kemp. He was there for a number of years and he just taught people so much about living as well as curriculum that was set out. It was like our teacher at Jaspers Brush. They had such an influence on the community as a whole that it just branched out into families. It was extraordinary really and the number of men that remarked about Mr Kemp and how he helped them get on their way. Like some boys went to Hawkesbury College from Foxground School. People were encouraged to do more than just stay home on a farm. These teachers had a real yearning to see youth grow and develop into really amazing people and do more than parents ever thought they could do.

Recording Time: 30:42 minutes
LS: That’s an excellent ambition for teachers of any age, be it then or today. Well, thank you for very much for that. I also understand that the house here has been the focus for family reunions over the years. Can you tell us a bit about that?

MB: Well that’s been pretty important. It was a very loving, encompassing family and families just always came back to Sedgeford to have visits and so one particular family gathering was the Golden Wedding [Anniversary] of the grandparents and the family all turned up for that except for one person, one son who had gone to live on the Northern Rivers and so he was unable to come back.

LS: And when was that?

MB: That was 1915. So the whole family as it was at the stage, except for that man and his wife were unable to be there and that was talked about always, that Golden Wedding [Anniversary]. So, then in 1973, I guess, one of the grandchildren spoke to my husband, another one of the grandchildren, and said, ‘I think we ought to have a reunion. We’re still all here’ – I think the majority of the grandchildren were still alive – ‘and it might be time to have a reunion, could you have it at Sedgeford?’ Yes, we will do that. So the arrangements were made to have this grand day and it was a grand day. All these folk turning up, people we didn’t know, children certainly we didn’t know then and some had travelled from, I think, Cairns. One group of people travelled, just travelled day and night till they arrived here. They just came.

LS: How many people were there altogether?

MB: Well, we reckon about 170. I don’t know how many. I don’t know that all the kids got into the pictures. Some had gone walking around the hills and just enjoying themselves. It wasn’t just that one day. There was a church service held at Cambewarra. There was an evening meal held at Gerringong, and Cambewarra and Gerringong figured in the whole situation as well as did ‘Sedgeford’ / Broughton Village because Gerringong was where the grandparents had first met and they also had another farm out at Cambewarra. So it was a grand day. Everybody had a wonderful day.

And so then it was coming up for the centenary and I just thought I should just do something for the family, particularly the young people who perhaps had not been here, didn’t know, wouldn’t know what their family or grandparents might be talking about ‘Sedgeford’. So, for the month of December, which was the month the family moved into the house here, we had open house and people just came whenever and stayed as long as they liked, had a meal or a cup of tea or whatever and so we drew them together again as a family in 2002, and the folk that came. Some from Sydney, some from Finley. All over the place, oh, one from Western Australia, one young woman. People travelled long distances to be able to be here and that was just a fun, wonderful, wonderful month of December in 2002.

Recording Time: 35:13 minutes

LS: Many fond memories of the house.

MB: Yes, and it appears that they had a radio here. This is early cricket days and John Thompson’s father used to come around. Oh, look people used to come and that was just what happened but during those early radio days to listen to the cricket that was being broadcast from England or wherever and so there’d be reunions for the evening listening to this cricket coming across and having cups of tea. You can just imagine it all – I’d hate to say romantic but in a way it is – it was what happened. It was normal and this is where they met – friends, neighbours, family.
LS: The real focus of the whole area?

MB: Yes, it was.

LS: This brings me to the sad, inevitable question. What about the future?

MB: Well, the future, RTA tell me, is that I’m right in the centre, epicentre, of this very big cutting, very large cutting, and so that seems inevitable that that’s going to happen. I’ve talked to my immediate family and we’ve resigned ourselves to it. We’d much prefer the whole thing to go than to be beside, which it could’ve been, but the whole thing will go and that will be sad.

LS: That is the house?

MB: Yes, and land. There’s only a tiny little corner left. But that seems to be the way it’s going. It seemed like that in 1991 and it hasn’t changed, and so these will be memories.

LS: They will be.

MB: And there are some good memories. So, we just praise God for that – good memories.

LS: Thank you very much for your time.

Recording Finish: 37:36 minutes
HELEN CHITTICK

Interview details

Interviewee:  
Mrs Helen Chittick (cited as HC in this transcript)  
RMB 353 Princes Highway, GERRINGONG, NSW 2534.

Photograph:  
Mrs Helen Chittick in her home at RMB 353 Princes Highway, 

Interviewer:  
Dr Lindsay Smith (cited as LS in this transcript)  
Navin Officer Heritage Consultants Pty Ltd  
4/17 Leichhardt Street, KINGSTON, ACT.

Time of interview:  
11:00 am.

Date of interview:  
Tuesday, 23 September 2008.

Place of interview:  
RMB 353 Princes Highway, Gerringong, NSW.

Recording medium:  
Sharp Digital Voice Recorder (PA-VR10E PC).

Subject of recording:  
Local history.

Also present:  
Ms Nicola Hayes, Navin Officer Heritage Consultants Pty Ltd.
Interview transcript

Recording Start: 00:00 minutes

LS: Can you tell me your full name and where and when you were born?
HC: Helen Jane Chittick and I was born in this room. Right here, in this room, in this house.
LS: And when was that?
HC: 72 years ago [1936].
LS: Where were your parents born?
HC: My mum was born in Cooma and my father was born here. Dad was born in this house too.
LS: Was he? And what year was that?
HC: 1905 I think, yes 1905.
LS: Are you married?
HC: I was but I am a widow now. My husband passed away about three years ago last April, 15 of April [2005].
LS: And what was his name?
HC: William Johnston Chittick. My maiden name was Johnston.
LS: I see. You weren’t related of course?
HC: Might have been way back, I’m not sure. In Ireland, you know.
LS: And do you have any children?
HC: Two boys. One 42 and one 36.
LS: Do they live around here?
HC: Stuart lives here, and Scott lives in Fairy Meadow.
LS: Do they have any children?
HC: Stuart’s not married and Scott’s got six, Zoë the oldest one’s 10.
LS: And they all live out at Fairy meadow?
HC: Yes, and the youngest one, Ruby, she is 4 months. He’s got them 10 [years] to 4 months, six.
LS: That’s a good range.
HC: It sure is. They are plenty of work.
LS: So you were born here in this house, in this room, at ‘Brookside’?

HC: Yes.

LS: And where did you grow up? You grew up on this farm?

HC: Yes. I went to Foxground School.

LS: Ok. What was that like going there?

HC: It was a nice school. It was just down from the turn-off.

LS: So did you walk up to school?

HC: No, my uncle Charlie took me on his old Harley Davidson. He had his side car. He used to pick up some more kids on the way up. My father went to Foxground school too. But it used to be at the crossroads then – in about a mile or so, at the crossroads.

LS: So it wasn’t the same school house?

HC: Yes, they moved it.

LS: Did they? What was the school house like?

HC: Just a wooden house with one room and a verandah at the back.

LS: And you went there for primary school?

HC: Yes, I went there for primary school. It got down to about seven of us at one stage. And when we left and went to high school, we only had two years in Nowra High School; they closed it down because they couldn’t get enough children.

LS: In Nowra High school?

HC: No in Foxground.

LS: And how did you get to Nowra?

HC: Bus. We’ve still got it. The bus stopped at the door. It comes from Gerringong.

LS: And that was Nowra High School?

HC: Yes.

LS: And then what did you do after that? After you left school? Did you work at a job?

HC: I milked cows.

LS: On the farm?

HC: Yes.
LS: You must have done that while you were at school too?

HC: Not much, not much.

LS: So what did you do after school? You continued working on the farm?

HC: Yes. I helped around.

LS: And did you work at all, like in Gerringong or something?

HC: No, no, just on the farm cooking and that.

LS: And how did you come to meet you husband then?

HC: In Gerringong, at the Morrows.

LS: The Morrows? What’s that?

HC: That was people. Out near the beach. You know Gerroa – not Gerroa, Boat Harbour. One house down the corner they lived.

LS: The Morrows.

HC: Yes, they were his mother’s people. He lived in the valley until he was seven and then his father dropped dead in the paddock fencing, putting a gate up. He put a gate up and then he dropped dead. He was in his late 30s. So his mother came back to Gerringong to the Morrows – that was her people.

Recording Time: 05:09 minutes

LS: And what did he do for a living?

HC: He worked in the paint store. Oh he owned milk trucks for a while. The Morrows, his uncles had a milk run at Toolijooa, and he done that for a while, and then he got a hernia and he couldn’t sort of do it real well. He had a bad hernia. He had it operated on but then he went into the post office.

LS: Oh right. And then he worked there for a while?

HC: Yes. Over 40 years.

LS: Oh that’s a while.

HC: And this is what they gave him when he retired.

LS: It’s a plaque presented to William Chittick in recognition of your 44 years of service. We wish you health and happiness in your retirement from management and staff at Australia post – 1996.

And then he passed away a few years ago?

HC: And then he worked on a while after that too.
LS: And then he passed away a few years ago?

HC: Yes, he got lung cancer. He was a pretty big smoker. But he gave it up a few years before he had a heart attack, he gave it up. He died quickly really. He went to Nowra Hospital and he was only there a few days.

LS: And what was this farm like when you were growing up on it?

HC: It was in full production of milk.

LS: And how many cows did you have?

HC: Well we milked about 50. That was a lot in them days I think.

LS: Yes. I think so.

HC: And we sort of had heifers over the creek. They were milking cows.

LS: And what did you do with the milk? How did you get it … ?

HC: Carriers came and picked it up at the road, put it in milk cans.

LS: The 10 gallon cans?

HC: Yes.

LS: And you took it up to the road and they took it from there?

HC: Yes.

LS: Where did they take it to do you know?

HC: Berry Factory.

LS: Oh, Berry Factory?

HC: Yes, Berry; there is a co-op there now.

LS: Yes.

HC: You know the co-op?

LS: I do, yes. It’s been in operation for a while.

HC: Yes. Well that’s where it was, the factory.

LS: And at Foxground were there many buildings there?

HC: Not really. There was a church and a school.

LS: That’s it?

HC: Yes, all public buildings you know. Some kids burnt the church down a few years ago. A good few years ago. I think they were playing with matches.
LS: And did they have community meetings in the church?

HC: Yes.

LS: And did they have dances and stuff?

HC: Not dances I don’t think. They had P&C and picnics. We always had picnics up in the park – where the school used to be at the crossroads when my father went. We had our picnics there and field days and that. It was a lot more of a community then. They stopped together more.

LS: And did you know Margaret Binks and that time, when you were here?

HC: Yes, I knew her from the church, when she came to the Methodist Church. She lived in Jaspers Brush.

LS: And where was the Methodist Church? Was that the one here at Foxground?

HC: I think it might have been Church of England. There was a church just along here. One in Foxground and one on the other side of the road just up a bit.

LS: And what about Gerringong. You’ve been here for a while; you would have seen some changes in Gerringong.

HC: Yes, a lot.

LS: Can you give us a bit of an idea of what the changes have been like over time?

HC: Oh well, I can remember when they built the new Town Hall. Just the little one at the back, it used to be opposite IGA. You know IGA?

LS: Yes.

HC: There was one there. That’s where they used to have their meetings. They had a lot of euchre parties in those days too.

LS: And did you go there quite a bit to Gerringong?

HC: Not to Gerringong, I went to Berry Church. We went to Berry.

Recording Time: 10:03 minutes

LS: OK. And what was Berry like?

HC: Very quiet. We used to go to the young peoples club with the neighbours, they’re gone now, the Thompsons. They lived just on the flat just over. I remember Frank Thompson saying one night, we come out of the social and went up the street, ‘You could fire a double-barrelled shotgun up the street and not hit anyone’. It was so quiet.

LS: And when was that? That would have been mid 1900s or something?

HC: I was around about 20 – 21 then. So about 50 – 51 years ago [1957/8].
LS: So it was pretty quiet?

HC: Yes.

LS: In the 1950s. And there wouldn’t have been that much traffic?

HC: No.

LS: Was there much entertainment going on in Berry?

HC: Well the pictures were the main thing.

LS: Was it?

HC: Yes, the picture show.

LS: Where were they held?

HC: In the School of Arts. They had them every Wednesday and every Saturday night.

LS: And that was the main attraction?

HC: Yes.

LS: How did you get to the pictures? By car?

HC: Yes. My father and mother used to go. They had an old Dodge.

LS: And what were the roads like then? Was it a sealed road?

HC: Yes. It was sealed in my time. My cousin he’s 90 and I think he remembers, you know, where the road went? Around the side over the other road along that boundary. [Boundary Road around the back of Sedgeford]. I don’t think it was sealed then but he said they used go to football. He was a great footballer. A young doctor’s son from Nowra got killed on the bridge.

LS: On the bridge?

HC: It was the bridge over the gully.

LS: Oh, around the Boundary Road way?

HC: Yes. And I think that’s why he got it changed then. I heard them say it was a Nowra doctor’s son that got killed. There was a bad accident.

LS: A car accident?

HC: Yes.

LS: I knew about that road around there [Boundary Road], and they moved it along here [in front of Sedgeford] and made a few alignments as they put it there too. I think it used to go closer to Margaret Binks’ house. Where you here when that was …?

HC: No. About 72 years ago that happened. When my mother was having me in here and she reckons she heard the blasting and it was terribly noisy. My grandfather owned the place then, Gerard Johnston, and it came right through the middle, and then they blasted that away. You know the Big Dipper?
LS: To put the road in?

HC: Yes.

LS: And that’s when they first started that part.

HC: Yes. It [the Princes Highway] wasn’t supposed to go here [on its current alignment] but I think someone got it changed. It was supposed to go along the old track [Boundary Road] where the doctor’s son got killed and then go straight up through Binks’ bails. That was the way it was supposed to go. But I think somebody got it changed.

LS: Somebody like who?

HC: Someone who was in power, you know, he lived around here. I better not give you any names but he lived around here and then he got it [the Princes Highway] shifted to here.

LS: Ah well these things happen don’t they?

HC: I suppose so. It wasn’t a very nice thing to do, was it?

LS: No, it wasn’t a nice thing to do. So Berry was pretty quiet apart from the pictures on Wednesdays and Saturdays.

HC: The young peoples club, we used to meet every fortnight.

LS: And where was that?

HC: In the Uniting Church Hall. You know where that is, at the back of the car park.

LS: So you used to meet once a month?

HC: No, twice a month.

LS: Twice a month, sorry.

HC: And then we had Christian Endeavour the other week, and we all went into the church for that.

Recording Time: 15.00 minutes

LS: And what did you do at those functions?

HC: One week we had like a social. We weren’t allowed to have all dancing in those days. You had to have some dancing and some games, because that was a social. And history I think was another night. I know it was free, then I would go out to Gerringong every February for a swim and you know. They were quite good meetings, you know.

LS: And what about the Young Endeavours ones, what were they for?

HC: They were Christian, you studied the Bible.
LS: Did you ever travel down to Bomaderry much, or Nowra?

HC: Oh yes. When I left school I went to tech in Nowra, used to go in the bus. The bus would stop here – the school bus, and took us to Nowra. I went with Yvonne Strong, Margaret’s sister, a lot [Margaret Binks]. Yvonne, she used to get in Jaspers Brush and we’d have the day in Nowra and come back on the school bus. We learnt dress making.

LS: Oh, did you. This is after high school?

HC: Yes. Dress making and millinery, and different things like that, you know, flour making. Made our own dresses.

LS: Did you ever go into a shop or anything [by way of business]?

HC: No, no. My mother was a dressmaker in her trade. She lived in Five Dock in Sydney. She had a business there when she was young. In the Depression, I heard her say she stayed up to two o’clock in the morning making dresses because it was bad times, she’d get about 10 shillings.

LS: Yeah, well to get anything would be good, I’d think.

HC: Yes. She said that if she hadn’t done that her mother would have lost her house, you know, in the Depression.

LS: Well, she was lucky she had the skills.

HC: Yes, well she learnt in Sydney of a tailor.

LS: Did she encourage you to do dress making?

HC: Yes, yes. I had to learn something.

LS: And when did you get married? How old were you when you got married?

HC: Twenty five. [1961].

LS: So you did your dress making course and worked on the farm a bit before you got married?

HC: Yes, and then we stopped here for about five years till Stuart was born then we lived in Fairy Meadow a bit. Got a house in Fairy Meadow, where Scott is now.

LS: And then you came back here later on?

HC: I used to come out here quite a lot. All school holidays and that, you know.

LS: And then you decided that you would come back here permanently and Scott would stay there?

HC: He was there before my husband passed away. No, it’s sort of … the years go don’t they?
LS: Oh yes, they certainly do. And what about Nowra and Bomaderry in the early days, was that very lively or was that pretty quiet as well?

HC: Nowra – there was a fair few around, Nowra. I didn’t go into Bomaderry that much, you know. There was a fair few around Nowra. Yvonne and I used to go and stay another night. We used to go on sailors’ pay day, and we’d have our tea in the shop and you’d see them all walk by all dressed up shopping. Someone told us that was their pay day. They used to come into Nowra a fair bit, I think. They seemed to be always very well behaved and that when we were walking by. One term or one year we stopped over and had our tea and done another lesson at night. My father would come down and get us.

Recording Time: 20:15 minutes

LS: After the second lesson?

HC: Yes. It was after tea – flour making, and John Strong, Yvonne’s brother, he used to come down to Nowra, turn about and dad would meet him at Strongs Road there, you know, you know where that is?

LS: Yes.

HC: And he’d bring us in.

LS: He’d bring you back here?

HC: No, dad would meet him at Strongs Road, and then the next night he’d bring Yvonne up and he’d meet him there too.

LS: I get you. Speaking of shops, were there many shops in Nowra?

HC: Yes, in the main street there was. There was Basha’s; it was a very good shop?

LS: What did they sell?

HC: Haberdashery, linen and clothes and materials and we used to go there to get things for tech. Basha’s, I think they’re, oh, my father used to say where they came from – somewhere overseas. Yes, they were nice men. There was Tom and Tom too, I think, Basha. But then they just went into carpets and furnishing but now I they’ve moved. Someone else has got that shop there.

LS: Right. So, they’re no longer in Nowra?

HC: They’re in a back street in Nowra selling carpet.

LS: And what about the shops in Berry, where there many shops in Berry?

HC: Just in the main street. Three fruit shops, you know, green grocers, and there was a couple of dress material shops, Heitman’s, it was a mother and father and daughter ran it and before that Mrs Bellus was in it, she was Greek, and he, Spiros Bellus, had the fruit shop next door, not far up from IGA. My mother used to shop in there with Mr and Mrs Bellus, you know, get materials and that, and then the Heitmans bought it and then I don’t know who bought it and then it sort of closed. Don’t know what’s in that shop now; it might be the antique shop, somewhere near there.
LS: So there weren’t that many shops in town really, in Berry?

HC: No, there’s the paper shop – Waddell’s, you know the paper shop? Waddell’s and they sold lots of nice china and that. Old Mr Andy Waddell used to go over and get some overseas but he had very good stuff. And the bank of course was on the corner and the Post Office on the other corner.

LS: And the road went right through the middle?

HC: Yes. Some people think it should go on the ‘sand track’ though.

LS: Yes, that’s right. I mean there have been a number of options put forward for it over the years.

HC: Oh yes.

LS: You would have seen some of those?

HC: Well, 20 years ago, I think it was, my husband and I were very involved. They had a working party. It’s 22 years since my father died, last June, so it would have been a while ago. It might have been 21 years they looked into it.

LS: Around the ’90s?

HC: Yes.

LS: And they had a proposal then, they were going to do something similar.

Recording Time: 25:00 minutes

HC: Yes. There was a couple of books. Mr Peterson his name was, gave us.

LS: Who was Mr Peterson?

HC: He was working on the road upgrade 20 years ago.

LS: So, this is the book from it: State Highway No. 1 Princes Highway. Proposed Improvements between Gerringong and Berry. Part B. Route Evaluation Study Working Papers and this was in the 1990s.

HC: But that’s been swiped now. They looked into the environment just the same as they’re doing now.

LS: Yes, that’s right.

HC: It’s really a waste of money, isn’t it?

LS: Well, I don’t know, it’s not for me to say.

HC: Do all this work and then swipe the lot.

LS: Well, apparently they’d also done a study in 1960 to upgrade parts of the road as well.

HC: I think they might have.
LS: And, I think this one they intend to do this time. As I understand it, this one is very similar to what they proposed in 1991 but I don’t know what happened then. It might have been funding or something.

HC: We went on bus trips around and then they had working parties, and over the hills were walked, you know. They did a lot with this committee then. But see most of the people that was here 21 years ago, most of them have left or died. I notice that there are hardly any of the same people that was at that meeting.

LS: Yes, different people being involved from the RTA as well.

HC: Yes, yes. There was a Mr Peterson and a Mr Beatty. I think Mr Beatty is retired now.

LS: And did you go along the recent meetings about the upgrade?

HC: Yes, I’ve been to a couple and my son, Scott, he went to the one in the Gerringong Town Hall, a while ago.

LS: And what are your general thoughts on the upgrade itself?

HC: If they go through this farm and cut it all up it’ll just ruin it, you know.

LS: Is it their intention to do that?

HC: Well, it looks like it from the maps, you know.

LS: Have they approached you at all about that? About the road going through this place.

HC: They haven’t really, only at the meetings.

LS: Oh, OK. But apart from it going through your place, generally, it’s probably a good thing because there’s a lot of trucks and heavy vehicles on the road.

HC: Yes. There haven’t been a lot of accidents around but I’d say there would be some bad ones, you know.

LS: Yes, and like in Berry itself, it’s pretty congested.

HC: Yes, yes.

LS: You get all the big trucks going through the centre of town. But I guess you may have seen it all before?

HC: Yes, it looks like it but, you know, I reckon they should go along the railway line.

LS: Have there been any proposals for that?

HC: Yes. You haven’t seen them?

LS: No, this is in ‘91 or the recent one?

HC: Yeah, ‘91 too.
LS: Well, they've nearly settled on a route, they've got a few options open but I think it's almost decided.

HC: Do you know which one it is?

LS: No, no. It's only the one I was showing you before but I don't think it is on the railway line at all.

HC: I think they went off that.

LS: Yes, I think they did too.

HC: A terrible lot of people say it's a logical thing. I've heard them, you know, 'Why don't they go along the railway line?'

LS: No, I don't know. I guess they've got their engineering reasons and all sorts of reasons but I don't know what they are. Can I just ask you another thing? In relation to the area and any Aboriginal activities or people in the area, do you know of any Aboriginal people who may have worked for you or any of their camping places around here?

HC: I think they were around the creeks, you know, they camped around the creeks. I don't think any ever worked for my grandfather, he had a few, you know, people work for him in the olden days but I don't think they were Aboriginal. I know they camped on Harley Hole down the creek that was their camp.

Recording Time: 30:21 minutes

LS: Harley Hole is it?

HC: Yes, it's called Harley Hole.

LS: Down which creek?

HC: Broughton Creek.

LS: Oh, no, I didn't know that.

HC: Yes, they used to camp there. Well, Mrs Martin said, Mary Martin, said they used to.

LS: Who's Mary Martin?

HC: Oh, she's passed away. Now she lived over the creek. She was Mary Strong. But she said that they used to come down around and my cousin's mother said she can remember, their name was Calwell, that was my father's mother's name, Mrs Calwell. The Calwells live out on Harley Hole, they had 80 acres, it was sold a few years ago when Frank died, and he was the last Calwell. There were three of them and they never married.

LS: Three boys?

HC: Two boys and a girl.

LS: And none of them married?

HC: No. They lived there. But June, she passed away a while ago, she said her mother could remember when she was playing over there as a child a little Aboriginal girl used to come down the creek and play with her on the verandah, over at Calwell's. They were around.
LS: And that was at Harley Hole?

HC: Yes, in front of Calwell’s old place. It used to be a very, very deep hole. I don’t think it is as deep now.

LS: Just naturally filled up.

HC: Yes.

LS: So what’s the future for you then, living here and hoping the road doesn’t come through?

HC: Yes, well that’s about all, you know. It’s worrying, and it’s made everybody, you know, really worrying times for everyone.

LS: Yes, I guess it’s the uncertainty.

HC: Yes. That’s it, you know, it is uncertainty.

LS: Well, I think that’s about it. Thank you very much for your time.

HC: Oh, good.

Recording End: 32:40 minutes
BILL JORGENSEN

Interview details

Interviewee: Mr William ‘Bill’ Jorgenson (cited as BJ in this transcript)
134 Yurunga Street, NORTH NOWRA, NSW 2542.

Photograph: Mr Bill Jorgenson in his home at 134 Yurunga Street,

Interviewer: Dr Lindsay Smith (cited as LS in this transcript)
Navin Officer Heritage Consultants Pty Ltd
4/17 Leichhardt Street, KINGSTON, ACT.

Time of interview: 2:30 pm.

Date of interview: Tuesday, 23 September 2008.

Place of interview: 134 Yurunga Street, North Nowra, NSW.


Subject of recording: Timber and dairy industry, and local history.

Also present: Ms Nicola Hayes, Navin Officer Heritage Consultants Pty Ltd.
LS: Can you tell me your full name and where and when you were born?

BJ: William Arthur Jorgenson and I was born on the corner of Bridge Road and Hyam Street in Nowra, a vacant block of land opposite the new Entertainment Centre, which was the hospital. That’s where I was born on the first of April 1926. I was the first boy after six girls and I was born on April Fool’s Day. My father came home from work and they told him he had a son and he wouldn’t believe it, so he went over and had a look for himself.

LS: Oh, because it was April Fool’s Day?

BJ: Yes. He thought they were playing a joke.

LS: Where were your parents born?

BJ: In Robertson.

LS: Both parents were born in Robertson?

BJ: No. My mother was born in Bellawongarah Mountain. It’s been about 100 years since my father’s family came to Berry.

LS: And why did they come to Berry?

BJ: Well, I don’t know but they had bullock teams up there. They came to Berry when they were only young.

LS: Both your mother and father?

BJ: Well, mum lived in Bellawongarah until she was married and my father came to Berry and then he met her. Berry and Bellawongarah are not far away [from each other]. Because they were up there [at Bellawongarah] getting timber and all that sort of thing.

LS: So he met her when he was working at Berry?

BJ: Yes, they had two or three bullock teams, and the real old timers in Berry told me years ago it was nothing to hear the Jorgensons at two o’clock in the morning coming along Beach Road that runs into Berry and which runs past the David Berry Hospital, cracking the bullock whips bringing logs into the sawmill.
LS: About what year was that?

BJ: That was before I was born [before 1926] because as far back as I can remember we lived out in Meroo Road in a little old house down near the line, and I remember I was three-years old and my father picking me up, putting me on his shoulders – and I can take you to the spot where the pallet factory was out there where they made crates – driving the bullocks across the road down into the creek to give them water. I never forgot that – I was three-years old. And that was the year we moved from there into Bomaderry. When we moved into Bomaderry, we started to count up the houses one day and I think there were 40 something. That was from Illaroo Road to the [Princes] Highway all Bomaderry out to Meroo Road and Hanigans Lane. Forty houses in Bomaderry that was the lot and they were all dirt roads. We lived in an old house in Karowa Street in Bomaderry and I remember that when we were little kids that a lady, a friend of mum and dads, had the only car and she came over and took us for a ride around the block – it was a real bush track and she had a job to squeeze the car through – and I thought I’d gone around Australia.

Recording Time: 05:09 minutes

LS: In those days you would’ve too. And where did you grow and go to school?

BJ: I went to school at Bomaderry, the old Public School over there – you want to have a look at it – it was two little rooms about this big, it was three rooms with only two open, we didn’t have enough kids. Illaroo Road out as far as the [Princes] Highway, down Hanigans Lane – that’s how big Bomaderry was then.

LS: And how many kids did it have?

BJ: There wouldn’t have been 100 kids. It wouldn’t have been big enough for a lot of kids.

LS: So you went to primary school there?

BJ: Yes, to primary school.

LS: And where did you go to high school?

BJ: No, I didn’t go to high school, unfortunately. And I went from there to Kangaroo Valley and I worked on a dairy farm with my brother-in-law and sister for eight years.

LS: Did you work with your father at all?

BJ: Yes, after I came back [to Bomaderry]. Up in the bush at Woodhill Mountain, we were cutting softwood, up on the hill under the bluff there. Yes, I did work with him for some time.

LS: And did he have a truck by then?

BJ: No, we worked for the people at Bomaderry who had the box mill – Norm Ditman and Norm Ryan, and we just worked for them.

LS: That was a sawmill as well?

BJ: Yes, they cut all their own timber for the boxes and everything. Fish boxes, cherry boxes, that’s what they used to make there.
LS: They didn't make any housing timber.

BJ: No.

LS: What sort of trees did you cut out for that?

BJ: There was sassafras, maiden's butt – what they'd call it, there was leatherjacket, there was all different softwoods. Of course, they wouldn't let you cut it out now. They wouldn't let you do it now.

LS: So how many sawmills were there when your father was around or in the early days?

BJ: There was one I don't remember, that was Molloy's – that was the one I was telling you about bringing the logs at night into Berry. At the end of the street, the one that runs across to the railway line, the railway crossing [in Berry] to Miller's. Molloy's mill was over there somewhere, that's where they used to take [the logs] and then there was one at Beach Road, and before that there was one up Woodhill Mountain, and there was one in the main street – Noel Williams from Nowra – he used to have a machinery place in Nowra and he moved to Berry, he opened up a big sawmill there. Now, you know as you come into Berry through the 50 kph area, you know where you see all the plaques up there with the stations on them – railway station signs – you know, all the names of the stations – that's where the sawmill was in there, a very big one at the time, yes.

LS: So, there were a few of them around?

BJ: Oh yes, it was all timber in them days, you know.

LS: And did you ever take it [timber] up to Gerringong? Any sawmills up there?

BJ: Not that I know of. no. There was one in Kangaroo Valley out Bendeela – there was a sawmill out there out towards the Dam – there used to be a sawmill out there.

Recording Time: 10:00 minutes

LS: When you came back and worked for your father, you mainly took it [the timber] down here to the Bomaderry sawmill?

BJ: Yes. Yes we only brought it down here to where the hardware shop is now. But that operated as a mill for a long time, Davidson and Herbert. Tony Davidson he had another one at Wandandian and he had another one down at Termeil. He was in it in a big way and that all started off with his father. My old uncle Bert Jorgenson at Berry brought old Manny Davidson down to work for him when he was getting timber in Berry from the Dorrigo. And I often speak to Toby, who is still alive and I say to him, 'How's everything down here, Toby?' and he said, 'old Bert Jorgenson from Berry got me here. 'He's a very wealthy man, and he sold out to Boral about five years ago – 20 million, but he still had a sawmill somewhere he's got one. Twenty million, Toby end up a very wealthy man.

LS: Good luck to him.

BJ: Yes.
LS: And what did you do after you worked for your father?

BJ: Jack Reid had one [a sawmill]. Now that man, my father told me a fellah named Arty Heam started him up. Yeah, that was another sawmill in the valley. Just before you get into the town [Kangaroo Valley] you’ve got Nugents Creek, you’ve got River Road there, Arty Heam started up there and he gave Jack Reid his start. Jack Reid had a sawmill up at Salt Water Creek, my father said, and said he never had the price of half a loaf of bread, and he ended up a pretty wealthy bloke when he died. But the sawmill’s gone – they did get timber over there, yes.

LS: Good business then? So you came back and worked for your father?

BJ: Well, I didn’t work for him, I worked with him.

LS: Yes, worked together.

BJ: He helped me when I built my first house when I got married in 1952. He helped me cut the logs in Burrier. My father-in-law was on a farm in Burrier …

LS: Where’s Burrier?

BJ: It’s on the Albatross Road, you turn right and go up towards where the tip is now and you follow that right out at a place called Barningella. And this lady that owned this farm and owned all this other area she said I could get the logs, so my father and I cut the logs for my house. My wife’s brother had the timber cut and he carted it into Eisen’s sawmill in Nowra and they sawed them up for 30 shillings a 100 super feet.

LS: So, you built your house. Where did you build it?

BJ: In Bomaderry and we lived in it for 23 years. Actually I did a lot of work on it with a builder; a chap I went to school with was the builder. I paid him £5 a day and he brought two apprentices here and I had to pay them 30 shillings a day. The apprentice now is a retired builder and he laughs about. I said, ‘I overpaid you, I paid you 30 shillings a day.’ He said, ‘Yeah, but I only got two, Dutch kept one for himself.’

Recording Time: 15:10 minutes

LS: And what’s your wife’s name?

BJ: Sally or Christina her name is. They came from Sydney, my wife.

LS: And have you got any children?

BJ: Yes, two girls and a boy.

LS: Do they all live around here?

BJ: Yes, 10 grandchildren, one great grandchild eight weeks old and we’re waiting any day for the next one. She’s a nurse in Sydney; her husband’s got a franchise with Harvey Norman. We’re back from Perth two months ago and she was due, oh, any day, the middle of this month, so we’re just waiting for it to happen again.

LS: A growing family?

BJ: Yeah, they all live – well, John as you know, he’s a builder here. My daughter and son-in-law they’ve got a big dairy farm at Pyree. He’s a chairman of the dairy farmers’ milk thing in Sydney.
LS: Oh, is he? What's his name?

BJ: Ian Zandstra, he’s Dutch – he came out here when he was four year old. Very brainy fellah. But his eldest daughter is a lawyer in Sydney. She’s done a Masters Degree. He’s smart but she’s smarter. And they all went to uni, all the kids, you know, they’ve all done well. So she’s got three girls and a boy, seventeen year old. He’s studying mad now, wants to be a veterinary surgeon, something like that. John’s got two girls and a boy, and Suzanne’s got two girls and a boy – and Joe, he’s apprenticed with John. And we’re all very, very close, you know, whenever we can we meet in Nowra on a Saturday morning to have coffee.

LS: So, you built your house over there and lived in Bomaderry for 23 years. What did you do for work in that time?

BJ: When I came back from Kangaroo Valley, I worked down at the box mill then I went to work at the dairy company. My brother worked there three years before me – we did 99 years between us. I worked down there and I ended up one of the bosses down there, the foreman, I had a good job, I had certificates and everything.

LS: This was down at the Berry Co-op?

BJ: Yeah. I worked there for 43 years. When bulk milk come in, and the milk tankers come in and deregulation of the milk came in, I said to them, ‘Look, can I get a job outside?’. I’d spent 16 - 20 years in the factory. Anyhow they gave me a job – drove milk tankers for the last 22 years for the dairy company.

LS: That’s a long time.

BJ: I enjoyed it and did that until I was 65. When I started at the dairy company in 1948 we had between 350 to 400 milk suppliers. Now this is foresight for you – there was an old fellah named Harry Silverside, he was a fellah who put us through one of our exams in Sydney, and in 1948 I went to work for the dairy company – my brother was there three years before me, and we had can washers not the long ones we had later, he pulled the last can out and this fellah and walked up to the verandah at the factory and said, ‘You finished son?’, he said, ‘Yes, thank goodness’. He said, ‘Look boy’, now this is going back about 1945, he said, ‘One day,’ he said, ‘There’s going to be a big truck going around over the other side of the river [the south side of the Shoalhaven River] there picking up milk with a tank on the back of it’, and he said, ‘there’d be about 12 farmers’. How many farmers do you think’s over the other side of the river? – 12, 12 left, there was about 60. There was 76 in Milton, this is when I went to the dairy company, there was 76 in Milton, I’ve got sheets from the factory when I left, about 76 in Kangaroo Valley, there was 15 at Cambewarra, there was about 12 or 15 at Meroo and Jaspers Brush. The dairy company went out as far as …. you know the road that runs down across the [South Coast railway] line there [O’Keefes Lane] – that one. That was as far as it was picked up, and today I would say – I’ll tell you how many’s left now. Did I tell you how many’s left?

Recording Time: 21:32 minutes

LS: No, you haven’t.

BJ: There’s seven in Milton – might be only six now, there was 12 across here, the other side of the river [the south side of the Shoalhaven River], I think that’s counting three that Berry used to pick up, six in Kangaroo Valley, there’s none in Cambewarra – no farms in Cambewarra, there’s one …, two …, three …, four in Meroo and out to Jaspers Brush – there’s four left there – that’s all that’s left there. Down Bolong there was about 11, that’s going down past Manildra and up that way. Down there, there is … only three down there.
LS: Since the early days are they much larger properties?

BJ: Oh yeah. There’s more milk coming out of those farms than did out of the 400. I’ll just give you an example down here. There’s one fellah down here milks 1200 cows, they couldn’t fit his milk on the big tanker for the one day. My son-in-law, when he took the farm over the fellah was producing about 10 or 12 cans a day, that was pretty good, not bad farming in those days. He’s now getting 200 cans of milk a day – that’s 10 gallon cans, in litres it’s about eight / nine thousand litres. There’s another one down there getting about 17,000 litres a day and they milk about 700. They’re massive, they’re big, and there’s more milk coming out of them areas than what there was previously – they all had to get bigger. When the deregulation came in they said you’ve got to have 12 cans of milk to survive. Twelve cans of milk now is like a billy can full – they couldn’t survive on it. You know an old chap named Emie Henry – he’s dead now – he told me there was 43 farms on Nowra hill, it doesn’t look like an area this big out there at the Albatross, this big, mind you a lot of them were only little places that sent cream in and all that sort of thing, a few sent milk and that but when I first started off at the dairy company farmers were getting two cans of milk, one and a half cans of milk, and three, four – you know.

Recording Time: 25:11 minutes

LS: Times have changed a lot.

BJ: Everything’s changed, hasn’t it?

LS: Yes, for sure.

BJ: Have a look at our groceries – Woolworths, Coles, where’s all the little comer stores? They’ve all gone.

LS: While you were living here, did you go to Berry much as a young fellah?

BJ: Oh yeah. I played football at Berry.

LS: What was it like then, in those days?

BJ: Very friendly. Berry and Bomaderry have always been very close but Berry and Nowra, and Bomaderry and Nowra; if they’d filled the river [Shoalhaven River] in it would’ve been different. Football days – the footballers wouldn’t greet you, that’s how bad it was. If you went to a football match, if you didn’t get there early in the morning then you’d be walking two mile to watch the game, that’s what it was like.

LS: So, in Berry was it a very big place at that time, in your early days?

BJ: Oh, not as big as it is now. On Beach Road it went right through and round that way. You know from Gerringong they put a new road in. My old cousin – he’s dead now – he said to me, ‘Bill’, he said, ‘You can wipe Berry off the map’, well just after that Berry started to come alive, and whatever made it …

LS: When was that, what time was that?

BJ: That must have been in the ‘70s when they put that road [Beach Road] through there.
LS: It actually gave them a link to the coast.


LS: Yes, that’s right but he didn’t tell me how much he got for it.

BJ: And they’ve still got it [the land].

LS: Yes, well that’s right. The RTA [then DMR] had the same sort of proposal [for the Princes Highway upgrade] in the 1990s through the area that we are looking at, and they were going to go from Bomaderry through North Street at Berry then continue up.

BJ: You think that’s all changed now?

LS: I think it’s probably more or less the same sort of scenario.

BJ: Speaking about the road now, don’t you think the best option would’ve been through Toolijooa and around that way?

LS: Well, I don’t know. I’m not involved in it but do you think it would have been better going that way?

BJ: Well, I thought so because …

LS: So, you’d come down from Gerringong to Toolijooa and then where would you go?

BJ: Come out on Bridge Road there.

LS: Oh, down the coast way?

BJ: Yeah. You know, before you come in where Broughton bridge is now outside of Berry, and I thought that seemed the most favourable position for it because I’ve been getting some data about the road. I don’t know, I think if they’re going to stick to the same route look at the money it’s going to cost them unless they stick with it up at Foxground and all them bends.

LS: They’re going to straighten out a lot of those bends at Foxground.

BJ: They were talking about putting a tunnel in.

LS: They were at one stage, yes. I’m not sure what they’re doing now. But it’s up to their engineers, I guess, and the cost.

BJ: They’re smarter than we are, I suppose.

LS: So, you would have seen a few changes in the road since you started taking on your driving role?

BJ: Oh, look. We started off with trucks with no power steering and the roads to Milton, they complain about the road to Milton, it’s like a highway to what we had, you know. And we had to move because we had a lot of farms down there to pick up milk. We used to send three tankers down there to pick the milk up.
LS: Three Bedfords?
BJ: Oh, no, we had better ones than that. Yeah, we ended up with Mercedes. And then we used to go to Bodalla and then Moruya came in, we picked Moruya up – they didn’t have a lot of farms down there.

Recording Time: 30:16 minutes

LS: But the roads wouldn’t have been much good going north [from Bomaderry]?
BJ: Oh, miles better than they were. You know before you hit the Foxground there’s a bridge and you go over the bridge and you come around that bend, I know that people have been killed there. A fellah named Luke McGuire with a big timber semi-truck he used to rev it up a bit of a night, big bloke he was, one of the wood chopping mob from Tomerong, he forgot to go around the corner there one morning and that was the end of him. He was sitting there with a load of timber on, he was walloped but there I think there was quite a few there.

LS: I think up that way, particularly around Foxground area where the Big Dipper is and those areas …
BJ: Where you go down Foxground and into there, it’s not hard to clip someone there if you don’t watch yourself. That’s a bad part of it.

LS: And they are doing that section up, as much as straightening it a bit I think.
BJ: Yeah, Gussie [Gus Miller] would have known a lot more than I know; he lived there for a long time.

LS: Yes, he knows quite a lot about Berry and the local area there.
BJ: I play in a brass band in Nowra, Gussie plays at Berry. I’ve been 58 years here and Gussie’s been 60 in Berry. Sometimes we’d go over and have a play with Berry and a couple of them would come over to us.

LS: What’s the name of your brass band?
BJ: Nowra Town Band – 126 years old this year, we’ve got photos going back to 1894 over the band hall there, of the band.

LS: And what’s Gus’ band called?
BJ: Berry Silver Band. Berry / Hay [David Berry and Sir John Hay] bought all the instruments when they started Berry up, and another fellah (I don’t know if Gussie spoke of him) Les Crawford was bandmaster over there for about 50 years, and I spoke with Les, Les died 10 years ago when he was 90, and you wouldn’t believe this, his wife’s about the same age – he died in the morning and she died in the afternoon on one day. Never had a beer in his life, never smoked – he was the bandmaster, and Les told me, he said, ‘Bill, I come to Berry in 1915 and my first play out was at the racetrack across the [railway] line’. The racetrack was over near the Berry milk factory there somewhere. You know where Gussie lives – the racetrack was over there I believe. It shows it on that big map [1911/12 map of Berry], doesn’t it?

LS: It does, yes.
BJ: And you see the vacant blocks of land along there?
LS: Oh, that’s right, at that time.

BJ: And my old uncle in Berry, he died when he was 92 and he’s been dead for about 15 years or 20 years …

LS: What was his name?

BJ: Bert Jorgenson.

LS: And he lived in Berry?

BJ: Yeah, and he had all that land where the nursing home is, he used to farm there and across the railway line through them gates to the back of the nursing home, he had land over there. He had land down at the back of the Bowling Club down there, right down there, he had land down there. He used to own the saleyards in Berry; I don’t know if Gussie told you, did he?

LS: No.

BJ: Well, you know where the doctor is in Berry, just around the corner; I think he is Dr Donovan.

LS: No, I don’t know his name. [Dr Neil Donovan, 22 Prince Alfred Street, Berry].

BJ: You know the bottom of the street there where you turn right to go across the railway. The saleyards were there. Bert owned that. He owned the saleyards, and he owned a place on Berry hill – that’s where my mother was born up there. But that’s another sad story.

LS: And what happened to Bert?

Recording Time: 35:00 minutes

BJ: I think Bert would be still alive if he’d kept away from the doctors. He was wealthy and like the Millers, he owned half of Berry – a lot of Berry. Millers owned half of it. He started to get all the free medicine and all this and that, so Bert started going to the doctor and once they started bunging the pills into him he went down hill.

LS: Well, that happens sometimes, doesn’t it? So, tell me, what’s the future for you here now?

BJ: Well, I like going fishing and play in the band and I’ve got a garden down the farm.

LS: Where’s your farm?

BJ: That’s my son-in-law’s farm. I go down the farm in my spare time and that because three or four of my brother-in-laws all had dairy farms in this area, and I’d milk for them sometimes in my spare time. But when I went to the Valley to work [Kangaroo Valley] I was 14 and we worked, we were up before daylight, mucking the stalls or cutting the wood at 10 o’clock of a night and all this stuff, and when I was young I wanted to be a farmer. All I wanted to do was buy a pair of bleacher boots and a pair of rubber boots. I was getting 10 shillings a week and my keep and when I bought that I started saving. I started saving in a Federal matchbox – two shilling pieces. You know the little Federal matchboxes?
LS: Yes, but you don't get many two shilling pieces in a matchbox though.

BJ: No. I started banking with the Commonwealth in Nowra and I still deal there, and when I got married in 1952 I had £800 in the bank, and most of it was made out of rabbit skins in the Valley. The place was thick with them. And my brother-in-law, we had two horses and bags split half down and sowed up across the saddle with 30 packs on each side and in the winter time they never milked a lot of cows. Blokes in Berry used to call them 'snake farmers', they got the milk in the spring when the grass was there and they didn't get – the different way it was. And we used to go around at 12 o'clock at night skinning the rabbits and pulling them out of rabbit traps. Catch a rabbit in a trap now and they'd gaol you.

LS: Well, yes, you've got to catch one first though.

BJ: There's not too many around now.

LS: No, there aren't. Alright, so the future's looking pretty good for you though in terms of, you've got plenty of things to do, plenty of activities to go on with?

BJ: I'm 82 going on 83, and I'm still pretty active. I had a big heart operation two years ago but they fixed me up. I've got more wind now playing in the band than I ever did.

[Short break]

LS: Floods in Berry?

BJ: Now, when they first went to build the Bowling Club in Berry, my old uncle Bert went down and he said, 'Listen, don't build that Bowling Club there,' he said, 'You'll get washed out.' 'Oh, you don't know what you're talking about.' I don't think it was up four or five years and the flood went through. My uncle took me and showed me this land at the back of the Bowling Club down there, and it's probably still there and there was an oak tree there and he showed me the mark on the tree they put the depth of the water, and my mother and father always used to tell me when I was really young there was a house in the back there and they lived there. Mum said, 'Oh, one night', you know Billy, she said, 'You've never heard rain like it', she said, 'We woke up at two o'clock in the morning and your father put his hand out over the bed and he had it in the water', in the house. And Bert showed me the tree, he said, 'See that mark', he said, 'We marked it, that's where the flood went to', and it was about five foot deep there. Oh, when it comes down there it comes down.

LS: Well, thanks for that.

Recording End: 40:03 minutes
MARY LIDBETTER

Interview details

Interviewee: Ms Mary Lidbetter (cited as ML in this transcript)
16 King Street, BERRY, NSW.

Photograph: Ms Mary Lidbetter at her home at 16 King Street, Berry, NSW, 12 September 2008.

Interviewer: Dr Lindsay Smith (cited as LS in this transcript)
Navin Officer Heritage Consultants Pty Ltd
4/17 Leichhardt Street, KINGSTON, ACT.

Time of interview: 10:30 am.
Date of interview: Friday, 12 September 2008.
Place of interview: 16 King Street, Berry, NSW.
Subject of recording: Local history of Berry and surrounds.
Also present: ---
Can you tell me your full name and where and when you were born?

Mary Louise Lidbetter. I was born Mary Louise Goulder. I was born at Rickard Avenue, Mosman [Sydney], a dead-end street that ran into the bison cage at the zoo [Taronga Park Zoo] in 1938. Lovely views all over Sydney Harbour.

Where were your parents born?

My father was an Englishman; he came to Australia in 1912 with his parents. He came from Liverpool in England and in 1914 he enlisted with the Australian army. He was very, very seriously wounded at Pozieres; he was shot through the chest, couldn’t lift his right arm and suffered with it all the rest of his life.

My mother was Winifred ‘Winny’ Bice and she was born on the north coast near Burill district where her father, a native of Shoalhaven, whose father had come to Australia in 1836 and was the first to take up a selection at Cambewarra. He had come out as a 10 year old with his parents and his mother’s brother who had come in 1826.

What was his name?

Richard Glanville and his selection was on the Upper Shoalhaven River at Bamarang, Mount Joy and Wogamia. That was my grandfather, Charlie Bice, and Charlie Bice had several different farms and the family moved around. His wife, after four children in four years, suffered from post-natal depression and she had it all her life. Mother was taken away by her mother’s eldest sister and brought up by her daughter in Sydney. So that’s all that family.

What was his name?

Roscoe Barnet Goulder, known locally in Berry as ‘Barney’ when he came here, Barney Goulder. I went to school at Mosman Infants, Primary and Science School, and did a business course there, and then the final two years I did at Willoughby High School. I applied for, and I was granted a Teachers’ College Scholarship but my father was retiring. My father’s family had always had shops and my father, I was an only child, said, ‘Sorry, you can’t go to teachers’ college, you’re coming into a shop with me’, and mother too. So they looked at numerous shops and they chose Berry, and he said when we got here, he gave me a lecture and said, ‘OK, you will serve the people of Berry, you will serve the people of Berry in the shop, and you will join as many organisations as you can and you will serve the community for the rest of your life’.

Oh, so the future was laid out for you?

I was told!

When did he buy the shop here [in Berry]?

1956, and it was the big two-storey shop on the corner opposite the Great Southern Hotel.
LS: What corner is that?
ML: Queen and Alexandra Streets. And we lived in the residence behind.
LS: And what sort of shop was it?
ML: It was a general clothing and drapery store and sold everything from birth to death for man, woman and child in the way of those sorts of things plus dress material, Manchester and all that soft furnishings and things.
LS: How old would he have been at that time?
ML: He would have been about 61 or 62.
LS: And how old were you?
ML: I was 18. I was a child of older parents. So, I worked in the shop and I did what I was told and joined all these different organisations and I became very involved with the community.
LS: And then he and your mother passed on?
ML: Yes, father died first. First of all he was in repat hospital, Concord Repat Hospital, for months and months before he died, and then he went into Lady Davidson Home and then, typical of my father, they must have told him that his end was close, his brother brought him home one day and he went to bed as soon as he came home, and he got up the next morning, and his friend [in Berry] came around to visit, Onnie Benny, and they were sitting in the lounge room, and my children were always in the shop too — from birth to what have you, and Ann went into the lounge room where her grandfather was — a grandfather she didn’t really know — and she stood up beside Onnie Benny and she walked across to the chair that her grandfather was sitting down in the shop — her first steps, and so Onnie went home after that, dad went to bed and died. But I had heard before Onnie Benny came (and was talking with him in the lounge room) dad had gone down the street, had gone into every business house in Berry and shaken hands with everyone, all up and down the business section of Berry and so after he died I went to the bank to sort out what access I had to the finances and things like that. ‘Don’t worry Mary, your father called in at the bank and everything’s now signed over to you’.
LS: So, he put everything in order?
ML: So, in my mind the hospital told him. But my father was spot on with everything, everything he did and irritable if anyone mucked it up. Anyway, that’s my background.
LS: What about your mum?

ML: My mother was housewife and then shopkeeper, and mother and I carried on the business, and mother got dementia.

Oh, the other major thing perhaps I should tell you because somebody else will. When I was 25, I had said to my father, Tom Lidbetter wants to come and speak to you. Now Tom Lidbetter was 24 years older than me, because we want to get married and my father looked at me and he said, ‘Tom Lidbetter is the man I most admire in Berry, I think he is a wonderful person, I don’t want you to marry him – you’ll be an old widow’. And father was right of course. But, oh we had a wonderful, wonderful time. Tom was the local saddler.

And then mother got dementia and she died in Berry Hospital.

What happened was down at the shop one of the big cedar fixtures suddenly went through the floor – one memorable day – and I rang the landlady and she said, ‘Well, if you want a new floor you’ll have to put it in yourself’. Well by then Tom and I, Tom had been in the saddlery and bakery business for generations, and they were building the stove and wanted him out, he went across the road into a little shop.

Recording Time: 10:40 minutes

LS: Across the road from your shop?

ML: Across the road from the saddlery. Then we bought a little shop, a little narrow fibro shop that was there then, it had been a big old billiard room beside us and they insisted that we had to buy the empty block of land. So, when we had the problem with the store up on the corner, we said we might as well put the money into our own block of land and put the drapery there. So that’s what we did. We built the shop that’s now run by Elders, at the IGA Elders, and then the little shop we put an archway between, which was very handy because Tom was in New Guinea with the forces during the Second World War.

LS: So, when did you get married?

ML: We got married in February 1963.

LS: How old were you then?

ML: 26 and Tom was 50. And it was the most absolutely wonderful marriage. We had three children in three years, and we lived in the house. When I married Tom I inherited his epileptic brother-in-law, not brother-in-law, epileptic brother and when Philip was expected – and that was three children in 29 months – we got a cable from the Australian Board of Missions to say that Arthur Lidbetter, an ordained minister and missionary in New Guinea had had a stroke and they’re putting him on the next plane.

LS: And you were living in King Street?

ML: In the little house [13 King Street]. That was built by my husband’s parents in 1924.

LS: So, they had passed on and he was living there?

ML: He and his brother, Fred, were living there.
LS: And when you got married, you moved into there?

ML: We moved into the old section of the house, and when we got the cable from Uncle Arthur, and Philip was born, it was desperation point. And we put extensions on [the house at 13 King Street].

LS: How did you come to move here [No. 16 King Street, across the road from No. 13]?

ML: Well, this was the house mother built. She died in 1974 and I had it rented out since 1974 until three or four years ago. And then Arthur, my son, who's an outdoor educator by profession and he had been working at Robertson and travelling backwards and forwards to the Triple Care farm.

LS: So you had three children – what are their names?

ML: Ann’s the eldest, Arthur and Philip. And Arthur’s the middle one, and he then got transferred. Oh, Triple Care Farm didn’t get the government funding for his wage but St Joseph’s Brothers in Melbourne got it, so they went to Melbourne then eventually to Canberra but every year they asked if they could come back and rent this house [16 King Street]. Every year I said, yes, and then one year about three years ago Ali, Arthur’s wife, got work at Shoalhaven Anglican school. So they said, ‘OK, can we come home to this house, move into this house [16 King Street], and I got thinking about it – I mean that house [13 King Street] had slept seven, a lounge room, a dining room, a study, a kitchen and bedrooms sufficient for seven people.

LS: Which was much bigger than this place? [That is, No. 13 King Street, where Mary was living at that time, was much bigger than No. 16 King St. – on the opposite side of the road, where her mother had lived and which she was renting out at that time but now lives in].

ML: So, I said to him, ‘Arthur, I think the time has come that you move into this one [13 King Street] and I move into the little house [No. 16 King Street].’ And so that’s what I did. I said I’d never live here. I always said I’d never live here because of mum’s dementia I had no nice memories of it. But anyway I spent money and have made it mine now.

Recording Time: 15:13 minutes

LS: And you’ve got the studio out the back now.

ML: Yes. So, anyway that’s me.

LS: OK. And when you first came to Berry, which was in 1956 or thereabouts, what was the town like then?

ML: Everybody knew everybody. Everyone was on first name terms with everybody. We were in the drapery store, where the hardware store is up at the Great Southern Hotel, and then a two-storey house, and a hardware store – that was a general grocery store and then down next door to us was another grocery, Chigwidden’s, then there was a milk bar, then there was Brownie’s café then there was a paddock – that’s where the walkthrough is to the car parks now, then the chemist shop where the chemist shop is now and then, well the saddlery was there eventually, it was an empty shop at that stage, that’s right, early on, and then the vacant block of land that I mentioned previously and then Mowle’s grocery store where the IGA is - first and foremost before it was the big brick building it was a house with attached residence on the side, residence and shop, …
LS: And what attracted your father to Berry to start with because I assume it would have been a small, quiet rural village at that stage?

ML: Well of course father had been a farmer after the First World War and he met mother when he was farming. He couldn’t do any heavy work on the farm but his brother who was 10 to 12 years younger than him and had been to Hawkesbury College, and so he took his brother up and bought this little farm. His brother was supposed to do the heavy work.

LS: This was around here?

ML: No, this was at Eungai, and mother’s people were at Eungai then. And he liked that type of country lifestyle. He’d always lived in the city until then. The reason why he went to Eungai was his war wounds – the bullet passed between the main artery under the breastbone and came out at the other side and blew those both sides – never damaged any vital organ. And so he went to the farm because he couldn’t go back into a shop because this was still suppurring so he could go without a shirt out in the paddock or somewhere.

LS: So he and his brother worked the farm and that’s where he met his wife, your mother?

ML: Yes. They got married and moved to Sydney into a home at Marrickville that was left to mother and then built another. Then when father retired he wanted his shop like all his brothers had and his parents and grandparents had always had and he was also after a quiet rural setting and Berry attracted him. But Tom [Mary’s husband] suffered from his war wounds too – he had malaria and dengue fever in New Guinea and he came home, so again my children had to grow up with a man who was a very, very loveable father and husband but if he had the shakes and the high temperatures and what have you, he wasn’t very easy to know.

LS: With you working and living in the shop you would’ve got to know everybody?

ML: That’s right, and that was part of the idea of course.

Recording Time: 20:00 minutes

LS: When did you join the historical society?

ML: The historical society is a very major part of my life. First and foremost I joined – there was no historical society.
LS: Was there a museum here [in Berry]?

ML: No, no museum, no historical society. First and foremost I joined the Brownies and leading the Brownies, eventually becoming the District Commissioner for the Lodge. So that was number one. The first thing I joined was the Anglican Church – now that’s a funny story – can I just interrupt your train of thought just to tell you – I came down here [to Berry] before my parents and worked in the shop with the then owners for a short time to get to know people and to get to know the shop. So my landlady took me to an evening church service at St Lukes Anglican Church and after the service I was outside and I was being introduced, in fact, I was expected by the Minister and his wife they’d got a letter from the church in St Clements, Mosman, saying I was coming to Berry and I had done their Sunday School teacher’s training. And anyway, so I was outside and Tom was the treasurer [for St Lukes Church] and he came to the church door after he’d finished counting up the money, etc., and a fellow called Jack Pomeroy was out there, and shouted, ‘Eh Tom, come out here and meet the woman you’re going to marry’. Anyway, I was 18 and didn’t get married until 25. But Tom was the Scout Commissioner and the superintendent of the Sunday School and so we were working with each other. I was a shop assistant and I met him at Chamber of Commerce and different things like this, and so we knew each other fairly well. Anyway that interrupts the fact that – where were we getting to? Oh yes, the historical society.

So, I joined the Chamber of Commerce and Tom was a member of the Chamber of Commerce and so we took it in turns to go to meetings. Tom went this particular night – Tom went to a meeting, I stayed at home, I went to bed and I don’t know whether I dreamt it, I don’t know whether I was awake or whether I was asleep – I have no idea but Tom came back, finished the meeting, came home, and as was customary I said, ‘OK, give me a run down on the meeting’. And that would then put me into clue to go into the next meeting. So he said, ‘Probably the most interesting thing was a letter from the Shoalhaven City Council wanting to know what Berry was going to do for the Captain Cook Bicentenary’. That was in 1968/69 – the thing was in 1970. ‘Oh’, I said, ‘This is interesting’. I said, ‘I’ve just been lying here and I thought wouldn’t it be fun to put the girls, shop assistants, in long skirts, and if they went outside’ – I mean the Captain Cook Bicentenary hadn’t been discussed in any way, at home or anywhere in town – ‘and if the girls went outside to the bank or anything, why they’d have to wear a hat a gloves, That would be fun to do’. I’d gone a little bit further in my thoughts by the time Tom got home and I thought I’ve been into enough people’s houses to know where I can borrow enough sorts of things to put in the shop windows that might have been sold on that site. Now, I’d got all that together – I admittedly say it’s not my idea; God had placed that idea in my head. So, I told Tom all this and he said, ‘Yes, Mary that’s what we’ll do’. So next morning he took me down to Lance Sewell who was the president of the Chamber of Commerce, he was the chemist, and Tom said to Lance, ‘Oh, Mary will tell you what we’re going to do for the Bicentenary’. I told him and he said, ‘Right, I’ll ring around and get the Chamber of Commerce back to meeting tonight and Mary you come down and address us and tell us what we’re going to do’. And that’s what we did.

Now, I was very careful in booking everything that went into shop windows that I’d borrowed and where it had come from but when it came time to give things back I had problems because people had looked in the window and said, ‘Oh, I’ve got something better than that’ and off they’ve gone and put it in. So, what were we going to do?

Recording Time: 25:54 minutes

LS: So, it became a bit confused?

ML: Yes, it was a bit confusing and I was really quite worried. And anyway, it was a public meeting this one – of town’s people – all called together and said, ‘No, let’s keep them. What we can, we’ll keep and we’ll form a museum’. I was the inaugural secretary – I’ve been everything now on it.
LS: When was that – about what year was that?

ML: This was after the Captain Cook Bicentenary in 1970, must have been 1972 or something like that.

LS: So it was fairly quickly afterwards?

ML: Yes, we opened in the two shops behind the chemist shop, with access to the car park there. They’re two shops now but they were a little residence for the chemist shop at that stage and that’s where we opened our museum. And it was a huge success. Now, I had a problem then in finding out what was sold on the sites and I overcame that problem – this was before the society was formed – by writing in my own shop window and watching and if I say somebody who I thought was an old resident I sat him on the seat, the strip seat, outside the paper shop and I’d say, ‘What do you know about that shop?’, and I’d write it all down what they said and I’d go all the way along – ‘Mother said that used to be so and so’, and, ‘Grandma said …’. I was getting three generations. I was writing all this down and a couple of years after the museum opened it was published then, at the South Coast Register’s request, in the South Coast Register in serial form.

LS: So, there was a weekly report on the history [of Berry]?

ML: Yes, and that was published several years later into book form by the Berry Historical Society, which we then had formed. It started off only as the museum and then advanced to a historical society. That then went ahead and I think it’s gone into its third publication – Historic Sites of Berry. It really does need an update. I had started to gather information for the update two years ago.

LS: When did you move into the museum?

ML: We moved into the museum in …

LS: You sold the saddlery to the co-op?

ML: Yes, and they then moved the saddlery business with the apprentice down to the Rural Co-operative Society building.

Recording Time: 30:01 minutes

LS: And that co-op bought your drapery?

ML: No. It was Elders.
LS: OK, so, you moved into the museum some years later?

ML: Yes, it was late 1970s, I think, I just don’t have this at my fingertips. Oh, here it is in *Historic Sites of Berry*:

“The bank’s lease was ended in 1978. The area rented to the Museum was enlarged.”

Previously to that, here we are, “October 1975 the Berry Museum sub-rented the banking section of the property from the ANZ Bank with the assistance of the Shoalhaven Shire Council in meeting rental costs. When the bank lease was ended in 1978, the area rented to the Museum was enlarged and an outdoor display set up and in 1983 the residence portion of the building became empty. The Shoalhaven City Council agreed to rent the entire building and grounds to the Berry and District Historical Society providing an admirable setting for the Museum. The extensions were formally opened by the Mayor in April 1984.”

LS: And now, today, the Museum and Historical Society are still continuing on strongly?

ML: Very strongly, yes.

LS: And you’re still involved with them?

ML: I’m still involved but because of my severe breathing problem I have been off the committee and not actively involved. I’m still on the roster. I still get called in in an advisory thing. If there’s a group tour I like to be there to talk to people and so, yes, I’m up and down up and down to there. I’m still involved and I am hopeful that if I can get over the next hurdle that I might be able to get back to doing my full share of the work.

LS: So, it’s definitely got a strong future then?

ML: I would say so, yes. I still hope to be able to go around and talk to different organisations and groups and things in the Shoalhaven / Kiama type area and talk about the history of the district.

LS: So you would have seen a few changes in your time, particularly in the town [of Berry]?

ML: I’ve seen a lot of changes. Like in the drapery shop where I lived, now every room in the house is a business. It’s very strange to walk into your home and every room is a business.

LS: I guess Berry must have started to take off around the 1970s or 80s as tourism started!

ML: Well, after the Captain Cook Bicentenary and up to then Berry was going backwards. We had four empty shops and about eight empty houses in town, and the Chamber of Commerce had been trying to get light industry and they had two or three start and fizzle. So, after the Captain Cook Bicentenary celebrations the Chamber of Commerce, at their next meeting, then said, ‘Right, we’ll stop trying for industry, we’ll become a tourist town.’ And then, I still get blamed! So that’s how it began.

LS: And that’s when they started to attract people, particularly the people from Sydney, and people like Sally Lindsay started to move to town?

ML: Yes, that’s right.
LS: And it’s taken off now because it’s definitely a tourist highlight.

ML: Yes, it is. That’s pretty well my story. But to finish up and I’m doing this not to boast, I’m doing this to try and stop people – organisations still try to give me accolades – can you just walk down here. [At this point Mary showed me a number of plaques and awards she had received for her community work, which were displayed in her studio at the rear of her house].

Recording Time: 34:54 minutes

LS: I relation to the Aboriginal people you might know of in the area, do you know of any of there early areas?

ML: Yes, there early area was the area of the Meadows. In 1822, Alexander Berry came to the Shoalhaven and his friend, Charles Throsby, from up on the tablelands had sent his Aboriginal guide down to act as guide to Alexander Berry. His name was Broughton. His Aboriginal name was Thotit or Toodwick (but he wouldn’t have spelt it). But he sent Broughton down to act as guide to Berry.

Berry had originally thought of building his administrative centre at Backforest but when he saw it he realised that it wasn’t suitable for farming because of all the swamplands around it and so Broughton said, ‘I’ll take you to the place where I was born.’ And he brought him up the Shoalhaven River into the entrance to Broughton Creek, walked him up Broughton Creek till they came to where Broughton Creek branches into two branches – Broughton Creek, which goes towards Gerringong you would have passed it on the highway, and the other branch comes through the town [Berry], that’s Broughton Mill Creek. Now in that land in between was the Aboriginal’s camping area. Yes, they wandered all over the place but that was their central homeland, and we call it the Meadow. And I take walks to the Meadow and there’s nothing to see there now but must tell the story of this down on the Meadow. Now, their sacred area, their initiation site, is on Moeyan Hill. Moeyan Hill has numerous pieces that stick out in different areas but if you crossed Broughton Creek from the Meadow, Moeyan Hill is that rise there and it goes out towards Coolangatta but not that far, it goes out along towards the beach [towards the coast]. And so that is their sacred site.

In talking to the Aboriginals, one of their later sites, this is after farming and people moving in and all the rest was the site of the bowling green, Berry bowling green, which is across the creek, across Broughton Mill Creek from the Meadow there.

LS: Closer to the town?

ML: Yes. And that was their camp. Now certainly the Aboriginals would come over here pea picking, and they would be brought in from Bomaderry Mission and left in town for the pea-pickers trucks to come and pick them up their people.
LS: About what time was that?

ML: Oh, 1960s/1970s, I would think. And then they would go out pea picking and then they would come back. Now my son, Arthur, from across the road, he is being invited to do a Masters Degree on working on the Aboriginals but he is more interested in tying it to their stories and then he hopes eventually to tie this back to how all the early civilisations told their histories through their stories. And so he’s pulling it in from numerous different angles on that. Arthur went down to introduce himself to the Aboriginals – now, first and foremost, the pea pickers would be brought back [to Berry]. The ladies would wander into my shop for their reel of cotton or stickybeak or what have you. The men would congregate in the saddlery shop. And Arthur, when he went down to introduce himself at Bomaderry Mission, he started and this fellah said, ‘What did you say your name was?’ and he said, ‘Arthur Lidbetter’. He says, ‘Hold on a minute, you’re not old Arthur (that would be my Arthur’s grandfather), and you’re not young Arthur (that would be the minister – the uncle), so who are you?’ And he said, ‘I’m Tommy Lidbetter’s son’. ‘Oh’, he says, ‘Well you’re one of us – you’re one of our crew.’ And he hit him on the back and he said when he was old enough to go pea picking, this fellah, his father said to him, ‘While you’re waiting for the truck, you do not hang around the street, you do not go to the pub, you go to Lidbetter’s shop’. So that was a wonderful opening for him and as I said Philip works with bush church aid therefore he’s getting references to all the different Aboriginals out there. And Ann (my daughter), about three months ago, her daughters go to Pymble Ladies College, she was invited to set up a program on introducing the Aboriginal girls that show promise in some either sporting or academic field from all around Australia for bringing them in as boarders into the Ladies College. And so that’s the three of them now are all associated with Aboriginals.

Recording Time: 42:42 minutes

LS: Yes, well they probably would have been all along anyhow?

ML: Yes, I mean, OK, they were at school with them but Arthur particularly, he’d say, ‘Mum, I want to bring a friend home from school’. They’d invariably be Aboriginal. And the kids, my kids in the shops. OK, they’re just our customers, they’re just our friends like everybody else and they grew up with it.

LS: And you would have seen a few changes to the roadways in your time?

ML: Well, this is right. The highway bridge was relatively new when I came and then at that particular stage this bridge had fallen down, the bridge off Wharf Road had collapsed and so everybody had to come across the Broughton Creek Bridge and come in round all dirt roads those roads. So, yes, I went to the opening of the Wharf Road Bridge, and that was a dirt road too going out to Shoalhaven Heads there. And that again would have affected the empty shops and the things like this and so that was having a major impact on the commercial centre of town.

LS: Yes, because that was important to get the bridge rebuilt?

ML: The people that lived there, at Shoalhaven Heads, automatically came to Berry over many years, over generations. Now the bridge [the Wharf Road Bridge] was gone, now they had the fun of going where you’re getting bogged, in fine weather dust, to try and come in the other way. And so it was that much easier, particularly when bitumened Bolong Road, to go to Nowra.

Recording Time: 45:19 minutes
LS: When was the Wharf Road Bridge opened?

ML: I don’t know – I think it could have a plaque on it.

LS: It might be in the 1960s, do you think?

ML: Could have been 1960s, yes.

LS: And there have been a number of proposed upgrades to the Princes Highway during your time too.

ML: Yes. Certainly we’re desperate to get the trucks off the shopping centre area. One lady who had been working at the Museum ran up to the paper shop to get something that we wanted at the Museum and didn’t come back. She said, ‘I have just stood in that little centre of the road there (where there’s no official crossing, just a little place to hide) and I have counted seven double trucks go past me on either side while I was standing in the middle’. She said it was frightening.

LS: Everybody would have been desperate and probably still is [to remove the trucks from Berry’s main street]?

ML: Well, we are, we are. We’re still desperate to get the noise, the trucks out of the road.

LS: So what do you think of the latest proposal – the North Street bypass?

ML: Well, I think it’s probably obvious, they’ve bought the land previously and the people in North Street have always bought their properties knowing it was going to happen. I’d like it to be a little bit further out but then if it goes further it affects other people.

LS: Yes, but it obviously has to affect some people.

ML: Yes, it has to affect some people, and a bypass is a bypass. Well, that’s just my thoughts on it. I mean OK, I hate the thought of it coming or them having to widen or do anything over in the second settlement area.

LS: Past Broughton Creek?

ML: Yes, the other side of Broughton Creek. From an historical point of view I’ll fight that all the way, you know, if it means widening streets and affecting ‘Mananga’ and Sally’s [Lindsay] and Ray Rutledge’s [places] and those sorts of things.

LS: I agree.

ML: I would be standing to the fore on that but at this particular stage it’s all still in the melting pot.

LS: That’s right there are still options.

ML: When we came here in 1956 my father, being meticulous as he was, went to the Main Roads Department and asked if there was likely to be a bypass at Berry. Oh yes they said, it’s well and truly on the drawing boards. It will go through within 10 years.

LS: Where was that proposed to go?

ML: I don’t know. He didn’t go into that he was interested in his shop that he wasn’t going to lose the front of shop if they widened Queen Street.
LS: Well, thank you very much for your time, Mary.

ML: That's alright.

Recording End: 49:13 minutes
SALLY LINDSAY

Interview details

Interviewee: Ms Sally Lindsay (cited as SL in this transcript)
A15 Princes Highway, ‘Constable’s Cottage’, BERRY, NSW.

Photograph: Ms Sally Lindsay outside her home at A15 Princes Highway, ‘Constable’s Cottage’, Berry, NSW, 20 August 2008.

Interviewer: Dr Lindsay Smith (cited as LS in this transcript)
Navin Officer Heritage Consultants Pty Ltd
4/17 Leichhardt Street, KINGSTON, ACT.

Time of interview: 3:00 pm.

Date of interview: Wednesday, 20 August 2008.

Place of interview: A15 Princes Highway, ‘Constable’s Cottage’, Berry, NSW.


Subject of recording: History of the Constable’s Cottage and Berry community activities.

Also present: ---
Interview transcript

Recording Start: 00:00 minutes

LS: Can you tell me your full name and where and when you were born?

SL: My name is Sally Ann Margaret Lindsay and I was born in Wellington New Zealand.

LS: Are your parents alive?

SL: No.

LS: Do you have any brothers or sisters?

SL: I’m one of a family of six and there are five of us surviving. There are two sisters here and the rest of the family are in New Zealand.

LS: When you say here is that around Berry?

SL: No, one sister in Sydney, but actually she lives most of the time in Indonesia, you’ve met Jenny, and the other sister is in Sydney.

LS: Do you have any children?

SL: Two, a son and a daughter, my daughter lives here and my son is in Sydney.

LS: Your daughter lives here in Berry?

SL: Yes, sort of, she’s in Nowra at the moment, living in Nowra, North Nowra.

LS: When did you first come to Berry?


LS: What brought you to Berry?

SL: The landscape is very similar to New Zealand. I was married at the time and my husband was with Qantas so it suited us to be here when he had more time off, lay down time.

LS: And this was a good stopping place?

SL: It was just a very pretty place, very pretty rural town and that appealed to us.

LS: He flew out of Sydney most of the time?

SL: Yes, he used to commute from here and then come back. In those days Qantas gave you quite a lot of lay down time, so he had two weeks away and then seven days off or 10 days off.

LS: Did he commute on the train or by car?

SL: Both. Those were the good old days of the train when you had the ice cream sellers and you could buy coffee on the way up, and hot toast and get a glass of wine and a bottle of wine, and cheese on the way home.
LS: Did you have your children here in Berry?

SL: My daughter was born in Sydney and my son was born here.

LS: When you first came to Berry was this the house that you brought?

SL: Yes it was.

LS: So you have been here in this house since the '70s?

SL: Yes.

LS: Did you know the history of the house when you were going to buy it?

SL: Yes, I know more about the history of the house now but I knew that it was the original police house – constable’s house.

LS: Could you just give me a run down of what Berry, the town, was like when you first got here, for instance the buildings?

SL: This area here is pretty much the same as it is now. There is not a great deal of change. Although there are a lot more houses in Pulman Street than there were at that time. When I came in the '70s we were sort of the first push of people from the city, there weren't very many out-of-towners. There was the old dairy and things on the main street, the old shops; there are lots of new shops in Berry since then. We were regarded really as out of town hippies and at that time I started up a community centre in the, we call it, Berry Bazaar and the building was now at Berry stores, that large store building in town and that was how I got to know a few people who were already here who weren't original Berry people.

It's changed a great deal, a huge influx of city people and tourists visiting the area. When we first came down here it was really quiet. You could stroll up the highway; in fact, I broke my wrist from roller skating on the highway.

LS: Were you working at that time?

SL: Not when I came down here. Once I came here I didn't do much work and there was no employment, hence the community centre. We actually applied and got funding for that so I had a paid co-ordinator's job. That's still in a small way surviving today. It's got a craft shop with little old ladies make and sell things. In those days we organised cultural activities, we had nights, and craft things and had stores, and I had a business, I had a health food shop in the town, which used to sell things – the first carrot juices to hit Berry.

Recording Time: 5:11 minutes

LS: And so you worked on and off in the town in businesses, and I guess other jobs in the town?

SL: Not really – no. Oh yes, I have. I used to work in the craft shop on weekends originally, for years actually. So that sort of kept me in touch with the local people and then apart from that I was working in Wollongong.

LS: What sort of jobs have you had in Wollongong / anywhere apart from working here?

SL: I have had all sorts of jobs in my life – millions of different jobs. But in Wollongong I was teaching and still am, at TAFE, teaching English as a second language.
LS: And your still doing that?
SL: Yes.
LS: Part time?
SL: Full time.
LS: It must keep you busy?
SL: It does.
LS: In relation to the house itself [Constable’s Cottage] could you give me a run down, as much as you can, on the history of the house? As much as you know about it.
SL: Most of it is probably already known to the RTA [NSW Roads and Traffic Authority] anyway but 1874 I think it started being built for the then constable. I’ve got numerous letters actually, backwards and forwards, writing about the state of the house and why it wasn’t finished and all the materials were lying around getting wet. It was finally finished in 1875.
LS: This was the constable for the town [of Berry]?
SL: Yes, and he was Constable Broad and he lived here with his family and had his horses in the paddock behind the house here so we’ve found numerous horseshoes and we’ve found Constable’s buttons and various artefacts, obviously from early days.

I’m not sure who lived here after the police moved into the township of Berry but there was a woman called Sarah Thompson who lived here for a long, long time and when we came here the front verandah was still covered in on the southern end and just recently, I met a woman who had lived here at the same time as Sarah Thompson but only for a short time, Sarah Pansley, she was an elderly women and she rented out a couple of rooms, and this young woman was a nurse at the hospital and she and her husband lived here just after they were married, she was 19. At that time there was a night-cart, the toilet was outside and there was only this kitchen, so Mrs Thompson must have done her cooking and things on the verandah and scurried around, and there was a bathroom here where there is now a verandah and that would have been added on later. Not sure how she got the water or what she did. The young couple just had a couple of rooms; they had that room and the kitchen.

LS: So Mrs Thompson would have lived here in the early 1900s?
SL: Yes, I guess so. And when we brought it from a Paul Robinson, who’s a local person, and he had not owned it for long and I don’t know who he brought it from, but he used to make surf boards, and he lived here maybe for a year or two before I came. He had a surf board sign on the place outside.
LS: And you have owned it since the ’70s, when you moved here?
SL: Yes.
LS: Can you just describe a bit of the house, like what type of house it is?

SL: Yes, it’s a weatherboard cottage, typical cottage with the main hallway and a few rooms either side with kitchen at the rear, which may have been added on to at a later date, not sure. Weatherboard externally and inside is brick nog [brick wall lining or brick ‘insulation’ in timber-framed walls], which apparently is quite rare, it is listed as rare by the DUAP – Department of Urban Affairs and Planning [Department of Planning]. It’s got a wonderful rarity. Over the brick, which had horse hair and that old plaster, it had plywood and then wall paper and where the plywood met there was cut up pieces of timber. In a couple of the rooms and in the hall we have actually taken that plaster and plywood off because it was falling off. Otherwise, the house is largely unchanged and one wall has been taken out since we were here, between the kitchen and the living room. Otherwise, the rooms are exactly as they were, and the toilet of course, and we’ve now got a bathroom, but not greatly changed from when I first arrived here except this bathroom had come off where the verandah is now but the roof line there is the same.

Recording Time: 10:40 minutes

LS: The highway as it is today, the road, has it always been in the same position as it is, almost immediately outside the cottage?

SL: Yes, it must have always been outside and in fact possibly may have been even closer because it was in a direct line up to ‘Mananga’ [homestead], because this was all one and still is one historical context. There was a house on the southern side of this house and that was removed apparently in 1953 or ’56 when the RTA came through and put the current road here. They actually bought them off Ray Rutledge whose property came out in the middle of the highway.

LS: So that was when they built the new bridge over the creek [Broughton Creek]?

SL: Yes.

LS: When was that?

SL: In the ’50s [1950s] – I can’t remember if it was ’53 or ’56, ’53 I think, and the old, original bridge foundations are still in the property out there.

LS: When you say foundations, do you mean the pylons on either side of the Creek?

SL: Yes, the pylons on either side.

LS: And the road itself going up past ‘Mananga’ – has been changed since then hasn’t it?

SL: Yes it has but not greatly. They’ve just widened it here and there.

LS: And in relation to the area of Berry generally, what sort of industries and trades were going on in the ’70s [1970s] that may still exist or may have gone?

SL: Dairy farming, I think most people were involved with dairy farming or farming of some sort or otherwise shopkeepers, a few trades people. I really don’t know much about any other industries.
LS: Was the dairy factory in operation then?

SL: Yes, the co-op. Oh, no, it wasn't functioning as a co-op, or was it? Maybe it was. Yes, I think it was.

LS: And when you were here, did you do much travelling, like to and from, say, Bomaderry or Gerringong?

SL: Yes, we used to go to Sydney quite often.

LS: What was Bomaderry like?

SL: I never spent any time in Bomaderry, apart from taking my children to school there in their high school years. It certainly wasn't anything like it is now. It was much smaller – there is a huge amount of development there.

LS: And what about Gerringong?

SL: The same, we were really the first push, myself and I met one or two other people who came down [from Sydney] bought a mud brick house, we were the first arrivals and then a couple of years later more and more people slowly started to come down. At that time they weren't the moneyed people, it was about the middle of the '80s I think that the money started to come down here and buy big properties, and farmers started to subdivide.

LS: So your main interests were in the town, raising the family in the town, having a business?

SL: The community centre was very busy.

LS: What sort of activities did you have there?

SL: At that time the NSW Arts Council used to fund lots of touring programs. So we had ballet and Spanish dancers and all sorts of things, and I was involved in setting up the playgroup as there hadn't been a playgroup. We had children's craft classes after school, we had woodwork classes for women, we organised the beginning of the Berry markets – we started that up. Really, there was nothing to do in town until then, without a doubt.

Recording Time: 15:11 minutes
LS: Were the community themselves involved in that?

SL: Slowly, I advertised for people to come and rent a stall because I needed help with the rent of
the building, I had to take a lease on it, and quite quickly got half a dozen people but they were
all people who had moved down from Sydney but living in disparate places and that sort of
brought them all together. And the only local person who really got involved at that time was
a woman, Betty Burke, who lived up on the highway, up in the hills up here, she was a librarian
– a retired librarian, she has passed away now, she sort of popped in. It was Mary Lidbetter’s
building prior to that. We took over her building when she retired; she had a haberdashery
shop in the building when we first came down here.

Yes it is all coming back now, Mr Grigleston in the garage down here and his wife where Gary
Young is now the panel beaters, and another couple in a hardware store opposite the IGA
now and they used to sell nails still in bags, and bits of things, an old-fashioned hardware store.

Really, the older locals didn’t really get involved in much or in many of our activities, some
things they’d came along to but it was really more newer people to the town. We were
regarded with suspicion.

LS: I guess they had their own set traditions?

SL: Yes, they had the CWA and the church and all those things, which weren’t things that we were
really interested in.

LS: Did you ever get involved with the local history society?

SL: No, not really, I’ve met and talked to Mary [Lidbetter] at various times. No, I think it was just a
time thing. I’m the sort of person that if I get involved in something, I commit to it and even at
this moment I’m not involved with the historic society because I don’t have the time to give
them but when I retire I will.

LS: What do you know of other properties around here, like the Stewarts?

SL: John Stewart at Mananga. At the time that I moved here, there was a Stewart Blow who lived
there, but in the past John Stewart who lived there was an auctioneer and he was also like the
local mayor and it was John Stewart who found the Neddy Noorah breast plate and wrote to
the papers about that.

LS: Can you tell us a bit about that?

SL: John Stewart wrote a letter to the papers in 1924 saying that he’d found two breast plates, one
belonged to Broughton and Broge, Broughton that he found at Warragee in that tree stump
and the other [belonging to Neddy Noorah] he had found in the creek near his property. At
that time, his property and this property were adjoining, we shared a boundary, and I believe,
he said he found it in the creek after a flood. So Neddy Noorah was believed to have helped
Oxley on his expedition, which is why he probably got the plate given to him and it is now
held in the Nowra museum, but it could have come from anywhere, but that half of the creek
that adjoins my boundary around about there the river had been dammed for the mill race and
so there is still an area where it is quite shallow there and I think it is my feeling that it was
around about there, his property is across the road from that part of the creek and the rest of
the creek is too deep for him to have found it most of the time.

Recording Time: 19:58 minutes
LS: Do you think there was a flood and it may have been washed down or exposed and then the flood went down, the water went down and then he found it in the shallows there?

SL: Yeah, or it may have been washed down or it may have been there all the time in the gravel.

LS: So can we take it from that that Neddy Noorah lived around here?

SL: Certainly moved around these parts there were a number of Aboriginals who moved around these parts. This house was next to a courthouse and a Catholic Church, and the courthouse is important.

LS: Was there a Catholic Church here?

SL: Just almost next door.

LS: Can we come back to that?

SL: Yes.

LS: So there were Aboriginals around here?

SL: Yes, they used to come to the courthouse to get their blankets. To get their blanket rations from Queen Victoria's courthouse.

LS: The courthouse was next door to the cottage that we are in?

SL: Yes.

LS: Are there any records of them obtaining blankets from the courthouse?

SL: Yes, there are published documents.

LS: And that would have been in the late 1800s, I assume?

SL: Yes, 1868 I believe the courthouse was built.

LS: And where was the courthouse in relation to this cottage?

SL: Probably right next door to this house, on the northern side, the Sydney side of the house, east over here.

LS: And the Catholic Church?

SL: I'm not sure exactly.

LS: And what happened to the courthouse and the Catholic Church?

SL: I don't know. I'd like to know. There was a butcher's shop here as well, and Mary Lidbetter had [placed] the butcher's shop on the other side of my house but Ray [Rutledge] believed it was on that side where there was a house removed and it makes more sense to be there.
LS: You mean between your house and the creek [Broughton Creek] here or on the other side of the creek where the butcher’s shop may have been?

SL: I believe it was south of this house. Next door to it but on this side of the creek.

LS: And Mary [Lidbetter] thinks it was in the opposite direction?

SL: Yes.

LS: There is certainly not enough room between here and the creek to fit the butcher’s shop.

SL: I mean adjacent to this house on the highway [Princes Highway].

LS: Then the courthouse would have had to be pretty close?

SL: Further up, there were rows of buildings along the side road, there was over 300 people living here.

LS: You would think that the courthouse would be relatively close, if not next door, to the constable’s cottage or part of it.

SL: Yeah, well it was.

LS: And then the church would have been further up on a high point on a hill somewhere.

SL: Yes.

LS: OK, thanks. In relation to the Aboriginals, have you seen the lists of those who collected the blankets?

SL: Yes, I have.

LS: And does Neddy’s name appear on them?

SL: [Unknown].

LS: Were there many Aboriginal people around here, or what knowledge do you have on them since you have been here and historically?

SL: Well, I was informed; somebody came to see me and told me that there had been a semi-permanent settlement of Aborigines in the field this side of the railway line, on the western side of the railway line running up to Pulman Street, and that was the area where Broughton claimed – he called it his place, and Broughton lived around here and it seems that there was a semi-permanent camp there. …

LS: And were there any Aboriginal people around here in the town when you first moved here?

SL: No, unfortunately, I don’t know where they all moved onto.

Recording Time: 24:59 minutes
LS: You don’t know of any living in other places, such as Bomaderry or Gerringong?

SL: No, unfortunately, the only ones I have seen have been up outside Woolworths in Nowra.

LS: In relation to the Princes Highway, you would have seen a few changes to it over the years since you have been here and also been involved with the recent proposals for the upgrade, can you give me a bit of background on the older highway as you know it and the proposals and your thoughts on it?

SL: The highway really hasn’t changed vastly, it’s been straightened at various points and there has obviously been major road works up further north near Minnamurra, which are very attractive, and it is a pity we don’t have a bypass like that for the Berry township proposed.

In terms of the various proposals since I came here 32 odd years ago when we moved here we were told that the likelihood was that if there was rerouting of the highway that it would go off north of this place, the Constable’s cottage where the RTA lay-by place is there now where they put their gravel and where the yellow chair is and go across the meadows there and behind and lead round onto North Street.

Over the time that I have been here the town has changed so greatly and the population has become so much bigger and there is an enormous amount of tourism, the tourists come here because of the quaintness and the rural aspect of the town, and the historic aspect of the town.

The people of Berry were really, I think, hoping for a true by-pass of the town rather than a road that goes along the edge of the town. A by-pass is greatly needed. Since I have been here we have had at least two, three, processes where the road has been looked at and various routes have been discussed and there have been arguments to and fro in the community.

LS: There has been no real action in terms of upgrading the road as a result of that?

SL: No never, so people have become rather tired of the process and a lot of people are unwilling to be involved particularly people who have been here a long period of time because they are cynical. They don’t believe it’s going to happen.

So, I think a lot of people who might have spoken out against what has been the ultimate choice for a new highway, didn’t get involved because this has happened before and its very, very stressful, extremely stressful for people, and even this time and I know the RTA has done as much as they could to make the process as comfortable, I suppose, as possible for people, it still sets people from one side of the town against people on the other side of the town and people in the middle of the town. It’s a very difficult process.

Really, I suppose what I’m saying is that nothing has ever changed in all this time and the route seems very much the same since the first time anything was first suggested and it doesn’t seem to me to be really taking into account the changed circumstances of the town and the needs of the town and the needs for sporting facilities and green spaces and things like that.

And I think a great modern highway like that at the edge of an historic town where there’s plenty of nineteenth-century buildings that are still intact and well maintained is going to destroy the character of Berry.

So, I think it is unfortunate that this route was chosen. Although I do give credit to the RTA for considering the historic precinct as a valuable asset in its entirety.
**LS:** Well, I guess only time will tell?

**SL:** Yes.

Recording End: 29:35 minutes
BRUCE & NORA McINTOSH

Interview details

Interviewees: Mr and Mrs Bruce and Nora McIntosh (cited as BM and NM, respectively, in this transcript)
‘Woodside Park’, 94 Tannery Road, BERRY, NSW.

Photograph: Mr and Mrs Bruce and Nora McIntosh at ‘Woodside Park’, 94 Tannery Road, Berry, NSW, 20 August 2008.

Interviewer: Dr Lindsay Smith (cited as LS in this transcript)
Navin Officer Heritage Consultants Pty Ltd
4/17 Leichhardt Street, KINGSTON, ACT.

Time of interview: 9:30 am

Date of interview: Wednesday, 20 August 2008.

Place of interview: ‘Woodside Park’, 94 Tannery Road, Berry, NSW.


Subject of recording: Local history of Berry, dairy industry and local government.

Also present: ---
Interview transcript

Recording Start: 00:00 minutes

LS: Can you tell me your full name and when and where you were born?

BM: Bruce Frederick McIntosh. I was born on the 8 of the 6th 1928 [8 June 1928] and I was born in Cobbitty up near Camden.

LS: And Nora?

NM: Nora Elizabeth McIntosh I was born on the 30 of the 3rd '28 [30 March 1928] at Moss Vale.

LS: And what is your maiden name?

NM: Campbell.

LS: I expect that neither of your parents is alive?

BM: No.

NM: No.

LS: Where were your parents born Bruce?

BM: At Camden, Cobbitty, it's an old family property.

NM: Your parents weren't born in Camden, well your father was.

BM: My father was.

LS: And what were their names?

BM: McIntosh and Heath, my mother's name was Poppie, and she was born in Sydney somewhere. We came to this property in 1936 and we were married in 1950, so we've been here a fair while.

LS: Where were your parents born Nora?

NM: My father was born in Yass; my mother was born in Albury.

LS: And when you say we came to the property, or came to the area, was that you and Nora?

BM: No, my father, my mother and me, I'm the only child. And Nora's people came three years before from Moss Vale to the farm here at Berry.

LS: What was the reason for you coming here or for your family coming here?

BM: The family got too large at the old family property and my father decided he had to make a split, so he came here and bought this place.

LS: And he was in the dairying business at the time?

BM: Yes, it's been a dairy ever since.
LS: Did you pursue that?

BM: Oh yes!

LS: Have you had any other interests apart from dairying, like jobs?

BM: No, dairying has been my life.

NM: Local government?

BM: Yeah, but as far as business is concerned simply dairy farming.

LS: You were in local government or associated with local government?

BM: Yes. I was in local government for six successive councils, probably too long but any case I had some fun there. I was Shire President for two of those councils. A long time ago now, mind you I was pretty young when I got into the thing.

LS: And do you have any children?

BM: Yes, we have six children, five girls and a boy, and the boy, our Rob, he’s 53 and he runs the place here.

LS: And does he have children?

BM: Yes they have four children.

LS: And what about the others?

BM: All the girls are married and they all have children.

LS: Do they live around here?

BM: Some of them do, yes.

LS: Rob is obviously in the dairy game as well?

BM: Yes.

LS: Are the others associated with it?

BM: No.

LS: They have gone their separate ways?

BM: They’re married and they are all in different jobs.

NM: Four of them are nurses of different types the other one is a bank business person.

LS: They tend to scatter around these days. And where did you go to school?

BM: I went to primary school here and I was a boarder at Kings for too long didn’t like it. Cleared out every chance I got. School wasn’t my high point, shall we say.
LS: And did you go to primary school, what do you call it before primary school?

BM: Years 1 to 6 at the Berry Public School.

LS: Can you tell me about, if you can recall, your young days at school here in Berry?

BM: Oh yes, they were good days, there was only 76 children at the school in those days and 35 ponies, we nearly all rode ponies to school, except one bloke, he had a bike and was the envy of the whole school, he had a push bike, most of us had horses, ponies.

Recording Time: 05:04 minutes

LS: It's not that far from here to the school is it?

BM: No, but, oh yes, they were good times and we had two teachers at the school and we had our usual problems. Of course in those days the old headmaster he could wield the cane pretty well and I remember I got six of the best for flogging some plums off a tree near his house and we thought he'd gone to Sydney for the day but he hadn't, he caught me up the plum tree and I got six, I'll never forget that, caught me red handed.

LS: Is the Berry school house still there, the same school?

BM: Yes.

LS: You were there from grade 1 to 6?

BM: Yes.

LS: What did you do before and after school, did you work on the farm?

BM: I was very interested in cattle, always have been terribly interested in cattle, and yes, I suppose its fair to say work would not be the right term, I didn't get up and milk and that sort of thing. And of course in those early days it was hand milking, it wasn't until after I left school that we installed milking machines, I think Dad was probably about the first in the district to get milking machines and that was a red letter day, and I always helped just making hay and all that sort of thing when I was a little kid, probably got in the road more than anything, I was always interested in farming.

LS: Actually learnt the trade?

BM: Yeah.

LS: Nora where did you go to school?

BM: Jaspers Brush, early, then high school by train.

LS: That's where Margaret Binks went to school she was telling me.

NM: Same class.
LS: And where did you live when you first … ?

NM: Jaspers Brush just out about, how far [Bruce]?

BM: Oh, a kilometre.

NM: Couple of miles, two or three, just walk along the Pacific [Princes Highway].

BM: Yeah, not very far either.

NM: Couple of kilometres.

BM: Not very far from Jaspers Brush, which is now a private hotel.

NM: Yes, that was the school.

LS: Oh, the hotel?

NM: ‘Woodbyne’ bed and breakfast is now.

LS: Oh, that was the school?

BM: Yes, that was the school. Yes, there were lots of schools around here in those days. All the little hamlets had their own schools you see, all closed down now though.

LS: Is the Berry school still operational?

BM: Oh yes, there’s probably about 300 kids there now, yes.

LS: That’s quite a number isn’t it?

BM: Yes.

LS: And how did you get to school [Nora]?

NM: I rode a pony too for a while then I walked, it wasn’t very far.

BM: And walked along the highway, which was unsealed in those days.

NM: Unsealed, yes, I can remember the highway being sealed.

LS: When was that?

NM: Oh dear, that would have been late ’30s [1930s] (BM) I suppose, it would have been before the war; just before the war I’d say, before the war started.

BM: I reckon about 38 [1938].

NM: Which was about what? ’39 [1939].

LS: 38/39 [1938 – 1939].

NM: Yes.
LS: Was there much traffic around in those days?

BM: Not many cars at all.

NM: And for holiday weekends, then there was quite a stream of traffic used to come down of Friday night and go back again on Sunday afternoon.

LS: Sounds similar to today.

BM: A lot of horses and sulkies and those sorts of things. I remember one fellow, I was going back from Berry on my bike and he was a Sydney bloke and had a flat tyre couldn't get any repairs and he put, he was picking grass, I said what are you doing with that, he was stuffing his tyres with it, he reckoned he could get back to Sydney with stuffed grass in his tyres.

LS: You don't know if he made it or not?

BM: &

NM: Tubes in tyres and the tube had blown hadn't it?

BM: Yes, and so he put the grass in.

NM: Well, that was probably during the war.

BM: Yes, you're probably right.

NM: You couldn't get tyres at all.

BM: No, you couldn't get tyres nor chocolate or any of these things.

LS: And what was Berry, the town, itself like when you were growing up here?

Recording Time: 10:04 minutes

BM: It hasn’t changed that much in the sense that the main street, the main street was just as it is now in terms of length, the one block (NM two blocks) and all the shops had their balustrades with the posts right on the street edge it was an attractive old time little town. And everybody knew everybody of course. And there were posts that the guys would tie their horses and carts up to. When I was a teenager I always took our milk to the factory in a horse and cart, until we got a utility truck at a point in time.

LS: Did your father or family build this place?

BM: No, that house was here when they came here. A city couple built it, there wasn’t much else here. It wasn’t a very good dairy farm at all. The city people came and built that house and then sold the property, and Nora and I built this house just after we were married 50 odd years ago.

LS: At that time your parents were still living in the house over there?

BM: Yes, and we lived over there for about 30 years and they lived here because it was easier to run than the old house, and we've been back in this house for about 20 years I suppose.
LS: Do you know when that house, what’s it called the … [Woodside Park]?

BM: It was built about, when did we work it out, it was about 1922.

NM: 1926 was it?

BM: 1922.

NM: ’22.

BM: Yes.

BM: We came here in 1936.

NM: The late part of the ’20s, mid 1920s probably.

LS: It must have been pretty much a dairy concern around the whole area when you came here?

BM: Oh, goodness yes. There were 127 suppliers to the Berry factory, in those days, and now there are five.

LS: Really, they must have come from far afield, or their must have been a lot of small ones?

NM: No.

BM: Yes, small ones yes, all the little vales, Broughton Vale and Bundewallah and Jaspers Brush were joined, those places.

NM: Woodhill – Woodhill was the furthest.

BM: Yes, they’d come in, anybody that had a fair way would come in with a carrier and they had the old lumbering trucks. Don’t know how they kept them on the road because they were very, very bad roads.

LS: A lot better now though. Nora what was Jaspers Brush like when you were growing up there?

NM: Very quiet, well, not actually, I suppose we were quite social, all the little areas were quite social; we had our own little hall.

LS: What was there by way of buildings?

NM: There was the school and the small hall and post office, railway station and milk factory, we had our own milk factory at Jaspers Brush.

LS: Was there a station master there at all?

NM: There was a post master cum station master or mistress mainly.
LS: And how big was the factory, the milk factory?
NM: I suppose we would have had a dozen suppliers.
BM: I think you had two dozen, yes, I would say there would have been two dozen suppliers.
NM: In the early days I suppose.
BM: A lot of those little factories.
NM: It closed before the war I think, didn’t it.
BM: Yes.
NM: And everyone came to Berry, at the time they were closing. Yes, there probably would have been two dozen [suppliers], I suppose.
LS: When all the smaller ones were closing, Berry factory was going along quite well. Where did the milk go from Berry factory?
BM: It was treated here in Berry and then taken to Sydney by rail. Sydney being the outlet of course, to Dairy Farmers milk company, which still operates today, the dairy co-operative still owned supposedly by dairy farmers but these days the other big corporate groups have become involved.

Recording Time: 15:00 minutes

LS: Prior to that it was taken out by the river …
BM: Yes, that’s right years and years ago.
LS: When did the rail come through, about what year, do you know?
BM: A long time ago, but I don’t know.
NM: It was here as long as we’ve been here.
BM: Oh, well and truly, we remember quite a lot of deviation on the highway, we remember when the highway went through Gerringong rather than by-passing it.
LS: Did you visit Gerringong much when you were younger?
BM: Yes we did.
LS: What was that like in the early days?
BM: Sleepy little town, like Berry, occupied mainly by Millers and Sharpes, I tell you what they had big families in those days, scattered a bit since. Half the population would have been Millers and Sharpes and Quinns.
NM: Hindmarshes.
BM: Hindmarshes and Quinns, and they’re still all there.
LS: What about Bomaderry, what was that like in your early days?

NM: Bomaderry was the end of the rail.

BM: Yes.

NM: So it was busier, wasn’t it?

BM: Oh yeah, much busier.

LS: So, it was a railhead, that’s as far as it went?

BM: Yes.

NM: It still does.

BM: That’s where it terminates, and so it’s always been a much busier place than Berry and Gerringong.

NM: You used to catch the train to Bomaderry to get to Nowra High School and then go by bus from Bomaderry, you see, to Nowra. It was quite good because the bus was usually late and we nearly always missed a period. Because they also took the mail and the papers and everything off the train, it always took them a while to unload that and then get across.

BM: When were at school we had one family that lived halfway up the mountain and they used to ride the one horse, it was a very steady horse, with these three kids from the Ward family, they used to come down off the mountain, on this roan horse.

LS: Young children?

BM: Yeah, little kids, primary school age.

NM: So did the Strong family, Margaret Binks’ family always had three on a horse.

LS: You were mentioning before, I’ll just ask you, about Aboriginal people in the area, do you have any knowledge, were there any Aboriginal people around when you were kids?

BM: Not that may around here, as I recall.

NM: They were mainly in Nowra.

BM: Yes, mainly in Nowra and Bomaderry, not many in Gerringong. They seemed to gravitate around Bomaderry mainly I’d say, south Nowra.

NM: We had two girls at the high school in Nowra and they’re still around, that would have been, I think they were the only Aborigines, at that stage, that attended.

BM: And one of them turned out to be one of the best ladies you will ever meet, and that’s Isabel MacLeod, may or may not have heard of her, Nora was at school with her, and they still recognise each other and she has done an awful lot of good for the Aboriginals in this district. Isabel MacLeod, she married Arty MacLeod – he was a pretty tough customer.

NM: Strangely enough there was no, I can never remember any feelings (BM racial) against the Aborigines in those days.
Others have told me that they came into the area to pick peas and things like that.

Oh, they did.

Oh yeah, they did a fair bit of that.

They did come over to this hospital [David Berry Hospital] because, they were, that was one of the conditions of David Berry’s grant, for the hospital, was that the Aborigines were never to be turned away, so they all came over here to have their babies.

And have anything else.

Yes and any serious illness. They all came to Berry Hospital.

That was very good.

It was a thriving hospital for a long time, a very good hospital at Berry, David Berry Hospital.

It’s still operational though?

Yes, but not as a hospital, the main part is now a, uhm, what do you call it darling?

Palliative care and repat.

The palliative care unit is an extraordinarily valuable area for the district. It was the old nurse’s home, but the main hospital section is a rehab place, which is very much used, of course, because it services the Shoalhaven, as does the palliative care unit.

So it used to be a very thriving hospital as such?

Oh yes.

In the early days that we remember, people used to come as far down from (BM Bodalla) Bodalla.

I remember one bloke coming from Bodalla one day.

Yes. Right down the coast there was only Berry Hospital and one I suppose the same size as Berry Hospital at Nowra. Nothing in Milton and so they all used to come up to Nowra and Berry.

It was very much forward thinking of David Berry.

Yeah, well he left £100,000 to keep it going. He was a great benefactor that fellow, no doubt about that.
LS: Certainly, the town therefore got named after him?

BM: Yes, and he gave a plot, a decent sized plot, to each of the four churches in the town, four separate areas. So, he was a great bloke.

NM: One [church] on each corner of the town so they wouldn’t fight.

BM: And he also gave a substantial area for the showground, and that’s there in the middle of the town, beautiful area, we conduct the show there each year and everything else – footy matches and everything else – great little spot.

NM: I think that the grant that he gave or the area that was bought for the hospital is still the same area isn’t it?

BM: Yeah.

NM: It’s not sold off [the Hospital] because they did talk of closing it at one stage about 20 years ago, I suppose, and it was the biggest meeting I think we have ever had in Berry, a protest. That’s how it stayed open as the repat and …

BM: Oh crikey yes, the town just rose up as one.

LS: Probably wider than the town too?

BM: Yes.

LS: Your involvement with the council [Bruce], which council was that?

BM: Shoalhaven council, in those days it was called the Shoalhaven Shire Council. It was exactly the same area – runs from part way between here [Berry] and Gerringong in the north and over to the other side of the Barrenya on the west out the top of Barrenya mountain and then down to a few miles this side of Batemans Bay. It’s a big area, and lots of towns in it. It’s quite a big and difficult council to run, it was taken over by the [NSW State] government, and the council was dismissed. I should start again.

Shoalhaven Shire was formed by the amalgamation of four municipalities and three shires in 1946 by the Government of the day, and the areas didn’t want to be amalgamated, and they fought like you wouldn’t believe.

LS: This was small municipalities?

BM: Yes, and seven of them, and they were put into one called the Shoalhaven Shire, and they dam well didn’t want to be together so they fought and fought and fought. Finally the Government recognised that this wasn’t going to work and they dismissed them and put an administrator in – a fellow called Keith Hawkshaw. He was here for five years and did a great job he pulled the whole thing together. He was a very good administrator, and that was what he was trained to do.

Anyway, and then the Government finally called an election in 1959 and Berry didn’t have anybody standing and I was, happened to be president of our local Apex Club, which we just formed, and we were saying well look, Berry needs a representative and nobody put their hand up and I was railroaded into it. They said, well you do it, and so I was the last person elected in that seven man council and the only farmer on it, and I was pretty young. I was 30 years old then and I was there for the next six councils, so it sort of gets in your blood a bit.
LS: How long is the term?

BM: It was three years in those days and it's four years now, it's been four years in the last dozen years, I suppose.

Recording Time: 20:00 minutes

LS: What mainly was your role?

BM: In those days every councillor was supposed to be representing the whole of the Shire but in truth my main interest was in the farming community because I knew it best. The other councillors knew that I knew it best, so I suppose in that sense I played quite a role on behalf of the farming community, which was still very much the main occupants of the country, I suppose, certainly the main bread winners of the Shire. We should have had more, although as time went on, we did get another one or two farmers on [the council], but for the first three years I was the only one.

LS: What were the other councillors, what were their backgrounds?

BM: They were just business men. One, (NM – the Chairman was the doctor) one was a doctor; the Mayor was a doctor, the first Mayor we had. He’d been the Mayor of Nowra municipality; he’d been the Mayor of Nowra prior. He was the only bloke that had any local government experience, old Doctor Ryan from Nowra, very well known, a very highly distinguished sort of a bloke, can’t remember he died of a heart attack in office, that really put the cat among the pigeons because none of the rest of us knew enough about it.
LS: In your role of promoting, I would expect, promoting farming and the dairy industry, what sort of things, what sort of changes have you seen over the years with the effects of your promotions?

BM: It really wasn’t the effect of my promotions its an evolvement of the industry far outside of local government, its been a commercial activity really and over a period of time it became obvious that small farms couldn’t cope with increasing costs from all sorts of things, costs of feed, costs of, you know, just simple living.

NM: There was the BAI station and the Better Farming League.

BM: That happened along the way didn’t it?

NM: Yes.

BM: Yes, but in answer to the question. Yes, it became obvious that the small farms had to amalgamate and a lot of them did, neighbours bought out neighbours, and that happened lots of times, and farm prices weren’t that expensive in those days, at least they were manageable to buy the neighbour out, you can’t do it now. Land prices around here are crazy, a neighbouring farmer has no chance of even contemplating buying another neighbouring farm, it’s only the city people who can afford to buy the darn things and that’s a bit of a shame, at least we think it’s a bit of a shame.

But as Nora said earlier in the piece, my dad was involved in a group of farmers who were fairly progressive farmers forming what they called the Better Farming League, and that promoted the better farming practices. And even by today’s standards they were well advanced back then. They were skilled in pasture management, and they improved thousands of acres of pasture around here by the methods they indoctrinated to other farmers or gave them the ability to get establishing, and they were responsible for introducing into the government of the day a proposal to establish an artificial breeding centre. It was the first in Australia and that came about because of my father, who was a fairly progressive farmer, and he was chosen by the [NSW] State Government of the day to be one of six people selected to go to the UK with the minister of Agriculture on a stud stock buying delegation to improve the standard of stud stock – not just cattle, horses, pigs, sheep and chooks – six of them went over and my dad was one of them.
LS: What year was that?

BM: In 1948.

NM: It was just after the war wasn’t it?

Recording Time: 29:50 minutes

BM: Yeah, 1948, and the minister of the day was a fellow called Eddy Graham he was the State Labour Minister for Agriculture. Wonderful guy because he’d been an ex-farmer himself, he was a pig farmer from Wagga, and my dad knew him just because we used to show at Sydney Show, and any milk that was produced at Sydney Show was tipped down the drain. See there was no facility to get rid of it and Eddy Graham had his pigs there and he used to come and get the milk from my dad to feed to his pigs. So they struck up a friendship that lasted all their lives and then Eddy moved into State Government and he kept in touch with dad. I remember he used to stay here whenever he was down this way and they were really good mates and so that stud stock buying delegation still has the reputation of putting NSW on the map in terms of upgrading stud stock and therefore the seed stock of all the broad commercial foods in NSW and beyond.

We are in the business of feeding Holstein cattle, you know the big black and white cattle, and on that particular trip my dad selected two bulls that are legendary in the breed because they just transformed the quality between them, bear in mind there was artificial insemination for 10 years, but those two bulls just transformed dairy cattle in Australia in, say, about five years, and from there on Australian breeders kept going back to Canada, in particular Canada.

LS: Is that where he got the bulls from?

BM: Yes, and they were clearly the leaders and still are, in the dairying industry in terms of Holstein cattle particularly, and Jerseys, and so that was an important step.

LS: And that led to the establishment of … [Graham Park]?

BM: Graham Park was named after Eddy Graham who died unfortunately just before it was opened. Wonderful guy and they named it after him and that was a very, very thriving and important aspect of cattle breeding in Australia, first one in Australia you see. Unfortunately, Lindsay, the hierarchy at the time, those in charge at the time were very good, brilliant academics especially one or two at the top.

LS: This is at Graham Park?

BM: Yes, they had no idea of the promotion, in other words in those days you didn’t have specialists in doing anything. I suppose, an academic is an absolutely brilliant guy but he had no idea how to promote anything and he used to sit in his office all day and make reports.

LS: Do research and …

BM: Do research and all those sots of things he was brilliant at it – never got out to promoting the things they already had, and so what happened was after about 10 years of this mismanagement, you would have to say, with the best intentions in the world mind you, but he had no idea how to promote the place and expand it, and private enterprise got hold of it and they started in Victoria first and one of their managers from here said, ‘Hey, we can do better than this’, and got Murray Gold and milk company behind him and so it just took off.
LS: And they were no doubt a commercial success?

BM: Oh, were they ever, and then they started another one in Victoria, another one in Western Australia and another one in Queensland – all thrived but this one [Graham Park] and finally it shut.

LS: Oh, it did shut?

BM: Yes, it shut about 20 years ago. It was such a dreadful, dreadful case of mismanagement because the facilities were there, marvellous facilities, as good as you get anywhere in the world.

LS: Are there other centres in NSW now?

BM: Yes, there is one at Aberdeen, but mainly in Victoria, oh there’s Toko in Queensland, that’s going very well but mainly in Victoria, because that’s where the enterprise seems to go. They’re backed by these big companies too.

Recording Time: 35:05 minutes

LS: Otherwise Graham Park could have taken off and then commercial …

BM: Should have been. One of the bad features of our local history here, it offered so much. But now, Berry Training Farm, we used to call it, was an interesting feature it was a beautiful place, and it was established by the [NSW] government a long time ago before we came here. My guess is probably in the '20s [1920s].
LS: What was its purpose?

BM: Its purpose was to be a home for wayward boys, wayward for want of a better term, real care for boys from the city and the boys off the street, they sent them down here, and I suppose it used to have 30 or 40 of them at least at a time. We used to strike upon one or two of them from time to time, almost every weekend, running away and they had to come through this property because we were on this side of the creek they couldn’t cross the creek too well – no bridges on there in those days – and they’d come through here and my dad and mum would always be kindly to them because they were poor little blokes. They had nothing and if they were ill treated or bullied or anything they’d take off. Sometimes one bloke on his own, sometimes two or three, and mum would always give them something to eat, as long as they would stop. Sometimes they wouldn’t stop, we were about the only house on the way, you see, they’d always …

NM: They went to school out there.

BM: Oh yes, they went to school.

NM: They had their own school and they were trained in farming.

BM: Yeah, in farming, but see we had, my dad had an obligation to let the Superintendent know that the boys were here and then they’d just come and pick them up. Now that closed down I guess about, in terms of being for wayward boys, at least 40 years ago, at least 40 years ago, and it was an experimental farm for agriculture for some time, and that lasted for about 20 years I guess. It was quite useful. It had a pasture research unit, they established a pasture research unit and then that basically established a better one as part of Graham Park. It’s still there, it’s the only operational part, and it’s a very useful pasture research unit.

But the Government of the day in their wisdom placed Berry Training Farm, which is now know as the Berry Vacation Centre as a centre for, at that point, for city people of lesser income to enjoy holidays with their kids. I don’t know what the proper term would be, but any case it was for the lower income people to come with their children for a limited period of time, a week or 10 days or something, I think it was a week, and it’s a great facility. They’ve got canoes on the creek – they loved the creek, still do, 20 canoes at a time, they’re laughing and going on having a great time and they’ve got very good gymnasia and a big flying fox thing down along the creek. It’s very well done, and they have a very good kitchen and all that sort of thing, and dormitories, its serving a very useful purpose.

LS: Is that what it is used for today?

BM: Yes.

NM: Mary’s [Lidbetter’s] son works up there. Second in charge, I think, of it now.

BM: Is he? Who Arty? Is he?

NM: Yes

BM: Well he’s a good style of young bloke, and he would do a lot of good. He is a good athlete in his own right.

NM: He’s done a big study on Aborigines, have you spoken to him at all?
LS: No, I haven’t, not as yet.

Recording Time: 39:49 minutes

BM: Now he might be an interesting bloke to see, you see I’ve lost touch with the vacation centre. I just observe, anytime, not anytime but most days if you are down near the creek there, it’s quite an expanse of water, about midday you would hear all this laughter and it’s great to hear of all these young people. They have one or aluminium boats, one at the start and one at the finish there could be 20 or 30 canoes in between – it’s great to see, especially when you realise who these young people are. Well, I thought, what a dam good thing.

NM: They’re mainly nominated, I think, by the Department of Agriculture, ah, the Department of (BM Welfare). Yes, and schools recommend families that they think would benefit from it.

BM: I think its serving a really useful purpose.

LS: Yes, it sounds like it would too.

BM: I think you would have a very interesting day if you were to go over there.

NM: Well, you certainly would with Art because he’s done his university thesis on the Aboriginals.

BM: Now I don’t know the name of the fellow in charge, Peter what’s it, it used to be, but he’s probably left by now anyhow but anybody in town could tell you.

LS: Mary [Lidbetter] would be able to …

NM: Yes, Mary would know that.

LS: Nora, whilst Bruce was off doing his council duties, what were you doing at the time – raising the family?

NM: Raising the family, I think he went into the chair at the council the week that our youngest daughter was born so I was reasonably busy.

BM: On the run.

NM: By the time he ran the farm and council it didn’t leave much time for home things did it?

BM: I was still responsible for the farm, I was pretty busy in those days, as a matter of fact, you know, when we lie in bed now, mind you we’re both 80 so its time we laid in bed I suppose, of a morning, we were only this morning I was saying, ‘Oh glad I’m not up a 4:30 in the morning’. Because we used to get up a 4:30 and go all day, you wonder how you did it, of course you could only do it when you were young couldn’t you?

LS: So where to from here. What does the future hold for yourselves?

BM: Well, God willing, we will die here you see. We just love living on a rural property and my son will take over. He’s a couple of sons, probably – one is at university and the other one is still at high school – but probably one of them will keep the property going. Not a wonderful dairy farm that’s the trouble. It’s a picturesque place, which you can see, but the ground is not very good here.
LS: But it is a going concern?

BM: It is a going concern, yes. It’s not the sort of place though we can milk hundreds of cattle here, whereas down on the flats you can, so I’m not too sure what the future holds. My guess is that my son will need to do something else as well to survive here but that’s his business. His wife’s a school teacher so they’ll be OK but I wouldn’t like to leave the place, not after being here so long.

LS: Well thank you very much, thank you, both of you.

*Recording End: 44:24 minutes*
JOHN & GUS MILLER

Interview details

Interviewee: Messrs John and Angus ‘Gus’ Miller (cited as JM and GM, respectively, in this transcript)  
‘Broughton Mill’, 117 North Street, BERRY, NSW.

Photograph: John (left) and his uncle, Angus ‘Gus’ (right) Miller at ‘Broughton Mill’, 117 North Street, Berry, 22 August 2008.

Interviewer: Dr Lindsay Smith (cited as LS in this transcript)  
Navin Officer Heritage Consultants Pty Ltd  
4/17 Leichhardt Street, KINGSTON, ACT.

Time of Interview: 11:00 am

Date of Interview: Friday, 22 August 2008.

Place of Interview: 117 North Street, BERRY, NSW.


Subject of Recording: Local history of Berry and dairy industry.

Also Present: ---
Interview transcript

Recording Start: 00:00 minutes

LS: Can you tell me your full name and when and where you were born?


LS: Gus, can you tell me your full name and when and where you were born?

GM: Angus George Miller, Angus George Chisholm Miller, I was born on the 2 of September 1925. I was born at Nowra.

LS: OK. So Angus George Chisholm? John where were your parents born?

JM: My father was born in Nowra but lived in Berry and my mother was born in Nowra she was a Morrison.

LS: Are they still alive?

JM: No, both deceased.

LS: Have you got any brothers or sisters?

JM: I’ve got three sisters. You can probably tell by the scaring on the back of my head. I’ve been hen-pecked all of my life.

LS: Do they live around here?

JM: Yes. All locals. Two in Berry and one in Gerringong.

LS: OK. Are you married?

JM: Yes. I have four children.

LS: And are they around here as well?

JM: Yes, at their age they’re still going to school; from 17 down to 10.

LS: OK. And what’s your wife’s name?

JM: Jennifer.

LS: And what about you Gus? Where were your parents born?

GM: My parents – my father was born in Gerringong, he had eight brothers and a sister.

LS: Do you know when he was born?

GM: About – He died in ’52 and he was 70 years old [1882].
LS: OK. We can work it out.

GM: He was born at Robertson, actually. Robertson that’s where his parents got married. There’s no land around, Berry owned all the land. There were Hindmarshes and Sharpes owned land but there was no more, Berry owned all the land to the Catholic Church in Gerringong and when David Berry died they had to raise money to make good his bequeaths at the turn of the century and they bought land and came back to Gerringong.

LS: This was your father who bought the land and came back?

GM: Grandfather. In 1901, he came back to Gerringong in 1901.

JM: He moved from Gerringong to Robertson and set up a farm and then when Berry sold his farm he moved back and bought the family with him and started up there, he moved back.

LS: And that was around 1901.

GM: All this land was owned by Berry, he owned the lot.

JM: There were other Millers still in Gerringong but the place was sort of built out if you know what I mean.

GM: But the Millers came there in 1834; he came from Renfrew Shire in Scotland. He came to Gerringong.

LS: What did he come here for? Was he employed as a dairy man or something?

GM: Why he come to Australia? Well he must have thought that there were more opportunities here, but he kept a diary on the way out, they had a rough trip out, he kept a diary somehow, and we’ve got copies / extracts of it somewhere along the line.

JM: He was a ship builder wasn’t he originally?

GM: Yeah, he came from Renfrew Shire, Glasgow, and they were ship builders; I don’t think he was a farmer or anything.

LS: He might have come to Gerringong to build ships.

GM: He moved to Sydney to start with. When they first got to come here he had a shop, he started a shop in Sydney, in Pitt Street, as I understand. I don’t know if that’s exactly right. Anyhow, the old lady, she seemed to be pretty well in charge, and she thought it was a terrible place to bring up the family, Sydney, what was going on there. And they got to know someone with a bit of an influence coming out on the boat, coming out here; she got him to prevail to the Governor about getting land elsewhere. The first bit of land he got was at Jamberoo, at Fountaindale, only a small place but then he bought 500 acres for 5 shillings an acre at Gerringong.

Recording Time: 05:43 minutes

LS: And then started up there?

GM: And that’s when they all branched out. There were certainly numerous supplying the Gerringong factory, and there wouldn’t be 13 suppliers at Gerringong factory now.
LS: And this is in the early 1900s, probably?

GM: This would have been in my time if I can remember. It would be in the ’30s and ’40s. There’d be 13 Miller farmers easy up there at Foxground, Toolijooa and around Gerringong.

LS: And have you got any brothers or sisters?

GM: I’ve got two brothers dead and one alive.

LS: OK. Are you married?

GM: No. I’ve never married.

LS: Right, I won’t ask if you’ve got any kids then. Thanks for that.

John, have you been in dairying all your life?

JM: That’s right.

LS: How did you start? Where you at this farm here, did you grow up in this farm?

JM: No. I grew up on the farm where we milk down at Wharf Road. My father and Gus were partners, they took over from their fathers, and their father took over from his father, and that’s what I’ve done with my father, I’ve taken over his share of the partnership, and I’m in partnership with Gus. And we milk down on the farm that I was reared on. This farm that I live on now was worked in conjunction with that farm.

LS: What’s the farm down on Wharf Road called? Does it have a name?

JM: Broughton Mill.

LS: Ah, Broughton Mill. Hence you’ve got the name ’Broughton Mill’ out the front?

JM: Yes.

LS: So you grew up on Broughton Mill farm [on Wharf Road]?

JM: Yes and this one but I lived there. See we milked there for six weeks or a couple of months and our back gate down there is in line with our front gate here, it’s just that Berry is in between. So we just run them straight through. We’d hunt the herd here and we’d milk here for a couple of months or six weeks.

LS: And this house was here then?

JM: No, no, it wasn’t here then. There was an old farm house where Uncle George lived but it was pretty dilapidated and unliveable and then when I got married this house was on the Showground and the Parks Trust bought it and put it up for tender, and we moved it across and put a verandah around it and about 10 years later extended this and we’ve been here ever since.

LS: About what time or what year?

LS: Oh, that's fairly recent then?

JM: Yes but it's an old and we've got the history of it there. It was originally an old drill hall or School of Arts on the Showground. I'll have a look later if I can find it. They pulled it down and built four little cottages.

LS: Out of the Drill Hall?

JM: Yes, with the old timber and that and this was one of them. There's one left still down that a fellow lives in down there. They sort of wanted to get rid of them to include the land into the Showground, into the Hays / Berry Park stuff.

LS: Did you go to school here?

JM: I went to primary school here and I went boarding school at Bathurst.

LS: And what was the school like when you went there, very big?

JM: At Berry? No, there were about 200 kids.

LS: Oh, that's a fair size. And what was at Bathurst?

JM: Scots School at Bathurst.

LS: Was it an agricultural college?

Recording Time: 10:09 minutes

JM: It was on a farm, partly agricultural but just like any other school. Agriculture was part of the curriculum but it was on about 300 acres.

LS: And then you came back here and got married?

JM: Yes, came back here and worked with dad and Gus and got married about five years later.

LS: And you've been living here ever since.

JM: Yes, that's right.

LS: And you were born here Gus?

GM: I've been in the one house in Berry all my life. I was born at Nowra; the babies were born at Nowra because there is no hospital here [in Berry].

LS: What about the David Berry Hospital?

GM: Well only the blacks were born there, the Aborigines. Although, who was born there? You [JM] had a sister born there but it was some special thing - I forget what it was. [ ? ] broke her leg and the doctors said Keith can't get to Nowra and he put John's mother went over there. Anyhow, that's why we were born at Nowra.

LS: And where did you go to school?

GM: I went to school at Berry and Far Meadow.
LS: And that was primary school?
GM: Yes, primary school.
LS: And how did you get to school?
GM: Rode a horse.
LS: Yes. Did most kids ride horses?
GM: A lot did, they had a horse pen there, a lot did, quite a few rode horses, some on bike.
LS: And what was the school house like? Was the school house a single building?
GM: The schoolhouse was a separate building to the school. He always had a horse and sulky to come to town, he didn’t have a motor car.
LS: Is this the teacher?
GM: Yes.
LS: What was at Far Meadows then?
GM: What was at Far Meadow?
LS: Yes, what sort of buildings was there?
GM: It was a weather board school, 22 kids were there.
LS: And was there a Post Office and things like that?
GM: No, no, nothing there, just the school and the tennis courts.
LS: OK.
GM: We would play cricket there, they had a cricket team. But a lot of the dairy farmers. It’s different now with all houses and the kids. No dairies out their now.
LS: Just the school was there and that was it?
GM: Just the school. The school was the community. The head of the P&C, he run the show. It’s different to these days.
LS: And where did you go to high school?
GM: I got the train to go to Bombaderry and then take the bus over to Nowra Intermediate High School. Col Sharpe was in the same class.
LS: And then after that you moved into the dairy industry?
GM: Yes. Well, actually, the war started then; in 1941 I left school. And this fellah’s father [JM] went to the war. He was away for five years.
LS: You didn’t go?

GM: No. I come back on the farm, I wasn’t at the war. I was in what they called the VDC, have you ever seen Dad’s Army on TV?

LS: Yes, I have.

GM: Well that’s what we had here.

LS: What’s the VDC?

GM: Volunteer Defence Corps. And we had the fellows too old and the fellows too young.

LS: And you were too young?

GM: Yes, and we had the foot fellahs and the mounted blokes. We were on the horses. I used to ride to Kangaroo Valley and over the countryside.

JM: You had to be a certain age, didn’t you? And they came down from Sydney to inspect the troops.

GM: Yes. We were too young to be in it, see. The fellah that lived down the road from us he worked on that Government farm, and he said, ‘Now listen, you and Bob Jennett [?] keep out of the road’, they are doing this inspection, and he said, ‘Keep back, don’t be up the front’. He [the inspector] was trotting along and when he got to Bob Jennett [?], and he was sitting on his horse there and he looked up at him – this young fellow [Bob] – and he asked, ‘How old are you son?, and before he [Bob] could open his mouth the old bloke, our lieutenant fellah said, ‘He’s 14 and his horse is four’. You had to be 18. ‘Good enough’.

Recording Time: 15:35 minutes

LS: And you were in the dairy industry all the time though? Like, you would have been doing dairy duties while you were at school anyhow?

GM: Oh yes, always, that’s all I know. We’ve been dairying all of our lives. Our uncle was the chairman of Dairy Farmers [Milk Co-operative], this fellah’s father [JM] was a director of Dairy Farmers.

LS: Can either of you tell me, a bit about the dairy industry, as you remember it from starting out in the earliest days? There were a lot of factories around here weren’t there?

GM: Oh factories. Oh Well …

JM: Broughton Vale had one, Woodhill, Jaspers Brush, and Kangaroo Valley.

GM: There was an old butter trail over here, the fellahs from Kangaroo Valley they used to take their cream up the mountain and down Saddleback and down from the boat. The stuff went by boats in those days.
LS: Didn’t it go originally from down the end of Wharf Road?

GM: Yes, they probably did.

JM: Yeah, they sent clippers up there to pick up the milk.

GM: There are old factories down there. Toolijooa had a factory, and Foxground had a factory and then they amalgamated with Gerringong.

LS: But they were only small.

JM: Yes, only little ones, just a few suppliers.

GM: Yes, they were only little fellahs. There were no farm separators a long time ago and things like that, and it was all cream and then you had to be near Sydney to get to the milk train because that was the thing to be into.

LS: What was that though?

GM: The liquid milk and the fellows out there all made butter.

JM: Then they built the Dairy Central Creamery and everyone’s milk came to there.

LS: And the smaller ones started to close down in the area?

GM: That’s when my old grandfather, when he was at Robertson, that’s when they brought in farm separators. He had a bit of a factory going there – the Beehive factory they called it – and they’d have to bring all the milk into him and then they’d all leave farms later on and that’s when he came back to Berry. We’ve got a bit of land up there, we must owe a lot of rates on it, don’t let on.

LS: How did they get the milk to Berry in those days? To the co-op, did they …

GM: Oh, the horse and cart. You see the first milk to Sydney all went in those factory cans, 10 gallon factory cans. They used to put them on the train. When they brought the railway through from Kiama down and then picked the cans up the next day.

LS: Then they took them from Berry here?

GM: Yes. From Berry. There’s an old factory at Jindyandy – you might have heard of the Jindyandy factory down at the Shoalhaven. The Shoalhaven had a few factories. Closer to Sydney, first, they had suburban dairies, in Sydney. They used to milk a lot of cows and feed them in Sydney and there were always fellows down here to buy cows to take, they wanted fresh cows all the time, they didn’t want dry cows about the place. And anyhow, so then they of course had Sydney come out and pushed these fellows out and they sold out at big prices. There were three or four families – the Moxeyes and someone else, they all owned United Dairies, and this Moxey, he milked about 4-5,000 cows out at Gooloogong, out near Cowra. But anyhow they were pioneers of it and then, of course, as Sydney grew they wanted more and more milk and the area expanded. The milk always went by train when I went to school. There was the milk train come down the coast here and picked up the milk. Jaspers Brush had a factory where Margaret Binks was. And they picked up the milk but now it all goes via trucks.

Recording Time: 21:25 minutes
LS: Yeah, that's right.

GM: But you can understand that if they ever got back to it [the railway] it would leave this farm and the RTA business along the roads. You look at the trucks on the roads today. If you want the milk here the railway would take it there and you've still got to pick it up and get it to there well the trucks take it around. That's what it is all about.

LS: That's right, and of course the roads have been upgraded. In your day was it a bitumen road originally?

GM: I think it was always a sealed road, I don't know whether it was all sealed but it certainly wasn't up around Toolijooa and Foxground and that. Broughton Village, they've altered the road a lot there, Broughton Village around that way, they've altered it a lot.

LS: What was at Broughton Village when you were a kid?

GM: A Post Office, they had a Post Office. Broughton Village was a Post Office. They always had their own Post Office.

LS: Did they have any houses there?

GM: Only dairy farms – a lot of farms, a lot of farms, a community. Broughton Village had their own cricket side. They had enough Thompsons and Binkses to do the job.

LS: What about Berry in the early days when you were growing up? Was it a very big town?

GM: No, no, Berry was – if the old fellahs came back and seen Berry they wouldn't know where they were. Berry hasn't got that many more houses in the actual town but out around Berry, see Gerringong has grown, town-wise a lot of houses people are likely to see. But Berry actual town houses haven't grown in proportion.

LS: When you were young they were still mostly all the houses in the town?

GM: Oh, there's a few more streets of course; this street straight across here never existed and there was no street up there.

JM: There were a lot of vacant blocks in the town.

LS: Like there was no North Street?

JM: No. That was a swamp. That's where they used to just dump loads of soil where they'd clean the road up, and they'd have a truck load and they'd just dump it along in the swamp.

LS: And eventually it got filled in?

JM: Yeah, eventually and they had a through road.

LS: And this was in the last what …?

JM: It was in the ‘70s, early ‘70s, it was.

GM: In fact the town never came this far out. It used to go along there to that front gate, and then go down there and get in at Alexandra Street.
LS: Oh, go down to the left.

GM: Yeah, that street didn’t go straight through there, that Albany Street. There was no Albany Street there at all. Actually it was part of a saleyard. The saleyards were there and that land up all along there where Mrs Toohey is, you say, that was an open paddock.

LS: Oh, that’s right because she was saying that they bought their land in the ‘30s or something but mostly it was paddocks around there.

Recording Time: 25:02 minutes

GM: Well see I was born in ‘25 and I can remember, I mean, so, I must have been 10, I wouldn’t remember anything before 10 would I?

LS: Oh, I don’t know.

JM: I was just looking through an old paper that I had and a fellah bringing his cream to the co-op and he had it on his pack saddle. Just these little cans, he had a couple of them going through the creek, Broughton Creek.

LS: Oh right, so it was a really, really small scale.

JM: Oh yeah. Farmers would only have a couple of cans of milk a day.

GM: Whatever you want, it cost that much today.

LS: Yes, you need the economies of scale to make it work.

JM: There’s probably far more milk produced in the area now but there’s only, you know, like eight suppliers supplying Berry instead of 130.

LS: Yeah, so where there were a lot of small farms, now there’s less farms but they’re bigger.

JM: Yes. Those two paddocks next to us, you wouldn’t think you’d make a living off two paddocks, but you could, you know, back in those times.

LS: How much land did you own around here, or did the Millers own, and how much have they got now?

GM: Well, my father came here for three months, the war was on and before the war, he and his brother George, this fellah that owned this place, they were in partnership of a dairy milk [farm] on an uncle’s farm. And, anyhow, there was three brothers, George and Harry they were going to the war. So my father was going to get rid of the cows and he couldn’t give them away. The Germans were near Paris at that time and my father, my grandfather and his brother bought 78 acres where I live.
LS: This is down on Wharf Street?

GM: Yes. 78 acres where I live, and he said, 'Look, go to Berry for three months, the prices might improve'. That was in 1915.

JM: He was going to dry them off, go to the war and it was going to be over in two or three months and come back when they calved. But he had a short leg, didn’t he?

GM: Yeah, and they wouldn’t pass him. He broke a leg when he was young and no doctor there to fix it and one leg was a bit shorter than the other. And he couldn’t run too good. Anyhow the thing about it was, so he came to Berry and he got married. He married my mother, she was born up in Bundewallah and we’ve still got the place there – had it since 1860. That’s on my mother’s side.

LS: What was her last name?

GM: Chisholm.

GM: And any rate, the thing about it is, so my father bought this off his father and his uncle. That 78 acres and then we’re getting onto the area, that’s what you asked wasn’t it?

LS: Yes, that right.

GM: Over the road there was a racecourse. They had a racecourse in Berry in the early days. And he bought a portion of that which is just straight across the road, North Road, and that was about 34 acres – it might be 33. And then in about 1950 or something he bought another 100 acres next door that belonged to an old lady and then about 12-14 years ago, we bought another 150 that belonged to the government where this wharf shed is, where the wharf is. So we’ve got about 340 acres.

LS: So having bought it just recently – the extra bit, the dairy industry must be fairly stable?

JM: It’s always been pretty tough going. There’s not a lot of room for margins of profit there. There is a fine line between profit and …

Recording Time: 30:09 minutes

GM: I think just the reverse of what you think there, if I may so. No, because the mob and I bought 70 acres over here with no money at all, but in those days land was cheap. Land has gone up that dear here. You couldn’t buy here. It wouldn’t matter how much money you had probably.

JM: The returns you get for the milk compared to the value of the land is unbelievable.

GM: Well, then the brother and I bought 69 acres on the back of this farm and then this uncle died and he left us this place. Well we had to pay a certain amount for it. One hundred and fourteen acres here?

JM: Yes, there’s 165 all up isn’t there? Or 180?

GM: The RTA took seven acres of us along that front [North Street]. But anyway, right, and then …

JM: We bought Broughton Vale in ’60 …
GM: Oh that’s right, another old aunt and uncle died out there. We were a bit lucky there, we’ve got 130 something acres out here at Broughton Vale.

LS: Right. Do you work those ones out there?

JM: Yes. We use them as dry runs, but when you milk and you get your cows in calf, they’ll milk till about seven months from calf and then they’ll go dry. They go for a couple of months rest. You’re bringing them in and taking them out each day. You’ve got cows to dry off and bringing cows to come home and no calves.

LS: Right, so it’s ongoing?

JM: Yes. It’s like a resting paddock. They call it a dry run.

GM: And then on top of that, this fellah’s uncle, no his brother’s uncle, had his farm down at the Shoalhaven and down at Pyre, down further, down on the lower part of the Shoalhaven, and we bought a farm from that estate – 130 acres there. And this Bundewallah business up here in Bundewallah it’s mainly bush and things, it’s the most valuable stuff we’ve got. It’s a subdivision.

JM: You can’t run many head on it because the land is too steep.

GM: And we’ve got 190 acres up there. So we’ve got about, we’d nearly have about 900 acres all up.

JM: Something like 306 hectares I think.

LS: That’s a fair amount the keep working on over time. Must keep you busy?

GM: Yes.

LS: Now you were talking before about the RTA taking some of your land here. Was this all part of the upgrade process?

GM: Yes. Oh, they bought it from us.

LS: When did they buy that from you?

JM: Back in the ‘90s. When we bought the Government farm they resumed that [land along North Street] and we used the money from that to buy the Government farm.

LS: Did they resume the front part here [along North Street]?

JM: We actually forced the resumption.

GM: We used to shift the herd across from that farm to this farm but once they were going to put the road there it wouldn’t happen [the shifting].

JM: And they saw this farm came up for sale so it was a good opportunity to sell that to them and acquire the next door farm to give us enough land not to have to bring the cows through.
LS: Yes, right. Well this was back in the '90s?

JM: Yes.

LS: I was under the impression – I knew that you had sold it to them but I thought that it was much more recently then that. I thought it was part of the recent upgrade.

GM: No, no, but they want more now; they’ve got a different route coming. Up to this point of course, they might change it.

LS: So where do you think the road is going to come now?

Recording Time: 35:03 minutes

JM: Its going to come, out on the highway there’s a cutting, you go out of town up a hill and there’s a cutting there. They are going to go through that yellow chair [to the east of the current Princes Highway], go through that yellow chair to the north of the creek, across the creek behind the tennis court there, and then through our place – cut the corner off our place.

LS: Is that southeast, the southeast corner of your place?

JM: Yes, the southeast corner and come right back onto where our front gate is.

LS: Back onto North Street?

JM: Yes.

LS: So how will that affect you if they do that?

JM: Well, it’s only a little bit of land but its valuable land in that it’s our high ground. So we’re actually up on a plateau here and that’s all flood plain down there and with dairy here you need a fair bit of high ground because in flood time you can’t let the cows go over the creek otherwise they get stuck there. The creek goes up and down quick but you can’t let them – you have to have them here of the night or at the end of the day, otherwise you put them over there, let them go over there and they are bound to be stuck over there and they’re gone for a week or more. You need enough to graze them up here and, like, I’ve got two boys and one will dairy here eventually and one down where Gus and I dairy now. It just means that we have to be set up here and keep it as a viable dairy basically because we’re running short of high ground.

LS: So that’s a valuable part?

JM: Oh, yeah, yeah.
LS: What are you going to do about it if in fact they do come along and they do want that part of the land?

GM: Well, what can you do?

JM: Yeah, what can you do?

GM: I think they offered to buy another farm didn’t they?

JM: Oh well, they touted that. They said that but like …

GM: You don’t want to leave here. We’ve had this for over 80 years and you wouldn’t want to leave here.

JM: It would be great to see milk coming off the place again but I can’t see it if they take that [part of the land] I can’t see it happening.

LS: Have you got other high ground on other other farms or is it lower ground?

JM: Yeah, we have, and they’ll be all right starting off together, the two boys but once they get married, they’re better of running their own shows otherwise you hit trouble down the track, especially if they have families they might not want to work together they’ll want their independence.

LS: So, there’s a bit of uncertainty?

GM: Yes. There is a bit. Yes.

JM: We’ll just have to ride through it and see how it goes, and hope for the best.

LS: The only other thing that I was going to ask about, you mentioned that the blacks were born in David Berry Hospital, and with the Aborigines around here have you had any dealings with them?

GM: No, not really, no. There were very few Aborigines around Berry. They’re around Nowra but not around Berry.

LS: Even when you were a kid there weren’t many?

GM: No, there weren’t many, the odd one, they [land owners] used to grow some beans and peas, they [the Aborigines] used to pick them.

LS: Where was that?

GM: Up round Bundewallah, out Broughton Vale, and Far Meadow. They used to grow peas and beans, and the blacks used to do the picking and their kids used to come to school. And they’d live in a shed or barn on the property wherever they worked, they worked around like that.
LS: So they were seasonal workers?

GM: Oh, yes. I'm always amazed when I go to Nowra how many Aborigines are there and we haven't had them in Berry. Although we were saying about the hospital, that there was only black babies in there.

JM: You [Gus] were actually born in a house weren't you at Tullian Creek? Weren't you born in that house at Tullian Creek that they're doing up?

Recording Time: 40:06 minutes

GM: No, I wasn't born … look, I'm not too sure of that. I know that nurse Thompson, she brought a lot of kids into the world and she was the one that did it but I've seen a photo now of where Ray Rutledge lives and that was the old hospital, where Ray Rutledge is. It was a store and when they shifted Berry over here and Berry had no hospital at that time, they used that as the hospital.

LS: Before the David Berry Hospital was built?

GM: Yes. Ray was telling me that the room at the back they used it as a morgue.

LS: Alright, thanks for that.

JM: There's about a dozen of us in the co-op still. And we started processing our own milk and selling it locally and I kept a bit of a, I cut every clipping out of the paper from when we started.

LS: This was a local co-op?

JM: Yes.

LS: And did you start that or was it already there?

JM: No. the co-op was there but we started processing.

LS: So it's a bit of re-vitalisation?

JM: Yes.

LS: So is that going strong now?

JM: It's going pretty good, yes. We're at the stage now where we're going to set up our own plant down there and at the moment we've got to send it up to Picton to get it processed up there and brought back.

LS: So what's the long term plans for that, are there any?

JM: Yes. Start of with the milk and then diversify into other dairy foods. Just step by step process.

LS: And what's the market for it?

JM: Well at the moment we're a bit restricted because we're only doing milk. But we've got yogurts – they're processing yogurts for us now – it's just the light skim and whole milk.
LS: That's been processed back here in town?

JM: Yes. But we'd like to do flavoured milks. A lot of shops won't take us on because they don't want to buy it of a competitor. Say, Dairy Farmers do flavoured milk and when they get whole milk they want to either deal with one, instead of getting a bit of us and a bit of them.

LS: So it's pretty good or some sort of prospects?

JM: Yes, it's going well.

GM: Dairy Farmers and not keen about it.

LS: What do you mean they're not keen about it?

GM: Well, Dairy Farmers wouldn't like, they put everything in our way, they wouldn't like a little firm starting up. They'd try to squash us, make an example of us.

JM: I was just thinking, I did a history on the dairy. We had our cards made up and …

GM: But, however, we never reach our potential until we do it ourselves at our own factory. But there are that many dairy farmers gone out it's a worry.

LS: What do you mean gone out?

GM: Well they've sold their farms …

JM: … and gone out of business.

LS: Oh, local dairy farmers. With the price of land now.

Recording End: 43:56 minutes
TERRY ROBINSON

Interview details

Interviewee: Mr Terry Robinson (cited as TR in this transcript)
539 Coolangatta Road, FAR MEADOW, NSW.

Photograph: Mr Terry Robinson at his stables at 1534 Bolong Road, Shellharbour Heads, NSW, 19 August 2008.

Interviewer: Dr Lindsay Smith (cited as LS in this transcript)
Navin Officer Heritage Consultants Pty Ltd
4/17 Leichhardt Street, KINGSTON, ACT.

Time of interview: 2:00 pm
Date of interview: Tuesday, 19 August 2008.
Place of interview: 1534 Bolong Road, Shellharbour Heads, NSW.
Subject of recording: Local history of Berry and horseracing industry.
Also present: ---
Interview transcript

Recording Start: 00:00 minutes

LS: Can you tell me your full name and when and where you were born?

TR: Terrence John Robinson and I was born in Nowra on the 2 January 1955.

LS: Where were your parents born?

TR: My father was born at Randwick [Sydney] and moved here when he was 12, and my mum was born in the area, she was born at Nowra, and she's lived here all her life.

LS: Are either of them alive?

TR: Mum's still alive, she's 74 now.

LS: Why did your father move down here?

TR: His father was a postman and they travelled to a couple of places before his dad settled in the post office at Berry and he was here for a long time and when his father moved on dad liked the views and the horses and that's why he stayed.

LS: So you've had a long connection with Berry?

TR: Yes, he came here when he was 12 and he was 75 when he passed away and that was about three years ago.

LS: So he's been here since early 1900s or mid to early 1900s?

TR: Dad was here from the early 1940s.

LS: And that's when he got into racing after his father moved down here?

TR: Yes. Not long after.

LS: What about brothers and sisters. Do you have many brothers and sisters?

TR: I've got five brothers and six sisters. You've met the youngest here today [Anna]. They all live in the area bar one, one girl lives at Lismore but the rest of us all live around here, within about a 15 kilometre range.

LS: And children or grandchildren?

TR: There are about 35 grandchildren and couple of great grandchildren.

LS: That's a lot of family. I was saying to Anna that it must be tremendous at Christmas time when everybody gets together.

TR: It's typically very, very good. We all get on very well, despite a few little things – that's a great time of the year, Christmas. Even though we live that close, our lives are that busy these days – it's amazing that people live so close to on another, you don't often get to catch up like you should. In today's modern crazy life.
LS: So, you've lived here all your life?

TR: Yes, I've lived in the Berry area all my life. The only time that I was away I went to college at Chevalier [Bowral] for four years. I came home for holidays, obviously, and that was the only time I've ever been out of the area.

LS: And what was your first job and what jobs have you had?

TR: I've only ever done this.

LS: And what's this.

TR: Well, my father started out as a harness racing trainer / driver and that's where I started with him when I left school. We also ran the riding school here and through that riding school we all grew up, all of us children all grew up at some stage through it, and sometimes managing it, most of us have managed it at some stage throughout our lives until the insurance put us out of business. I continued working with my father in the harness racing game then we gradually got into gallopers, a thoroughbred business — we were training those and riding them since I was 18 and we gradually turned over into thoroughbreds. Dad was very successful in the harness racing game he ended up winning the Sydney premiership.

LS: How did he get started in it?

TR: He was a champion horse young rider. He wanted to be a jockey but was too heavy.

LS: This was is in Sydney was it?

TR: No. Down here. And his passion was the horse; he wanted to be a jockey. He used to have a race track in Berry, which was on the railway side of Berry. Well, obviously they used to bring horses down on the train in the old days and race there.

LS: Whereabouts is that now?

TR: It’s all farmland now. Millers who owned land around the township and in Berry itself, especially on the southern side, it was on their property and also went through another property, which has changed hands a few times. My brother-in-law and my sister actually have a property which backs onto the old part of the straight now – the old race track, which is still sort of there. You can still see it. I actually had a property for years down near it too and you can see where they had the straight.

LS: And they used to bring horses down on the train and race them there?

TR: Yes, they did.

LS: What was it, midweek or just the weekend?

TR: Oh, they’d only have a couple of meetings a year, I’d say. I don’t remember at all. The old Berry race track stand ended up being the stand at the Berry Showground at one stage until they tore it down and built a new stand. So, the old stand at the race track ended up being moved to the showground years ago and now it’s a new one and the old stand is gone.

Recording Time: 05:10 minutes
LS: And you just followed on?

TR: I did. My father was very successful in the harness racing game and he is now one of five they call legends of the game. The New South Wales Harness Racing Club has …

LS: Did I ask you his name?

TR: Kevin, Kevin Robinson. And on Friday we are going to an induction down here for the Shoalhaven Sporting Hall of Fame where he is going to be inducted into that. That was his harness racing but he was also a very successful thoroughbred racing trainer too. He won a Group 1 race; he won the Oaks, and won a lot of other group races.

LS: So this is in Sydney?

TR: Yes, in Sydney but we never won a major race out of Sydney. I won the Group 3 race last year or two years ago on a horse called ‘Danebar’, most of them were in Sydney.

LS: So he kept that up all his life did he?

TR: He did. He was training horses until he passed away at the age of 75.

LS: So he was a pretty famous man. He would have been famous in the Berry area?

TR: He was. He was very well known in the area, extremely well known. And he saw a lot of change obviously – he’d seen a lot more than me.

LS: Oh, well you would have seen a few changes here in Berry at the time?

TR: Yes, I have. I remember as a kid growing up – you go up the street on a Saturday …

LS: Where did you go to school here?

TR: I went to the Catholic School here. They used to have a little Catholic School that went up to the year – 6th class, grade 10 in those days and then you had to go to Nowra or Bomaderry then in those days. I ended up going to college for three years and then I came back and spent my last two years at Bomaderry. I’m afraid I let my studies go a bit, I got a bursary to go there [to Chevalier] and I ended up getting into sport and study was just routine and I wanted to play sport. Unfortunately, I didn’t take full advantage of it – that’s life, you live and learn – I’m not too disappointed with how things have turned out.

LS: Sorry, you were saying before that when you were a kid you were going up the street …

TR: Yes, you know you walk up the street on Saturday afternoon and you could lay down in the middle of the road and you wouldn’t see a car for two hours. Now, crickey.

LS: Yes, it’s extremely busy through Berry.

TR: A very, very busy place but it’s a lovely town. People seem to like coming here. I think like anywhere now, people tend to like to get out and do things if they’ve got time to themselves I suppose. We’re not too far from Sydney and that’s our biggest market.
LS: Do you live in Berry?

TR: I’ve lived in Berry most of my life until about five years ago. My wife and I bought five acres along this road [Coolangatta Road] from here to Berry, about three kilometres from Berry on this road. So, I’ve lived in Berry all my life.

LS: And your father and mother obviously lived in Berry.

TR: Yes.

LS: Whereabouts did they live?

TR: They lived in Alexandra Street for most of their lives. My father bought a place off his father-in-law when he got married in 1955 and then dad built a brand new home about three doors towards the railway station, it must have been in 1975, I ended up buying the house off my dad, and I lived there with my first wife for many years until we got our third child. I grew up at mum and dads with 11 kids at that stage, or 12 kids. We lived in a three bedroom home and then I bought it and my first wife and I when we expecting our third child she said that it was not big enough, anyway.

Recording Time: 10.24 minutes

LS: I was thinking it must have been a pretty big house if you had a big family.

TR: No, it wasn’t a big home. It was only two bedrooms and a sleep out. Mum and dad had one room and, I’m the eldest but the two girls, the elder girls below me, they had one room and the boys had the sleep out. The two youngest girls slept on a settee in the lounge in the dining room, we used to have bunks to double up and dad bought the family a pool table once. The boys were jumping up and down and the girls were very peed off. Anyway, one bloke ended up making his bed under the pool table, because we just didn’t care – we really never worried about it – that’s the way it was – we’d sleep anywhere, didn’t matter.

LS: And there’s a big age difference between the brothers and sisters.

TR: Well, they had 11 in 12 years and that was pretty hard work, obviously. A lot of strain on my mum and dad, and mum had a few – oh, well, it was hard work.

LS: She would have been a full time house person keeping everything going?

TR: She had a few little problems and they decided finally, that’s enough now Mrs Robinson you’d better do something about this so they actually put her on the pill. We were Catholics, obviously, to try and help her, and anyway, another 10 years on down the track they had another one – that’s Anna. There’s 21 years between Anna and myself.

LS: Yes, that’s extraordinary isn’t it?

TR: So, we are a big family.

LS: Yes, that’s good.

TR: Yes, it’s all good.
LS: So, you moved from in town [Berry], where you had your father’s house to your property near Berry but what about this property we are at now [1534 Bolong Road, Shoalhaven Heads]?

TR: This property has been in the family for 33 years. My father bought 10 acres off one of his best mates Colin Pepper, who had the original riding school and we moved the riding school here in 1972 or 1973, yes 1973. So it’s 35 years we’ve had this place. We ran it as a riding school for years until we had to close down and then my father had a lot of race horses, and was very successful in the thoroughbred game, so we ended up using this place as a pre-training place. We built those stables down there, later we had spelling paddocks here and we had a very successful business until we had a few problems with Parks & Wildlife [NSW National Parks & Wildlife Service] and our local council, Kiama Council. We used to do a lot of work on Seven Mile Beach. The best part of Seven Mile Beach is the Gerroa end, which is controlled by Kiama Council. At Gerroa there happened to be a few retired academics, probably half a dozen of them or 10 of them or 12 of them. They didn’t like us on the beach. They thought we were damaging it.

LS: They didn’t like you with the horses on the beach?

TR: My father had been working out there since he was a kid. It was a ‘green’ council at the time and after a while I ended up putting a stop to it, and it made a huge loss to our business because my father had a reputation of getting out of town horses to the races, so we were very successful and once we lost that part, our work declined a hell of a lot to a stage where it was only going very ordinary in the last few years of dad’s life. I went through a rough patch about 13 or 14 years ago my first wife got ill and I couldn’t handle it too good– there were a few issues there. Anyway things got going good for me again, I didn’t know how to take over the business as much as I could’ve either because we went through, we lost dad and obviously clientele and we lost a lot of horses and things got a little bit tough there for a while. So I had to take over and I’ve made a lot of changes out here, I’ve only moved out here this year and at the end of last year EI [Equine Influenza] put us out of training at Berry. They asked us to move because we used to train on the showground at Berry. That’s where my father’s training establishment was, actually the horses – this was just for extras basically.

Recording Time: 15:35 minutes

LS: This place here was for extras?

TR: Yes. Basically the main set-up was in Berry because my father was right opposite the showground gates and it was just convenient for him, he’d been there all his life, trained horses there all his life. It was a nice and handy set-up too; it was a really good set-up. Eventually also one of my other brothers who went into the harness horses, he was a very good rider, he got too heavy and didn’t like the harness horses and we eventually had them out here, so we had two stables basically running a thoroughbred stable and a harness racing stable. And with Chris [a brother] he basically started looking after dad’s horses here and then opened up his own business because my father lost interest in the harness horses and just wanted the race horses and I was doing both.

LS: And with the showground did the council ask you to leave?

TR: No. We actually never had anything signed on paper or anything like that, it was a verbal thing, and dad had a very good rapport with everyone in town. Obviously he had done very well in his career so he was well known and well respected and they just had the Berry Show Society and the Park’s trust. The rate at first was a pittance, to start with it was only $500 a year, which is nothing, and it ended up going to about $6,000 after that, which is still cheap and I was still happy with that. And we looked after the track and looked after the stable area and that was our commitment to the place and we tried and keep the place clean and tidy. With EI …
LS: What is EI?
TR: That is Equine Influenza.
LS: Ah yes, yes sorry.
TR: Equine Influenza came into being, ah well, it affected Australia in August last year [2007]. With that, they always had the intention with this place - when my father passed away, this place was left to us – six of the boys. Now Chris [a brother] was working here with his set up. He ended up building his own place just down the road and a new home on 22 acres and built a new track.
LS: This is on Bolong Road?
TR: Yes. Just down the road, right opposite the Coolangatta golf course. Now, Chris ended up moving his total team out there in January - 12 months ago, so 18 months he has been out of here. This place has always had horses on it for years and years so my intention was to move from Berry out to here because at that stage I was up keeping three places; the showground at Berry, I had this place and to up keep, and we just moved out plus my own place, five acres. At Berry, being on a showground and with OH&S these days, it’s becoming a huge part of any business or any operation so I decided that it was more beneficial for me to come out here and develop this more and let Berry go because you’re paying rent in there, you’ve got to up keep this and you’ve got to up keep your own place. It just seemed the logical thing to do. So I decided to keep the place for 12 months, let the paddocks, line them up and do them up and just give it a break. Then EI came along and they virtually said to me, well, it was my choice too, you know, people are coming to the showground all the time because they have fairs there, they have different attractions there and they used it a lot on a weekend, and Equine Influenza was also spread by humans so it was probably best that we left, and I was so happy because it made me make the move. The only thing is that when I moved out here I hadn’t started what I wanted to do because I hadn’t knocked down a lot of the old stables which were up the top there, so I knocked the lot down and kept the track open, kept the drains up and cleaned the place up. I was going to spend some money out here to clean it up but I’m really happy, it’s great. It’s the best move I ever made. I lived in Berry all my life and worked there all my life and I thought I’d be really sad to leave there but you actually know the difference coming out here. Anyhow, the weather is a lot better out here, being right on the coast. Berry can get so hot in summer where you’ve always have a nor’easter here and I think my horses appreciated it.

Recording Time: 20:21 minutes
LS: You’ve got a self-contained area here.
TR: We have, yes.
LS: And you cater for all those OH&S and other issues as well.
TR: Yes exactly. As you know that’s huge these days. I could have been in the dark waiting for things to happen in Berry, we’ve been very cautious over the years there, no one’s ever let a horse out; we never had a drama – a real drama at all. Yes, I must say Berry is a great little town, it’s a really good little town, very lucky about that, there’s no place like it. I’ve never had to lock the door to my house all the time I lived there, never locked the car, whenever we go out I never worry about locking my car or my house. That’s the way I grew up there and nothing ever changed there and it had no need to.
LS: And what about your knowledge of other areas like Bomaderry for instance? What was that like when you were growing up because it’s a fairly big metropolis now?

TR: It is. Bomaderry was always – I went to school there for a couple of years. The Bomaderry area was probably, how do I say it? I think I was privileged more to live in the Berry area – put it that way.

LS: Right. You’re being very diplomatic, and probably similar with Gerringong it would be have been growing as well.

TR: Gerringong to me had always had heaps of potential, it’s such a beautiful place, you know, just along the coast there. To me Gerringong was the place that if I was going to move it would probably be to Gerringong. It’s a beautiful part of the world isn’t it? Played a bit of football there, lovely place, it’s just nice.

LS: And, you said before that in your father’s time that horses would be brought down from Sydney and other places on the train.

TR: Yes, years ago.

LS: How do you get them around now, on the road?

TR: Yes. It’s all road work – everything is road.

LS: And do you have difficulties in travelling on the roads? For instance, do you use the Princes Highway?

TR: It used to be a nightmare going to the races and trots. I remember as a kid going with dad to the trots and taking harness horses, and going to Sydney was a nightmare on a Friday, it took three and a bit hours and of course you had to go through every town in those days. The highway is a godsend to have a dual carriage way, it’s sensational.

LS: And do you still do that today?

TR: We do as much Sydney work as we can. If our horses are good enough for Sydney that’s where we want to race. That’s where the money is – if the horse is good enough. We still race a lot in Sydney, we race at Kembla. But certainly I’ve been travelling backwards and forwards from Sydney thousands of trips, I was doing both. I was still driving the pacers; I drove harness horses for years. My father was slowing up, it’s hard to be going to the trots and driving pacers and the next day he would be going to the races, taking the horses to the races. He’d be doing two or three trot meets a week and doing a couple of galloping meetings a week. He was going backwards and forwards the whole time because all the harness racing was in Sydney so was the pacing and most of our galloping was that way.

LS: You would have seen a lot of changes in the roads over that time? All for good, I hope?

TR: Oh definitely. No risk.

LS: Yes, well let’s hope that it continues to get better. Another thing, when you were growing up around here, I realise that it was around the ‘60s (or ‘70s), were there any or many Aboriginal people around here then?

Recording Time: 24:52 minutes
TR: No there wasn’t. I can hardly recall running into any at all. At the showground you would have the odd guy that would come and camp at the showground for a few days and we’d go up and say hello and that was basically the only time that you would ever see an Aboriginal around here. They’d just camp on the showground for a few days and then they’d go again. And that was it. I don’t remember seeing any Aboriginals around town or in this area other than that.

LS: What about around Nowra?

TR: Yes, down in Nowra. When we’d go shopping down there or go down the shops down there but that’s the only time I ever came across them.

LS: A last question in relation to the highway itself, the current upgrade. I guess you’re probably an advocate for it, as much as it being a bypass?

TR: I think a bypass is a necessity for any place. To have the highway all the way around Australia it would be the greatest thing in the world – a two-lane highway and you could bypass any town. It’s a lot quicker – it just seems so obvious – to me, that you keep the traffic rolling and it’s a lot safer. I’d be an advocate for it anywhere.

LS: So what’s the future for you around here?

TR: The future for me – I’ve had a few changes in my life but I’m looking forward to this. After coming out here, we’ve been out here for nearly a year now and that’s given me a new lease of life. It’s going to be hard but I can really look forward to the next few years. I’ve remarried again and my second wife has never had a child before, she expecting so I’m looking forward to that and she is looking forward to that obviously, I’ve got four other children and my eldest daughter is a very bright girl and she’s a Rhodes scholar. She is in England at the moment, at Oxford, and she is about to graduate on the 25 October and I haven’t been overseas for about 22 years so my wife and I are going over for that. All of my kids, I’ve got four kids, and four of them are in England at the moment. One guy is on holidays, one guy is a gap student, the youngest guy, and the other girl is an occupational therapist and she’s going around working at the moment.

LS: Yes, it’s a different world these days.

TR: Oh, it is. The kids are amazing, the two girls, they’ve just been everywhere. But they work hard, I must say, the eldest girl is a very bright girl and is right into human rights. She won another scholarship to go to Canada, they only give out 12 in the world and they get all these bright kids in this one place in Canada and they stay for six months and they do whatever they do. My daughter was offered to write a book on human rights in west Papua New Guinea. She helped a family out of there. She also majored in Indonesian, Asian languages at uni and when she was over in Indonesia for a year at the university – that was when they had the Bali bombings. Part of the trip was going to west Papua and she got involved with the whole thing – terrible thing. She did her best to help some people and ended up in a bit of strife but got some people out of there and some lady wants to publish a book on it. She’s done a lot, Jenny, she is a really good girl, she got accepted to one of the leading law firms for human rights, the top one in New York if we can afford to send her there – my wife and I. She has just been to a young leader’s conference in Hawaii – amazing girl.
LS: So, things are looking pretty good for the kids?

TR: Things are good for the kids. I think Jenny will end up with a job, actually she is a bit frustrated, she is not likely to work at the moment at anything but she will find something else. Might have a career change. Any advice for her?

LS: No, no, not me. Alright, well thank you very much for your time.

TR: Alright, thank you.

Recording End: 29:49 minutes
RAY RUTLEDGE

Interview details

Interviewee: Mr Raymond Berry Rutledge (cited as RR in this transcript)
1 Pulman Street, BERRY, NSW

Photograph:

Mr Ray Rutledge in his home at 1 Pulman Street, Berry, NSW, 25 January 2008.

Interviewer: Dr Lindsay Smith (cited as LS in this transcript)
Navin Officer Heritage Consultants Pty Ltd
4/17 Leichhardt Street, KINGSTON, ACT

Time of Interview: 1.00 pm

Date of Interview: Friday, 25 January 2008

Place of Interview: 1 Pulman Street, BERRY, NSW

Recording medium: Sharp Digital Voice Recorder (PA-VR10E PC)

Subject of Recording: Local history of the town of Berry, with particular reference to the Pulman Street area.

Also present: Ms Sally Lindsay, local resident, ‘Constable’s Cottage’, Berry.
Mr Ross Frizelle, RTA Audio Visual Officer.
Interview transcript

Recording Start: 00:00 minutes

LS: This is an interview between Lindsay Smith and Ray Rutledge in relation to the G2B Princes Highway upgrade route selection, and Ray, for the record, please tell us your full name?

RR: Raymond Berry Rutledge.

LS: That’s Berry as in the town Berry?

RR: Yes.

LS: How come your parents named you Berry?

RR: I was never ever told that.

LS: OK.

RR: Possibly because of the fact that this is where I was born.

LS: That’s the next question I was going to ask you – when and where were you born?

RR: In this place, in this house – well I think I was born in this house; my parents were living here before I was born, and I assume that’s what happened.

LS: And what year was that, what date?

RR: 24th of the 5th ’24 [24 May 1924].

LS: So that makes you …?

RR: Coming up to 84.

LS: Where were your parents born?

RR: My mother was born in Wattamolla [Approximately 13 km northeast of Berry] and my father I think was born at Broughton Village.

LS: And neither of them is with us anymore?

RR: No.

LS: And what about brothers and sisters. Have you got any brothers and sisters?

RR: Two brothers and two sisters.

LS: And what are their names?

RR: The eldest brother was Alec Jack, he was born on the road to Woodhill Mountain and the rest of the family were all born in this house. Arthur Broughton was the second eldest in the family and Rita Mary, she was the third and I was the fourth and the youngest sister was Ida May.
LS: Are they still alive?

RR: No, only Rita, Rita is the only one still alive apart from myself.

LS: And where does she live?

RR: At Meroo Meadow.

LS: Is she married with kids?

RR: Yes, she has five children.

LS: What about yourself, you’re obviously married to [Dot]?

RR: Yes, we have three children, two boys, a son Brian, who resides in the other part of the home here with us and a daughter who resides in the town [Berry] and the younger son did live in Sydney but has passed away a couple of years ago now.

LS: And what’s your wife’s name?

RR: Dorothy May – she’s a Sydney girl from Marrickville.

LS: So, you’ve lived in Berry all your life?

RR: Yes.

LS: Have you moved around a bit?

RR: No, only when I had five years in the army.

LS: What’s your earliest recollection of Berry, or whatever the town was known as then?

RR: It was Berry, and as a schoolboy, going to school and the town – it’s vastly different to what it is today, naturally. I left school at the age of 13 and worked on the dairy farms for a few years.

LS: And where was the school from here, in relation to your house?

RR: Where it is now, situated on the outskirts of Berry on Victoria Street.

LS: OK, so you worked on dairy farms and then?

RR: And joined the army as a 16 year old and spent five years in the army. I was discharged within a few months and bought a truck, a milk carter from farm to factory for about 10 years.

Recording Time: 05:18 minutes

LS: And where was that, around here, around Berry?

RR: From Harley Hill and Jaspers Brush, and then after I give that away I got a job with the local council, the Shoalhaven Council, and worked as a labourer with the electricity department and worked my way through to line foreman. I retired in 1984, at 60, 60 years of age. As a returned serviceman I was entitled to – so I took back the five years that I gave them when I was in the army. I had the idea of doing a lot of travelling but I suffered a heart attack about 18 months afterwards and that curtailed most of the travelling. That’s about, that’s my life’s history.
LS: Yes, it’s terrible isn’t it when somebody asks you something like that and you have to collapse it in such a short fashion. But thank you for that. When you went to school – could you describe what the town was like when you were going to school, because that would have been in the what, ’30s or around that time? It wouldn’t have been obviously as big a town as it is?

RR: No, no – the school consisted of three classrooms, the first and second class, third and fourth – first and second in one year [room], third and fourth another room, and fifth and sixth in the other room, just the three teachers. But the town, it was a quiet little place, not a lot apart from the picture show a couple of times a week and the Friday night dance that was about the extent of the entertainment in the area at that time. But we made our own entertainment, local cricket or cricket on the side of the road and that sort of thing.

LS: I guess the highway wasn’t as busy then as it is now?

RR: No, no – we used to have a Sunday afternoon entertainment, as kids we had an old truck tyre which we’d sit in and roll down the hill over the old bridge and see who could go the furthest round the corner; about every 10 minutes or quarter of an hour we call out, ‘Hold it there’s a car coming’.

LS: Not every five seconds like today?

RR: No, it was mainly horse and cart transport in those days.

LS: And you obviously walked to school?

RR: Yes.

LS: And what were the houses like around this house. Were there many houses here at that time?

RR: No, no – there was one next door, No. 3, and there were two others down the street.

LS: Down Pulman Street?

RR: Yes, and another two, No. 11 and No. 13, and nothing else down the end of the lane.

LS: Down at the end of Pulman Street?

RR: Yes.

LS: And are they still there, those houses?

RR: Yes, plus quite a few others as well. There was none on the eastern side of the highway, on the eastern side of the road [Pulman Street], except one place that had been shifted there – as a farmhouse for the farmer’s son when he got married, but all the rest they’ve been built since then.

Recording Time: 10.09 minutes
LS: And was that area, say from here down to the creek [Broughton Creek] was it owned by one person or was it broken up into little lots.

RR: Most of the land was owned by a chap that had a small dairy farm. He lived in one of the houses [in Pulman Street] and he had a small dairy farm this side plus the other side of the creek [Broughton Creek]. What is now the Bowling Club was part of his farmland. That was about all the ones that was in the area in the way of buildings at that time.

LS: That’s not many buildings though as compared to what there is today?

RR: No, well that’s what it was like through the whole of the town.

LS: History tells us there was a mill further down near the creek [Broughton Creek]. Do you know of any remains of that or did you play in that when you were a kid or something?

RR: The mill was gone before my time. Whether it was pulled down or whether it was washed down in a flood I wouldn’t know but the area down there it was down behind the No. 11. There was a big waterhole that used to have water in it nearly all the time (yes that’s the one, I think – in reference to a switch to turn off the noise from the refrigerator) and the, I suppose about 20 years ago the people that owned it [No. 11] at that time they decided to fill the hole in where the water wheel was to drive the mill. That has now gone; it’s all been filled in.

LS: And that’s behind No. 11.

RR: Yes. You can see where they put a channel through to divert the water from the creek.

LS: That’s from the creek to the mill?

RR: Down this channel to drive the mill – the water wheel, the water went on further down into the creek.

LS: That was a water race, as they’re called. Did that come from around about near the highway somewhere, from the creek [Broughton Mill Creek] to the mill?

RR: That was for a sawmill, a different mill. It went from just north of the old Policeman’s Cottage [Broughton Mill Creek] down across the road there was a banked up water race went through and then the water run out down and joined into the other creek [Broughton Creek].

LS: The creek north of where the Constable’s Cottage [Broughton Mill Creek] is fairly steep there, they would have needed some sort of pump or something to get the water up.

RR: No, they had a tunnel under the road, I believe, which stopped working long before my time. But the road was built over it. They put a weir in the creek [Broughton Mill Creek] to divert the water and it would creek up enough to allow the water to run down through the tunnel.

LS: Right, through the tunnel and into the race and down towards the sawmill and then out in the creek [Broughton Creek] down there.

RR: Yes.

LS: Was the sawmill in operation when you were around or was that earlier?

RR: No, it was gone long before my time. They had three sawmills in the town; one of them was operated on steam.
LS: Where were these three sawmills located?

RR: One was in Prince Alfred Street, the other two, one was in Princess Street and the other one was in George Street.

Recording Time: 15:07 minutes

LS: These are all before your time?

RR: No, they were all working in my time.

LS: This is long after the water race going down to that sawmill?

RR: Yes.

LS: That sawmill down near the creek, are there any remains down there or can you see where the water race came through?

RR: You can down here where the old flour mill was. The water race through there is still there quite visible.

LS: When you say flour mill, is that the mill with the water wheel [behind No. 11 Pulman Street]?

RR: Yes. The other one that’s there (the one leading to the sawmill) it was a sawmill.

LS: And you can’t see anything of that?

RR: No, the pond I suppose you would call it that the water wheel turns in that has been filled in over the years too with rubbish that the farmers had that they wanted to get rid of.

LS: And that’s the sawmill one?

RR: Yes. The water race it’s been bulldozed down and flattened out now.

LS: So the other three [sawmills]...

RR: They’ve all gone now, you can’t fall trees now.

LS: Yes, well there’s a lot to cater for three mills isn’t it?

RR: Yes, the timber, some of the timber came from down the Jervis Bay. One of mills had a sawmill license or whatever they call it, and they cut the timber down there and they brought it up here to mill it. I’d say it was highly successful for the highway to move the sawn timber.

LS: In your early days, was there any river traffic here? Like from or to where the sawmill used to be, or the flour mill?

RR: No, no they [the creeks] weren’t accessible by steamers. The steamer was running when I was only very young. I’d say it had stopped running probably in the late ’20s [1920s], I might have been four or five years of age possibly when they stopped running.
LS: Probably just couldn’t navigate anymore?

RR: Well that was part of the thing but then everything was coming by rail and some of the timber was shipped to Sydney and that by rail and they cut a lot of mine timbers out between here and the beach, Seven-Mile Beach, and that was trucked away by rail trucks. Most of the timber, the sawn timber went around to the Wollongong area, particularly after the war years when there was a lot of housing [the housing boom] going on in those places up there. Several people around the place that had trucks that carted the sawn timber.

LS: In relation to your house, the one that we’re in, you know a little bit of history about it or you probably know a lot of history about it. Could you just run through what you know about the history of the house?

Recording Time: 19:55 minutes

RR: Well, our family purchased this in 1919, after it had been used as Wilson’s Store closed down in it, David Berry decided to build the hospital over there, the David Berry Hospital, and while they were building that he decided this place was vacant that they would turn it into a cottage hospital.

LS: As a temporary measure?

RR: Yes, as a temporary measure while the other one was built in 1912. I believe, 1892 Wilson moved over to the township as it is now and when the store, the hospital started I’m not one hundred per cent sure, but the new hospital, the David Berry Hospital, was opened in 1912.

LS: So during that period 1892 to 1912?

RR: From 1912 till our parents bought it in 1919, it had been used by Woodhills a crowd that had a big store in Nowra plus another one at Windsor, they used it as a boarding house.

LS: This house, they used as a boarding house.

RR: Yes. A boarding house for some years, I don’t know how many, but, then as I say, my parents bought it in 1919.

LS: And they (and you and the family) have owned it ever since then?

RR: Yes.

LS: And have you made many modifications, or do you know if many modifications have been made to the house?

RR: Yes, this section that I’m living in [the eastern section] was the store for Wilson’s Store the other section [the western section] where we grew up as kids that was the residence for the store. After we came out of the army, my brother and myself, with my mother’s permission we divided it into – we made another residence out of what was the store part of the house.

LS: Right, so you then had two residences within the same building?

RR: Yes.
LS: And you made some internal changes to walls?

RR: Yes, there's been, as I was saying, the main store and this part that we are in now it was just the storeroom. Cause we've made quite a bit of alterations to that, a partition in there and added a laundry and bathroom and that to the side there and added use for the sewerage built the toilet onto the unit as well.

LS: When you were chatting earlier you had an interesting story about the road out the front of the house here, when it was resumed by the RTA.

RR: Yes, with the event of the new bridge the representatives from the RTA or the DMR in those days came and requested permission to resume a portion of the land, which I queried and they said if I don't give permission it would mean that they would have to resume it, which would delay there works a little bit but they would have no trouble getting it in the long run, so I signed the agreement to take that bit of land.

LS: This is just out the front of your place?

RR: Down the back of my place. The amount of land they were taking they valued it at £12 that was in the very early 1950s, for which they never ever come good with any payment.

Recording Time: 25:18 minutes

LS: Still it's bound to worth a bit now, wouldn't it?

RR: Yes, and that was a week's wages in those days – more than a week's wages.

LS: It would have been good money.

RR: Yes.

LS: You should ask them for it now!

RR: Well, the DMR is gone.

LS: That's true. But at that time it was the early 1950s, they were doing up the road or widening it or realigning or something?

RR: They were building the new bridge, or what we call the new bridge -- it's an old bridge now.

LS: Can you still see the remains of the earlier bridge?

RR: Yes, the abutments are still there and the old piers, the wooden piers, where they cut them off just below water level.

LS: And did they build the newer bridge exactly where the older bridge was?

RR: The start of the two bridges were very much together but the old bridge crossed the creek at right angles and the new bridge crosses it at a very acute angle, which they claimed was to be the long range forecast for the road that bypasses the town coming from Kiama down along the railway line, the back of the Berry Hospital up over the hills, the hill here, and across the bridge and up North Street of Berry. In those days they were only talking about two-lane highways, one lane each way which today that is obsolete and not anywhere near sufficient.
LS: That’s correct; yes it’s not as safe or sound.

RR: No.

LS: That alignment remains now doesn’t it?

RR: Yes. In doing that they caused flooding problems.

LS: By changing the alignment or building the sides of the bridge?

RR: A bit of both. Changing the alignment of the bridge and the road works away from it turned the water more towards the town and then a very wise engineer decided that if they raised the Broughton Vale Bridge, the bridge on Broughton Vale Road, that the water would go under that and would not flood across the flats but when they done that they then had to raise the road on Broughton Vale Road.

LS: Leading up to the bridge?

RR: Leading up to the new bridge, they raised it by three or four feet, which an old foreman on the council told them that they weren’t putting enough culverts for the water to go under the road and they said but we don’t need them because the we raised the bridge and the water will go under that but that was not an actual practice.

LS: That didn’t work?

RR: It pushed the floodwaters back towards the town and flooded to where the Bowling Club is now which did not flood beforehand.

LS: And has that been successfully addressed since?

RR: No. Not all of it is the DMR; some of it is the local council, a combination of the two.

LS: Just getting back to the houses a bit more, the Constable’s Cottage over there what do you recall about that when you were a kid, it’s always been there for some time before you were around?

Recording Time: 30:01 minutes

RR: Yes. In my time it’s always been a private residence. There was another residence this side of it, which was taken with the new alignment of the road and the new bridge in the ’50s.

LS: Which side of the road was that house, was it just in front of the current Constable’s Cottage?

RR: Just along side of it. The highway came down the left here and the bridge road and Pulman Street and the highway they were complete right angles corners, there was no sweeps.

LS: This happened when they put in the new bridge and realigned everything, that’s when they destroyed that house next to the Constable’s Cottage?

RR: Yes. They also destroyed another house that was a bit further up towards ‘Mananga’. It was directly opposite the bails, the old bails up there on the side of the road that are still there. The dairy bails, and prior to that, way back before my time, I believe there was a Butter Factory, or something, Bacon Factory or something further up from there. The old chap that lived in that house was an old retired ploughman when I was just a boy and he got me and my billy cart to get ashes from this other building site to bring down and put in his pathway for him. I was only perhaps a 10 year old kid at the time – 10 or 12 year old.
LS: And did he pay you for it?

RR: Yes, I don't know how much, probably a shilling, two shillings, in those days.

LS: And that place is not there anymore?

RR: No, that's where you turn around. You turn from the new road onto the old road, which comes straight down in front of Mananga. You can see the part of the road there that we crossed over when we came from the Constable's Cottage to here. Within 10 feet of Sally's place, the old Constable's Cottage, that was just right angled corners.

LS: And speaking of 'Mananga', I don't think that that's the original 'Mananga', I think there may have been an earlier one. Do you know anything about that?

RR: There was an earlier one before my time but it was this side of the dairy.

LS: Which is where?

RR: Just up, a little bit up, as I said, the old dairy bails are still there on the side of the road, part fallen down, but that's were we turned around but there's that much rubbish in the grass and undergrowth there now you can't see but I could've showed you where the old house was.

LS: Well, we might have a look a bit later on. That was ruins or it was gone/destroyed when you were a boy?

RR: Yes.

LS: And the new or newer one was already in existence?

RR: Yes.

LS: What about the new one [Mananga] do you have any memories of that when you were a boy?

RR: It was Stewart's property then. There was Norm Stewart and Ted Stewart. Norm Stewart, he run the dairy and his brother Ted he was estate agent for Caleer (?). But there was the two boys and a sister but never married and then the nephew of the Stewarts came there. Stewart Lowe worked for them after he came out of the army he eventually then took over the farm. That was until dairying started to fall away.

Recording Time: 35:25 minutes

LS: You've been up there [to Mananga], when you were a boy you used to go up there?

RR: Oh yes, old Norm Stewart he was a very keen lawn bowler, but his sister, Annie, or one of his sisters, Annie was there with them and they had a croquet lawn in the front of the house out to the road back in those days. I never played croquet but I seen the set up and that.

LS: No, I haven't played it either. Well that's very good. Just a bit about more general things when you had your truck and you were doing your milk carting business you must have seen quite a lot of the area develop over those years.

RR: Yes, when I was carting the milk I did a bit of stock carting as well, farmer had one or two beasts that he wanted brought into the saleyards.
LS: Where were the saleyards?

RR: There were two saleyards. Kings had a saleyard in Alexander Street; some fellahs build a bed and breakfast there since, which I think is closed down and the other saleyard was in Albert Street and Kings had the sale on one Wednesday and Campbells saleyards ran out of a big saleyards on Cambewarra Road, just out of town towards Kangaroo Valley, or Kangaroo Valley Road actually.

LS: So how far did your run extend?

RR: Harley Hill and Seven-Mile Beach Road, was one run and then the other one Jaspers Brush, Strongs Road and O’Keefes Lane and …

LS: But it was a fairly big local area?

RR: Yes. Actually there were 12 milk carriers in the area at that time. There were 134 farms supplying milk to the Berry factory, today there’s about nine. And getting away from it they’re talking about the blue route going through these farms.

LS: This is the proposed upgrade?

RR: Yes, its going to disorganise their farms but there’s only one dairy farm that’s still operating in that area and he’s been there since 1963 and he’s getting near the end of his working life.

LS: There would have been a decline in production since 1963?

RR: No, no, not a decline an incline. Those eight or nine farms are producing as much or more milk than what the 134 were. Well, there’s more modern techniques, and principles and methods for farming.

Recording Time: 40:16 minutes

LS: And they may well be bigger.

RR: Oh they are, back in those days the average herd would have been around about 40 or 50 cows, that would have been above average but now they’re around two or three hundred.

LS: Yes, that’s a big production difference.

RR: Yes.

LS: And did you and your brother run that business or just yourself?

RR: Only myself. My eldest brother, he finished up a dairy farmer and middle brother he was an electrician with the County Council, electricians’ department

LS: Well thanks Ray. Is there anything else that you would like to ask me or say at this stage?

RR: Oh there’s probably lots that I could say.
LS: In relation to anything really, local history or the upgrade or whatever. There’s probably a lot of things that come to mind but not right away?

RR: Yes, some of them have concerns about dairy farms and so forth. They had a meeting here in Berry a few weeks ago on the Saturday. One fellow got up there and he spoke a bit, he come from Foxground. He spoke of the beautiful scenery that the roads were going to spoil and he reckoned that the highway should come along Toolijooa Road because there’s no scenery or anything there to spoil. And I wasn’t quick enough to think of it but I thought of it afterwards – what does he do in Foxground? The area he’s talking along Toolijooa track to Gerringong is very high producing farmland and dairy farms, very high producing ones there, whereas Foxground now is hobby farmers with 15 or 20 acres, a few horses, which are not producing. All they’re doing is, some of them have only got two or three acres and all they do with that is burn fuel mowing the grass, which they’re talking about now the ozone layer and the environment they’re trying to get away from.

LS: Yes, everybody’s got their own cause, don’t they?

RR: Yes, but I can show you or tell you off hand without going around and looking, seven or eight places where they’ve got two or three acres of land and all they are doing is mowing the grass on it. They haven’t even got a goat.

LS: And there’s certainly a lot of history in this immediate precinct and in Berry itself.

RR: Well, they need to know, as Mary said the original town was down on the flat near the water [Mary Lidbetter, Berry and District Historical Society, had noted this fact prior to this interview] [between Broughton Mill and Broughton Creeks, near the ‘Crooked S’] to start with, the floods soon chased them out of that and they come up here along the ridge [Pulman Street] and it developed and there wasn’t enough room on the ridge and they then moved over to the present site to where the town is now. Talk about this place [Ray’s house at 1 Pulman Street] as Wilson’s Store if you look over there [to Berry] now you’ll see that Wilson’s Store was established in 1856 and it moved over to the present site in 1892.

Recording Time: 45:10 minutes

LS: To this site?

RR: No, here it was Wilson’s Store the original in 1856 and it moved over to Berry in 1892. This is the original Berry township along this ridge [Pulman Street and across the other side of the present Princes Highway] incorporating the Constable’s Cottage and Mananga and whatever else there was there back in those days.

LS: Yes, which some of it is already gone of course?

RR: Yes.

LS: Well thank you very much for your time, and I guess all that we’re interested in is what you are going to do in the future?

RR: Grow veges.

Recording End: 46:34 minutes
COLIN & MARGARET SHARPE

Interview details

Interviewee: Mr and Mrs Colin and Margaret Sharpe (cited as CS and MS, respectively, in this transcript)
295 Princes Highway, ‘Bryn-y-Mor’, TOOLJOOA, NSW.

Photograph:

Mr and Mrs Colin and Margaret Sharpe in their home at
295 Princes Highway, ‘Bryn-y-Mor’, Toolijooa, NSW,
21 August 2008.

Interviewer: Dr Lindsay Smith (cited as LS in this transcript)
Navin Officer Heritage Consultants Pty Ltd
4/17 Leichhardt Street, KINGSTON, ACT.

Time of Interview: 9:00 am

Date of Interview: Thursday, 21 August 2008.

Place of Interview: 295 Princes Highway, ‘Bryn-y-Mor’, TOOLJOOA, NSW.


Subject of Recording: Local history of Gerringong, Berry show and dairy industry.

Also Present: ---
Can you please tell me your full name and when and where you were born?

I'm Colin Stanley Sharpe; I was born at Kiama on the 4 February 1927.

OK, thanks. And Margaret?

I was born at the same private Hospital in Kiama. My name is Margaret Sharpe and I was born in Kiama Private Hospital on the 29 of the 9th 1936.

OK and what's your maiden name?

I was Margaret Noble from Jamberoo.

OK. Thanks very much. Where were your parents born?

My father was born here in Gerringong. My mother is a Sydney girl; she was born at Ermington.

OK. And when were they born?

Dad was born in 1888 and my mother was born in 1896 or 1897.

And they were both born in Sydney?

My mother was born in Sydney. She was the daughter of a nurseryman in Sydney. But dad was one of 10 children and my great grandfather came out from Ireland in 1850 and he had five children, and grandfather was the third child in that family. When he first started working here in Gerringong he was a worker for the David Berry Estate. He worked first as a workman and then when he was old enough he became a tenant farmer.

When he came to Sydney, I expect, to start with …

Colin's great grandfather, Neil Sharpe, came from Ireland, his son, James Sharpe, was actually born in Kiama in 1863. And it's James Sharpe that you’re talking about as a tenant a farmer.

Right. And Alexander Berry was here at that time?

Yes. It was the Berry Estate. Of course, as time went by and in the early 1900s when the Berrys started to sell off the properties to make the …

After David Berry's death to comply with his will they had to sell off some of their property especially ones in the North. They came right up to Gerringong just near the Catholic Church and so forth, so they sold off all at once.

Right.

Have you heard of the bequests?
LS: Yes I have.

MS: So to comply with those bequests a lot of the tenant farmers were given the first option to buy the farms they were on.

LS: Right and your father was one of those?

CS: Grandfather, yes.

LS: And he bought a rather large section?

CS: Yes, the last record was 700 acres.

LS: That’s pretty big.

CS: Yes.

MS: He didn’t buy that all at one time.

CS: No, but that was the final number of acres.

LS: And how many children did he have?

CS: Ten children. There were five boys in that family. Actually, there were six boys but Uncle Wally died. He was with the sixth Light Horse, and he died in the Middle East in 1919.

LS: OK. And the rest of the …

CS: The other boys were on the properties here in Gerringong.

LS: Right.

CS: And in 1916, dad and his brother Les, they bought the adjoining property which is this McCabe’s property which we’re now sitting on. And they bought that property in 1916 at £50 an acre, which was quite a lot of money in those days. And then in 1919 my father married, he built ‘Bryn-y-Mor’, which is this home which we’re now sitting in now.

Recording Time: 05:24 minutes

LS: Why do you call it ‘Bryn-y-Mor’?

CS: One of my mother’s girlfriends suggested she call it that because it means a house on the hill near the sea.

LS: OK. So he built the house here?

CS: He built the house here and then a couple of years after that Uncle Les, he went back and he took up another part of grandfather’s property, and he went there to live so dad was on his own here.

LS: OK. And he married a local girl did he?

CS: He married the Sydney girl.
LS: And how many children?

CS: There were three children. My sister Gretel who was seven years older than I am and then my brother Neil who was five years older than me. And I was the baby.

LS: Do they live in the area now?

CS: No, actually my sister lives in the area but my brother died some 10 years ago of cancer. And he was a farmer and we had been in partnership for quite a while.

LS: Right. And do you have any children?

CS: Yes. We have three children. Two girls and a boy. Kathy, who is the eldest, and James who is 7 years younger, and then Elizabeth who is another 3 years younger than James.

LS: Right and do they…

CS: No James lives locally, he is a valuer, my elder daughter Kathy was a school teacher she married a school teacher and they live at Wollongong.

MS: She is still teaching.

CS: In fact she has gone back to teaching. And Elizabeth our youngest daughter she has worked mostly in Sydney. She did spend two years in London, working in London but she is now back in Sydney and some years ago now she married an Irish lad who was working out here and they live in Sydney.

LS: Right, they move around then?

CS: Yes. Elizabeth spent most of her time in banking, she is still now mostly in commercial banking.

LS: And Margaret if I could ask, you’re a local person as well?

MS: Yes, I grew up in Jamberoo.

LS: Right.

MS: My father was a dairy farmer and I’m an only child.

LS: And where were your parents born? Were they born around here?

MS: My father was born at Jamberoo but my mother came from Dubbo, the Dubbo area, south of Dubbo, and she came as a school teacher at the Jamberoo Public School and that’s how she met my father, and they were married in 1934.

LS: There you go. Thanks. Speaking of schools where did you [Colin] go to school?

CS: I went to the Toolijooa Public School, which is in the corner of our property actually, which was very convenient, and I went there till fifth class and then I … of course it was a one teacher school. The most pupils that would have been there in my time would have been about 20, 24 and got down to about 12, I think, when I left. And then I went to Nowra Intermediate High School. And we travelled to Nowra by train. I rode my push bike to the Toolijooa railway station.
LS: Was it a railway station or a siding?
MS: Oh yes.
CS: We called it – it was a railway station, it was a siding – we called it a station of course.

LS: Did it have station master?
CS: No, no it was unattended. So we travelled to Bombaderry by train there we took the bus to Nowra – of course there were two buses, one for boys and one for girls.

LS: Oh is that right?

CS: Oh yes, It was the same for the train, they had two carriages one for girls and one for boys. And then of course it was a co-educational school. That’s how it was in those times. That was in 1939 when I started in Nowra. And then I had four years at Nowra and then I went to Hawkesbury Agricultural College in 1943 but I only had the one year up there because I came home because dad … of course my brother was away and it was very hard for labour in those times so I decided I would come home and that’s when I left Hawkesbury. But strangely enough my son James went to Hawkesbury and he studied land economy up there and I was pleased to see him go up there because it was a great college.

LS: Yes. And so most of your life, working life, has been associated with the area?

CS: It was actually, yes. I’ve spent up until 1991. That’s when I broke up the area actually and sold the property. But I could go back and say to him no my brother took up a soldier settler block in Willowale in 1953 and he ran that until 1960 when he came back, and to digress again, when my brother went on his own farming, dad and I had a partnership and I took up half the real estate in this property. I was a tenant in common. Then after 5 years, half this property was mine. And then in 1960 when Neil, we decided we’d joint farm again we formed S. N. Sharpe Pty Ltd and we moved the cows between ‘Bryn-y-Mor’ and his properties, south Strathmore. They’d be here for about six weeks and then we’d move them to his property and they’d be there for about a month and then they would come back here. And we did that up until 1988 when we decided that at that time that as we were both getting on that we would dissolve the company while we were able to do it our way without any interference from children. And we would dissolve the company and then there’d be no arguments. And that we did.

LS: Right.

MS: Neil’s son had also come back to work with his father and his uncle and so Neil and Ron worked their farm and Colin worked this one.

LS: OK. So it was a good arrangement?

CS: It was. It worked out very well. And then I didn’t like the way the dairy industry was going.
LS: Well I was going to ask you about the dairy industry. When you were a young fellow going to school how was the dairy industry then in relation to how the milk get to the factory and where were the factories, and that sort or thing?

CS: Well, when I first came home from Hawkesbury, our milk went to the factory either by taking it in the milk cart to the factory or it could be picked up at the road side by a carrier. There were three carriers for Gerringong. There was the Toolijooa run, there was the Foxground run and there was one to Rose Valley. And the rest of the farmers, those who were out Gerroa way they took their milk, and quite a few of those who were quite handy, they took their own milk by horse and cart. Of course when I came back first there were no quotas and the factory had a, it depended how much milk dairy farmers needed in Sydney for their city supplies was how much milk was transported to Sydney by rail. The rest of the milk was separated on the farms and then the cream went to the factory and it was there made into butter.

Recording Time: 15:17 minutes

LS: OK. So that was at Gerringong factory?

CS: At the Gerringong factory. All the factories made their own butter at that time with their surplus milk, virtually. Then when the quotas came in it changed the face of dairying as far as we were concerned, it meant that we had a quota.

LS: What were the quotas, what was the quota system about?

CS: The quota system was to make sure that Sydney had an ample supply of milk. At times, Sydney up till then was short of milk. Particularly in the winter time when they just didn’t have enough milk and it meant, well, that they just went without.

MS: They actually rationed it. If you had children and babies you could get milk everyday but others could only get milk every second day in the winter time because it was more expensive for farmers to produce the milk in the winter time so a lot of them let their production fall down in the winter time.

LS: And what year was this?

MS: This was immediately after the war wasn’t it?

CS: Yes. It was during the war too, actually, and up till after the war.

LS: So they instituted quotas?

CS: Quotas, yes.

LS: Which meant that you had to produce a certain amount?

CS: Yes. And that meant that you had to produce that all year round.

LS: Oh OK.

CS: So that meant there wasn’t that fall of production in the winter time.
LS: And with that quota system did they pay you more?

CS: Yes. We were given a yearly price. We could organise our finances, of course, and we knew every month what our income was going to be. And so it made a big difference.

LS: Did you have any troubles meeting those quotas?

CS: Well, if you tried to get a quota which you couldn't attain well then you could lose your farm. It meant that you had to spend a lot more money in the winter time to make sure that you could maintain that quota.

MS: Also it made a difference to breeding cattle too; people had to be more accurate with their breeding so that they had cattle calving right through the year to produce that amount of milk. Whereas before it was more a springtime calving and then going through the summer and then it would go down during the winter time.

LS: So it meant really quite a change?

CS: It was. It certainly was a change – a change for the better though.

MS: My father, Ernie Noble and another man from Jamberoo, from the Jamberoo factory, they had a lot to do with working out the quota system and doing it. My dad put hours and hours and hours of thought into working out how a quota system could work the best for everybody, not only for him as a farmer but for all the farmers and to produce this milk for Sydney for a regular supply.

LS: How long was that maintained? How long was the system in for?

CS: The system was in right up til the time of deregulation.

LS: Which was when?


LS: Oh, so it was quite a long time.

CS: Yes.

MS: In the ‘50s the quota came in.

LS: And deregulation must have then had a similar impact on you?

CS: Yes it did because it meant virtually that there were no state boundaries. Milk could travel anywhere. And with Victoria being the biggest producer of milk they were producing milk a lot cheaper than what we could at that time and it meant that the price of milk dropped dramatically, and it meant that the big producer, those who could produce a large amount of milk, were able to virtually stay in.
LS: So the years of regular income, they just disappeared?

Recording Time: 20:01 minutes

CS: They had really, yes, and for quite a few years the farmer, he was absolutely struggling.

LS: And was it around that time that you had difficulties?

CS: No, it was before this. Actually before it became difficult I was able to sell my quota. There were full quotas when I actually sold out.

LS: Right. So you could trade your quota?

CS: You could trade the quota. When quotas first came in you couldn't trade quotas. It wasn't until, probably about the … '70s? It was well on, though, before you could buy a quota.

LS: So you sold yours?

CS: I was able to sell my quota back into the pool. At that time there was a pool you could buy in and out.

LS: So what did you do then?

CS: For eight years I raised vealers, and they were eight enjoyable years, I thoroughly enjoyed that. I raised them up until about nine or ten months old and then sold them off to the butchers. And that was most enjoyable. At that time John Milne, who was operating ‘Arangi’, a neighbouring property, he often used to come and have a talk to us and at one stage he said to me – if you ever think about giving up the cattle let me know, and at that time …

MS: We were yarding up some cattle to go to market and he’d put up a gate but it wasn’t attached to the post and I was standing there and it actually fell down and hit my leg and caught my legs and so I was sitting here on the lounge with my leg up and John came and said that he wanted to come and have a chat sometime, and I’m lying here with my leg up, and I said I’m not going to chase these cows around – I’m 65 – not that that was that old at that stage. I said that to him that day then he was back a short time later and said – well if you ever want to give up chasing the cows around I’d be willing to rent the farm. So we thought about that and Colin rang the accountant …

CS: No, first of all I said to John, you make me an offer.

MS: Oh, that’s right.

CS: And he did, and I rang our accountant and he said that amount would be fine.

MS: He was offering the same amount of money as we were making from our vealers plus paying the rates.

LS: Oh, so that was a good deal?

CS: It was a very good deal.

MS: So that’s when we changed over and he leased all of our farm and ran the two big farms together, giving him about 350 acres.
LS: So that’s when you effectively moved out of dairying?

CS: Yes, out of the vealers actually.

MS: And then the Waterboard came along. We didn’t have the property for sale but the Waterboard was putting in the sewerage system for Gerringong and they didn’t want an ocean outpour they wanted to use the treated water on land.

LS: And what year was that approximately?

MS: About 2000. They had water property at Rose Valley first and they were going to have a sewerage system there and pump the sewerage from that back into Kiama or something. Anyway, Rose Valley residents didn’t want that to happen and there were all sorts of reasons – good reasons – for it not to happen. And that changed things and held up the whole system really. And then they started looking around this way. First of all they wanted about five farmers in this area to take the water but the offer to the farmers at that stage was that they bring the water to the farmer’s boundary but the farmer would have to put in an earthen dam to hold two day’s supply of water and then put in all the infrastructure for the irrigation themselves. And this was just before deregulation. So the farmers didn’t know where they were going to be with deregulation.

CS: No. It was actually after deregulation.

Recording Time: 24:50 minutes

MS: It actually happened after that but when they first started talking about it and nobody put their hand up to take the water. So at that stage then the Waterboard had to have another think. And they started looking around to see what farms they could buy. We didn’t have our farm for sale; it was running quite nicely, John running the two properties. In the end the Waterboard, both these farms, the other farm John was running was actually the farm that grandfather Sharpe had had, so it was grandfather Sharpe’s farm and our farm that they bought or acquired. It was the acquisition of your farm. That actually didn’t happen until about 2002 but they talked about it for some time.

LS: Which left you with this place?

CS: Well, in the end we said that we would sell to them on the condition that I could keep my home on one acre with access to a bore for water for our garden and access to the highway. They readily agreed.

LS: Right. And when was that?

CS: That was in about 2002. Or 2001 to 2002.

LS: And since then Colin you’ve been involved with the Gerringong Historical Society or even before then?

CS: Yes, probably since about 1990 we became involved.

LS: This is both of you?

CS: Both of us, yes. And we’ve both been presidents at different times, yes. I’ve been involved with the Berry Show Society since 1945.
LS: OK. That’s a long time.

CS: Yes. It is a long time.

LS: And are you still involved with that?

CS: Still involved. Still go to committee meetings at Berry. Actually, my father was also in the Berry Show Society. He had been president down there in 1938/39 to 40.

LS: Well, you would have seen a few changes in Berry?

CS: Yes.

LS: And with the Show as well?

CS: With the Show, I was president first in 1963-65 and then again I was president from 1987-89.

LS: And the Show itself, is it an annual event?

CS: Yes, it’s an annual event.

LS: And when is it held?

CS: It’s held normally the first weekend in February or as close to that as possible. It follows the Kiama show. But I’ve seen lots of changes down there [at Berry].

LS: What was it like in the early days – the Show and the showgrounds?

CS: Well, the Showground virtually hasn’t changed very much at all. Except on the southern side there used to be a pond there which the drainage out of the showground itself went into that pond then there was another drain went out onto Station Street. We filled in the pond but in the old days there was a big area down there that was not used much during Show time. In time we were able to drain that and it made that a far greater area for the cattle and for the horses. But of course in the early days cattle came to the Show by train or walk them even, walk them in. There were just five dairy breeds, of course, in those days and, actually sorry, there were four dairy breeds. We didn’t have the Holsteins come in as a breed to the Show until 1948. And now, they are the predominant breed throughout Australia. Of course, horses were a great part of our Show. Things moved a lot slower at the Show, of course, in those days. And then for the Show jumping there were only the brush hurdles, there were four brush hurdles in the ring and also a high jump. High jumping In those days was quite a big thing. A feature of all the shows. And of course the pavilions were the vegetables. There were virtually only five sections in the pavilion in the early days. You had cooking, you had sewing, you had needlework, you had vegetables and farm produce. Oh, and flowers but now, of course, we’ve got art, we’ve got photography, we’ve got ceramics, everything is there. The trees on the higher part weren’t planted until about 1959.

Recording Time: 31:06 minutes
MS: And that made a great shade area with the grandstand. Also the grandstand was rebuilt.

CS: Yes, the old wooden grandstand was built by David Berry; everything on that showground was built by the Berrys. They gave the land [for the Showground] and all the land for the churches in Berry too. But of course the original grandstand was about 50 m north where the present site is. But the story goes that at that time it was in front of the Mayor’s house. And they decided it would be moved. And it was then much higher than what it is. There used to be rooms under the grandstand – this wooden structure. I think in about 1935, 34 or 35, it was moved to the site it is at now and then it was lowered so that there was no room under it virtually for storage. It remained there until it was condemned as a fire hazard. Remember at that time there were some dreadful fires in England where grandstands were burnt down, particularly in soccer fields and so forth.

LS: What year was that?

CS: This was about ’88.

MS: A new one was built for the Show of ’88.

CS: In England it happened earlier than that. We wanted a new grandstand built for the ’88 Bicentenary Show. So, they decided they would pull the old one down – it had to come down – and a new big one would be built but the main superstructure, all the main area, the roofing area, the original timber of that is in the present building. We were able to retain that. And that was opened for the ’88 Show.

MS: But they hitched it back up and there was a bigger area underneath where we run a café now and do the public catering. The Ladies Auxiliary of the Berry Show Society does the public catering.

LS: Must be a pretty big task?

MS: Oh it is.

CS: It is. It’s quite interesting; in the early days all show societies, back onto my father’s times and those earlier ones, they virtually had to become guarantors of the bank accounts. They maintained it just to keep the shows going. And then during the war we went back to one-day shows.

LS: How old is the Show now?

CS: It is up to about 125.

MS: And it is a two-day Show, two days and two nights.

CS: We are up to about the 125th Show, I think it is now.

MS: No, ’88 was your hundredth.

CS: 120th.

Recording Time: 35:05 minutes
LS: Thank you for that, in relation to the Historical Society, how long have you been involved with that?

CS: Since 1990, and of course we’ve been, most of us have been presidents at different times. Quite interesting, early this year we had the 75th anniversary of the landing of Kingsford-Smith at the Seven Mile Beach and his flight from Gerroa to New Plymouth in New Zealand.

LS: OK. That would have been a pretty big event.

CS: It was. To celebrate that we had a sight and sound night. Fortunately we were able to – a lady who came over from New Plymouth in October last year she came to our museum and saw what we had about Kingsford-Smith and the flight to New Plymouth and we told her what we were going to, and she said – I’ll go back to New Plymouth and talk to them and stir them up – and she did.

LS: Very good.

MS: But she had been there at New Plymouth when he landed the plane over there. So that’s the connection there and she knew the mayor of New Plymouth, so she spoke to him and they both got something going.

CS: The connection also was here. I was out there as a six-year old and some of our members were also involved, some of whom were a bit older than I was of course. So it became an event and the publicity officer for the New Plymouth Aero Club he came over in April this year. He couldn’t come over for the event but he was organising things over there. We had phone calls and it finished up he organised a flight of five of their Aero Club aircraft to fly over New Plymouth late that afternoon, which was about the same time Smithy would have landed. And then he came over here about 28-29 April this year to have a look at our museum and also to take him out to Gerroa to show him the site out there where we have the memorial.

LS: You must have a pretty busy life with the show and with the Historical Society?

CS: Yes. It gets quite busy. We are also involved with the Uniting Church too.

LS: Oh well, you’ve both got busy lives in that respect.

MS: And Colin was secretary of the Milk and Dairymen’s Council, the local branch here for …

CS: Twenty two and a half years.

MS: We’ve always been involved in community things.

LS: And that’s how you got involved with the Historical Society as well?

CS: Yes.

LS: Ah well, you would have seen some changes in Gerringong in your time?

CS: Certainly have, yes. I don’t mind the change. You can’t stop progress. Australia’s population has gone from when I was a kid at 5 million to 22 million and people have to live. You can’t blame them for wanting to live on the coast can you? The people who’ve come to live here are very vocal; of course, they don’t want to see change, not in their back yard. Unfortunately, it has to change – you can’t stop progress. Sometimes that progress isn’t to your liking but still you can’t stop it.
LS: In relation to, not only in your work at the Historical Society but generally, we have been working on aspects of the Princes Highway upgrade, one of those is the Aboriginal archaeology. Have you had any dealings or know of any Aboriginal activities around this area particularly.

CS: Do you mean in relation to sites?

Recording Time: 40:00 minutes

LS: In relation to Aboriginal people. Have they worked with you at all or anything?

CS: We've only actually had one fellow who used to come and dig out tussocks for us. And he was a marvellous fellow. He was a great big six footer and he was a great worker. This was back in the, probably, '60s or '70s, actually. But Neville, he was a great worker. And most enjoyed working with him actually. I think he is the only one actually that I have ever worked with.

LS: Where was he from? Gerringong?

CS: Well he lived on a farm actually. It had a vacant house and he was able to live in it. He went up north actually. He wasn't a local, he wasn't a local Aboriginal. He'd come from up there. When I went to school there were very, very few Aboriginals who I was involved with at school actually. But then the Stewart family came to Gerringong, the father came here to work in the sawmill, which opened up during the war actually. There were a couple of families; the Stewarts and the Campbells came then. But then back in the early days there was the Simms family before I was born and they are recognised in the Simms Road now.

LS: This is in Gerringong?

CS: In Gerringong. I understand back in the, probably, 1850s that there was an Aboriginal settlement out at Gerroa and that site apparently is still recognised by the Aboriginals.

LS: And you were talking earlier about progress, and you can’t stop progress. One of the things that progress has with it is roads, of course, which brings us to the upgrade of the highway. You would have seen a few changes in the highway in your time?

CS: Certainly have. Yes. I've seen it go from an unsealed road, actually.

LS: And it was unsealed all the length down from Gerringong through to Berry, say?

CS: Right through – yes, it was unsealed all the way. We used to often travel to Sydney of course with mum being a Sydney girl, and we used to drive to Sydney and I can actually remember Appin Road, getting bogged on Appin Road. Going up in different times. All that way, it was only in the towns that it was virtually sealed.

LS: So you drove, you didn’t take the train?

CS: No. We had a car so we used to drive by car. People said that I was lucky as a child because we always seemed to have a holiday – a yearly holiday. Quite often I can remember going to the Blue Mountains, to Blackheath for holidays.
LS: And you would have seen changes and upgrading of the roads during that time as well?

CS: Certainly, yes, and it’s been great to see that upgrade. Recently I was speaking to a chap down here on the flat here opposite Miller’s gate that I could remember when they raised that by just putting spall in, which raised it up about a foot or 18 inches, you know. And that was the first time that road was lifted up. Up till then, in flood time of course when I was a kid if people did get stuck were the local horses that would go and pull them out.

LS: Ah, you were the local saviours?

CS: Yes, we were the local saviours.

LS: I bet you got a bit tired of that at times?

CS: The floods here got off the flat pretty quickly, once the rain stopped. If the Crooked River was open it would clear and it was only a matter of hours before the traffic was able to move.

LS: And what about the latest proposals for the upgrade?

CS: Well, whether we like it or not it has to be upgraded. I am prepared to accept that it must be upgraded. With the amount of traffic now and the state of the roads, particularly between Gerringong and Berry, where there is virtually no passing lanes and with the amount of traffic it just has to be upgraded.

LS: Absolutely right. I think you’re right and that is progress. It needs to be done; it’s just a matter of how it gets done. So what does the future hold for yourselves?

CS: Ah, the future, I shall live in ‘Bryn-y-Mor’ as long as I am able. How long that is I don’t know. I’m feeling pretty good at 81 and a half, virtually, and we still like to travel as much as we can.

LS: So, you’ve got a lot of activities?

CS: Yes, yes. Actually, that was one more reason why we like to travel, was to get away from the activities. That is our holiday actually.

Recording End: 46:19 minutes
SONNY SIMMS

Interview details

Interviewee: Mr Sonny Simms (cited as SS in this transcript)
59 Beinda Street, BOMADERRY, NSW.

Photograph:

Mr Sonny Simms outside the Nowra Local Aboriginal Land Council Office at 59 Beinda Street, Bomaderry, NSW, 12 September 2008.

Interviewer: Dr Lindsay Smith (cited as LS in this transcript)
Navin Officer Heritage Consultants Pty Ltd
4/17 Leichhardt Street, KINGSTON, ACT.

Time of interview: 2.00 pm.

Date of interview: Friday, 12 September 2008.

Place of interview: Nowra Local Aboriginal Land Council Office,
59 Beinda Street, BOMADERRY, NSW.


Subject of recording: Nowra LALC, Bomaderry Children’s Home and local area.

Also present: ---
Interview Transcript

Recording Start: 00:00 minutes

LS: Can you tell me your full name and where and when you were born?

SS: My right name is Henry Joseph Simms but I'm more commonly known as Sonny Simms, that's the name that's been given to me and its stuck with me but my proper name and correct name is Henry Joseph Simms. I am the third generation Henry Joseph Simms. The eldest boy in each family carried that title and my boy is the fourth generation Henry Joseph Simms. I was born at Crown Street hospital in Sydney and raised on the La Perouse Aboriginal Reserve.

LS: How did you get the name Sonny then?

SS: I don't know, by an elderly aunty many years ago, just christened me Sonny and it's stuck with me.

LS: When you were a young fellah?

SS: A little fellah, yeah.

LS: You must have been pretty bright and sunny?

SS: I don't know, and that just transcribed to everybody then.

LS: Where your parents born?

SS: I always tell people I've got the best of both worlds, my father, literally born on the La Perouse Aboriginal Reserve and my mum also literally born on the Aboriginal Reserve at Roseby Park, Orient Point. Both parents born on missions.

LS: Are either of them alive today?

SS: My mum is still alive today, mum will be 95 on the 20 September [2008]. My father is deceased; he had an accident after work back in October 1969, he fell eight foot and broke his neck – a working accident.

LS: How old was he at the time?

SS: At the time dad was in his 60s.

LS: Are you married?

SS: I'm married.

LS: What's your wife's name?

SS: Lynette Simms.

LS: Do you have children?

SS: We have seven kids, four boys and three girls, their ages range from 44 down to 28, we have 12 grandchildren, [aged] 22 to 4.
LS: Do your kids live around here or are they scattered a bit?

SS: They all live locally bar one boy who works at Roselands, in Sydney. He is the general manager for the white goods section for Grace Brothers at Roselands, lives at Lakemba. All the rest live locally.

LS: Have you lived here [in Nowra] all your life?

SS: I’ve lived here permanently, in Nowra, since September 1963 officially. But we always but we always come to our grandfathers place as kids to spend the Christmas holidays and Easter holidays, that’s on mum’s father’s property. So we’ve had a long association with this area.

LS: Why did you move here?

SS: I come here through my rugby league enterprises; I travelled around playing professional rugby league. After I finished at South Sydney it was very hard in the early ’60s to get a guernsey never get anywhere up there, so they found me a position in the country which was at a little place called Bodalla, down the far south coast where they make the famous cheese, I played there 1963-64. I come here at the end of the season in 1964 and stayed here ever since.

LS: What were you doing when you first came here?

SS: I come here one week after our grand final victory in Bodalla and I commenced work on the Shoalhaven City Council one week after the grand final, I was employed two days after arriving here and I worked for the council for 22 years.

LS: What were you doing on the Council, what sort of job?

SS: I’ve done everything all bar the bulldozer. I’ve done a lot of work, I’ve been the dog catcher, I was the grave digger, and I finally finished up in the water and sewer gang. I left that and went across into construction, where we done all the kerbing and guttering, footpaths and built all the sewer pumping stations, water filtration plants. There was a team of three of us myself and two tartans. We were the construction gang of Shoalhaven City Council.

LS: The three of you for the whole area?

SS: The three of us, saved council a lot of money.

LS: Did you retire from the council?

SS: I retired from there, well I was asked to come up to the Land Council. I come across here when I was asked by the elders. The place was run down, in financial strife.

LS: What year was that approximately?

SS: I come across here in ’83 in the council, but not on full time then. I worked there as a secretary on a voluntary basis for a while and it’s a paid position now. I’ve been overseeing the... But prior to coming on to the Land Council as an employee, I was both an ATSIC councillor, an elected councillor and also an elected councillor for the NSW Aboriginal Land council. So I’ve been involved, what I term on my resume – black politician, self taught.
LS: When did you get involved with ATSIC and the other commitments?

SS: From the very start.

LS: From around the ‘80s?

SS: The Land Rights Act came in 1983 and ‘87 we actually had … (interrupted by phone call).

LS: You have been involved in the upper echelons of Aboriginal politics for more than 25 years.

SS: Plus the other four years before that, so I have taken part in the marches, I’ve been knocked down by coppers, kicked in the guts by coppers, so I’ve been to all the rallies, I’ve been a supporter. And I’ve followed in the footsteps of my father, he followed this years ago but you only get mention of Jacky Pattern and the other fellah who get all the accreditation for it, there was quite a string of Aboriginal People behind that too.

LS: What was that, what did he do?

SS: Well they fought for citizenship rights back in the ‘30s, my father and uncle Ned Simms were part of that movement but you only get Jacky Pattern and the other fellah who get all the accreditation for it, there was about a team of eight.

LS: There must have been more involved?

SS: He was an elderly man. Pearl Gibbs, I recall they used to come to our place many years after and have rallies and reckies at my father’s house and when he come into the city my mum would say where you going Pat, he said I’ve got men’s business, so he participated in all that.

LS: You have been involved with the Nowra Land Council since …?

SS: Since the inception in 1983.

LS: They’re based here at Bomaderry.

SS: This is the registered office here, 59 Belinda Street Bomaderry. The office is in Cottage no.2 which is the cottage used by the staff during the years of the stolen generation.

LS: Can you tell me a bit about that, about this residence here and the accommodation around here?

SS: The homes first opened in 1908, and my father was among the first five intake into here.

LS: 1908?

SS: 1908, yes he was a bit older than my mum. They removed my father from La Perouse Aboriginal Reserve when he was three months old and he spent 14 years of his childhood here. His entire childhood was spent here.

LS: This was a home for children was it?

SS: This was a children’s home, this is the birthplace of the stolen generation in NSW.
LS: How did that start?

SS: When they were removed from their parents either on missions or reserves by the Aborigines Protection Board, then the Aborigines Welfare board, they were brought here, as being so called neglected, and were under the auspices of the United Aborigines Mission [Organisation] the UAMOs, which are based on the east coast of Victoria. And dad spent 14 years of his entire childhood here. In latter years my father’s two younger brothers come through the same system.

LS: Did it have a name?

SS: That’s what it was called the Bomaderry Children’s Home.

LS: And it was run by the Government?

SS: A joint venture between first of all the Aborigines Protection Board, then the Aborigines Welfare Board and the United Aborigines Mission.

LS: That started in 1908 and he [your father] was brought here and he lived 14 years here, and when did it stop?

SS: They were still bringing kids here, we purchased this property on 16 October 1993, I bought the front fence out the front there with fellahs on council back in 1974 and it still went for about another eight years after that, they were still bringing kids here. So the kids were still coming here in the ’80s.

Recording Time: 10:08 minutes

LS: In the early ’80s?

SS: ’80s. Even after the 1967 referendum. They were still removing kids and bringing them here.

LS: When you say we bought it, the Nowra Land Council bought this area?

SS: We bought it, the property was up for auction. The Japanese wanted it, they were going to build a big complex here and buy land around the district and build a big golf course. So we rallied all the Koori people we could muster, right along the south-east coast, we even brought people in from the top end, full bloods, and I think the sight of the Japanese on that Saturday morning auction seeing us full bloods painted up the red rag around their forehead. I think it put the wind up the Japanese, cause they only made one bid then the property was knocked down to us for $365,000. The Nowra Local Aboriginal Land council we own it, we maintain it and the place is now heritage listed.

LS: Do you use the other cottages?

SS: We have one cottage there for the elders, we have one tenant still remaining here, the other two tenants have left and vacated, we are going to turn one of those cottages into a museum or as we call it a Keeping Place. And back on the 24 May [2008] we just celebrated 100 years of the former Bomaderry Children’s Home. Kids come back to this place and a lot of those kids never saw each other for 40 years, even one lady from America come back to meet with her sisters for the first time in 40 years.

LS: That was a big event wasn’t it?

SS: Big event, and quiet emotional, a very emotional event.
LS: How many people turned up for that do you think?

SS: We had over 1,500 that come back. We had a lot of photos here on display and once they saw themselves in the photos they took them. None of the UAMO Home people come to it – they were fearful of the word compensation. Like I said no one’s going to point the finger, we’re here to celebrate, which we did. But I was pleased. That’s been my two ambitions in life, once we bought the property whilst I was connected with the Land Council once they had the bridge walk back on 21 October 2001.

LS: The bridge walk?

SS: We had our bridge walk here in correspondence with the Sydney one because when we bought this property back in 1993 one of the original cottages was still standing. We used that as our church. Three weeks after we bought it someone torched it on us. So what we done was pushed that over and had a memorial garden built there on that site and that particular site is the site of the babies cottage.

LS: And that’s here in the property?

SS: That’s down the bottom of the property down there. But that signifies where the babies cottage was, which was one of the most relevant cottages of all and we have the two plaques there denote that. Our theme is there they brought the children here as infants hence the footprints, coming in as babies, going out the other side as adults.

LS: So a long association with this particular place?

SS: Very long association.

LS: What do you remember about when you were a child and you went down to your grandfather’s place? Was that a property?

SS: He had a big property; he owned nearly all of the water front at Orient Point. My grandfather, that’s mum’s dad, he was an oyster farmer and a fisherman. Him and his brother uncle Jack pioneered the oyster industry in the Cook Haven river, along with a man from Georges River called Haiser, George Haiser, they pioneered that oyster industry in the river.

LS: Did he own the land down there?

SS: He owned the land. A vast proportion of land it would be worth a few million dollars today if it was on the market but one of mum’s sisters and her husband took our Pop into town one day and he changed the will. So when he passed away mum and the other brothers and sisters got nothing, the other two got the lot.

LS: It seems to me to be unusual that he would have owned a lot of land back in 1900.

SS: He owned a lot of land, he owned a lot of land and he helped other of people too and he helped his own sons buy leases, he set his two sons up into the oyster lease industry, set them up.

LS: It must have been a profitable business?

Recording Time: 15:00 minutes
SS: It was but at the same time too he was a hard man but a fair man, he was something similar to my dad and he didn’t squander anything, grew all his own vegetables, had his own Jersey cows for milking. Self contained he was. And as I say he had an Aboriginal friend called Peter Smith who lived in the bush at Culburra alongside Lake Wollumboula and he had a punt like my Pop. We used to share Christmas with Pop every year but on Christmas Day wouldn’t come in this punt because when he used to come down the river over Greenwell Point, there was no access around the river with trucks or whatever, across the river was the main way, it was only a dirt track.

He used to take the supplies and the mail delivery for the Goodnight Island guest house, there used to be a Goodnight Island guest house. Well Peter, he used to be more or less the handyman there he delivered the mail he delivered all the goods and he took the cans of milk across. He come to my Pops every Christmas Day for Christmas dinner but he wouldn’t come in the punt. When he used to come down the river he had a little kelpie dog up the bow of that punt and you’d hear him come from a long way up the river, you’d hear him singing, this is a non-Aboriginal man, and Pop said the reason why he used to sing was that he was frightened, he was frightened.

LS: What was he frightened of?

SS: Because he asked this clever black fellah, this clever black fellah knocked on his door one and asked him for flour (LS – and he didn’t give it to him). He said this clever black feller tormented him and give him the shits, so he went inside and got the shotgun and fired it in the air, the blackfellah hit the toe. But when he [Peter] was going down he pushed the punt in the water at Lake Wollumboula to set it, the blackfeller cut him off between him and the house and the punt and pushed him out into the Lake Wollumboula. Luck happened that they would do that together – him and Pop. Pop was going out there to help him. When he got there Peter was right in the water up to his chest – the blackfellah nearly drowned him. Only for Pop come and saved his life.

So come Christmas Day he’d come in horse and sulky. He had a horse and sulky and his horse was named Darkie, so after Christmas dinner we asked him, could he let us all have a drive of Darkie. Yes he said, but don’t go up to them kids up the mission, they’ll run Darkie into the ground. So, he’d enjoy a few rums with Pop and talk and smoke an Indian head pipe, both of them.

LS: With tobacco?

SS: With Tobacco. We’d get the horse and sulky, me and me brothers and sisters and my cousins, because all of Pop’s sons and daughters gathered Christmas in a big mob. We’d take the horse and sulky up to the Rotary Park mission. We’d give all the kids a ride up there. Next day he’d come down to the river he’d say to Pop, when I unsaddled Darkie, put him on in the paddock, he said he just laid down and slept.

LS: Must have worn him out?

SS: Great old man, old Peter.

LS: When you were growing up, where were you growing up?

SS: I grew up at La Perouse.

LS: And you really didn’t have any young experiences around here, around Nowra?

SS: No, only my visits with Pop, all my entire growing up years were in La Perouse.
LS: When you came here to Nowra did you know many people did you have relatives here?

SS: Yeah, we had all Mum’s family here and dad had a lot of friends here too and plus kids on the estate who grew up with him. But I come from a place at La Perouse and during our life there growing up; we never experienced racism that is one thing I am proud to say about La Perouse. We went to school and La Perouse is like a league of nations because that’s where all the people lived out there in the Depression, they all stayed on, they all lived in old tin shacks. We had Russians, Maltese, Italians, Yugoslavs, Gypsies (LS – anybody) that’s why I said it was the league of nations, and everybody was poor except we all went to that one school, we were all barefooted and we all shared with each other. So we had a really common bond there and that’s why today La Perouse has been so successful at inter-race marriages, especially all them top jockeys and footballers, they’re all married to girls who were born to people on the La Perouse mission or the La Perouse area. Like Darren Beadman the top jockey in Australia, if not the world, he’s married a girl from La Perouse. Kevin Moses, Johnny Duncan and all of them all married La Perouse girls, all of them, all state footballers.

Recording Time: 20:18 minutes

LS: Good to start at La Perouse then?

SS: Yes, we all said that we all speak about growing up in La Perouse we knew we never encountered racism, even at out athletic carnivals, swimming carnivals, you weren’t black you weren’t white you were just there to compete.

LS: You were just another kid.

SS: Yeah, it was great. Then after my primary school years at La Perouse I sat an examination and I was one of five boys who was selected to go to the elite school, all boys school, South Sydney Junior Technical School. That school also attending there was Ronnie Coote and Paul Cross who went on to play with Easts and Balmain. Although I knew them from the primary school, we played football against each other, at the same school we was in the same team together. Come weekends when the La Perouse would play Coogee or play Kensington we used to come up against Coote and Paul Cross.

LS: That’s the beauty of football isn’t it?

SS: It was great, and all boys school, it was great there and being one of five.

LS: With your long association with the council you must know a lot of people in this area and up and down the coast?

SS: I’ve got a lot of contacts here and know people right along the coast from my days in ATSIC and the NSW Aboriginal Land Council, plus I’ve served here with the Shoalhaven area consultative committee for a decade, I’ve been on there. And that’s all the top people from all the different places is town, Albatross, Council, paper mill, Manildra, all of those places they’ve all got a representative on that committee and I’ve been on there for a decade.

LS: You would have seen a few changes in you time?

SS: I’ve seen a lot of changes, a hell of a lot of changes, especially around the town area [Bomaderry].
LS: In terms of development?

SS: Development, yes.

LS: People in Berry were telling me that before the '70s, before the tourism boom, Berry was just a small rural town.

SS: Oh yes it was just a village.

LS: I guess it might have been the same down around Bomaderry way as well.

SS: My grandfather is buried in Berry cemetery. My grandfather worked, when dad and his younger brother were here [in the Bomaderry Children's Home], Pop left La Perouse so he could be closer to his boys, so he got a job on a dairy farm at Bundewallah [northwest of Berry]. So Pop worked on a farm at Bundewallah, after he finished milking on a Sunday morning he'd catch the train to Bomaderry, walk down to the bottom [of the Children's Home] and you'd see big strainer posts there, he used to watch them playing in the yard down there before they walked to that bottom gate and walked us down.

LS: Because he wasn’t allowed to talk with them?

SS: Yes. That was the only contact, he couldn’t come up and embrace his boys, he only had visual contact, but on their way to church they knew that Pop would go ahead of them.

LS: They knew that he was here?

SS: Yeah, they knew and they could wave and that was it. Dad said going to church, coming home they knew where to look on this stump because Pop used to leave two bob on there Two bob was a lot of money and on the Monday opposite the railway station my Dad, Frank Green, Reggie Russell and Bradley Tempe formed a relationship with a young George Coppry, whose parents owned the general store opposite the station. That two bob brought them broken biscuits, lollies. So all the kids that were walking home from the old school and had to walk past the station but they had to eat those lollies and biscuits before they got back on the premises. But that was Pops only contact with his boys – visual, once a week.

My Dad he hated his father. He barred from the house at La Perouse because he believed Pop put him in here [Bomaderry Children’s Home]. It wasn’t until Pop was on his death bed in Berry hospital that Pop’s brothers and sisters said to dad your father didn’t put you there. They were the last few words he spoke to my father before he passed away, Pat, I didn’t put you in the homes that was the Welfare Board’s policy and that’s what they done, you and your two younger brothers. Pop was allowed to our house, the only time he come to our house was when my father was in the city selling all the artefacts that our family had made, but he’d come down with a sugar bag full of tucker for us, but he was never allowed there, while ever Dad was home in La Perouse over the Boomerang shed or making artefacts up the backyard Pop wasn’t allowed.

Recording Time: 25:03 minutes

LS: That’s sad isn’t it?

SS: It was sad but he worked on at the farm at Bundewallah. That’s how he come close. At least he could see them of a Sunday morning it was only visual but my Dad had a hatred for him.
LS: And your Pop worked up there for a long time?

SS: A long time on the farm there, he worked there until he died, worked on the farm until he died.

LS: And that’s why he’s buried in Berry?

SS: Buried in the Berry cemetery. But dad was also angry because he never ever saw his mother, his mother died whilst he was in here [Bomaderry Children’s Home] and he never got her chance to see his mother and that was a real sticking point with my dad.

LS: It’s a very sad overall situation, the whole thing?

SS: Very sad, yeah.

LS: Well, you would have seen a lot of changes, people coming in to the tourist area, things like that. Have you been involved with the upgrade of the Princess highway?

SS: I’ve taken part in all of the discussions from the very start both with the archaeologists and with Ron De Rooy (LS – from the RTA), the community meetings. I’ve been involved right from the start.

LS: And the current proposal, they haven’t finalised it yet, but it still seems to be more or less the same as the one that they had in 1991.

SS: Yeah, I don’t think they are much different. Ron and I went to see people in Toolijooa and all over there and I said well I hope their not like one lady, one land holder when the eastern gas pipeline come through, she pulled a gun on them ordered them off the property.

LS: What are your thought on the bypass, do you think it’s a good thing?

SS: I think it’s a good thing because I think it’s going improve a lot of them black spots. I can talk from experience, Ron and I have taken photographs along that entire line and also walking along their with archaeologists so I’ve had a pretty first hand approach with this Gerringong to Bomaderry upgrade of the Princess Highway.

LS: The road itself, in a number of areas, does need adjusting.

SS: Especially today with these B-Doubles on the road. It’s nearly impossible to pass anyone there or get off the road when these come in your path. It wasn’t so bad years ago with an old table top, not today with these B-Doubles.

LS: I think that’s pretty right, I think that’s a good thing for the future. And what about the future for you, what’s happening to you?

SS: I’ve got my future planned. Well, I retire – would have been three weeks today. Three weeks today I officially retire. My wife and I we are going to hook up the caravan, we’ve got a caravan and we’ve got a 4-wheel drive, were going to go down through the Murray over to Renmark and come back up the coast road. I’m looking forward to next Easter because ever since I’ve been a boy it’s been my ambition to go and watch the Stawell Gift. So next year I’ll be a free man, no ties, (LS – and you’ll have your caravan) I’ll have my caravan, I’ve got everything underway from the information centre for accommodation, so that’s where I’ll be next Easter, I’ll be there to watch the Stawell Gift.
LS: So thing are looking pretty bright from here on?

SS: They are looking bright, a finish that had to happen. I want to get a boat for the fishing but I’ll take the kids and grandkids mainly in the river in the boat because I’m a keen rock hopper. I love fishing off the rocks, and diving. I love diving around the rocks, lobsters, you call them abalone we call them mutton fish. So, whenever you hear Kooris talk about mutton fish you know they’re talking about abalone.

LS: Well, thank you very much for you time.

SS: You’re welcome.

*Recording Finish: 29:30 minutes*
LILY TOOHEY

Interview details

Interviewee: Mrs Lily Toohey (cited as LT in this transcript)
31 Albert Street, BERRY, NSW.

Photograph: Mrs Lily Toohey in her home at 31 Albert Street, Berry, NSW, 19 August 2008.

Interviewer: Dr Lindsay Smith (cited as LS in this transcript)
Navin Officer Heritage Consultants Pty Ltd
4/17 Leichhardt Street, KINGSTON, ACT.

Time of Interview: 9:30 am

Date of Interview: Tuesday, 19 August 2008.

Place of Interview: 31 Albert Street, BERRY, NSW.


Subject of Recording: Local history of Berry and dairy industry.

Also Present: ---
Can you tell me your full name and when and where you were born?

I'm Lily Toohey, and my maiden name is Humble. I was born in a coal mining town called Weston, near Kurri up near Cessnock, on the first of November 1914.

Where were your parents born?

My father was born in the north of England, he was a Geordie, he was born in Northumberland, and my mother was born at Merryweather up near Newcastle.

What's a Geordie?

A Geordie is someone who is born in Northumberland, right up near the border with Scotland, and they were tired Scotsmen because after the Scottish wars with England some of them were too tired to go back home to Scotland so they stopped in England and that's what they called them, Geordies, Georgies, after King George.

And you were married?

Yes, I was married at Nowra.

When did you get married?

In May 1936. I came to Berry in 1934 and I was married in 1936 at Nowra.

What was your husband's name?

It was William (Bill) Joseph Toohey.

And had he been in this area for a long time?

He came to this area when he was six years old, and that would have been about 1918, because he was born in 1912 at Cobar.

Do you have any children or grandchildren?

I do. I have three children – one son, Bill, is 69 and another son, Tom, is 66, and John, who is 63.

And do they have children?

Yes. I have six grandchildren – five grandsons and one granddaughter.

Do they live around here?

Oh, they're scattered about – you have to go to get work. And I have eight great grandchildren and number nine will be due around November (2008), and I never see them because they are all over the place.
LS: So you’ve lived in Berry since you moved here?

LT: I came here in 1934.

LS: Where were you living before that?

LT: I was living at a place called Jerrys Plains between Singleton and Muswellbrook.

LS: Why did you come here [to Berry]?

LT: I came here with my family, who all moved here. My father was a herd master, to put it in a better way, he was a sharefarmer.

LS: And he bought some property down here?

Recording Time: 04:56 minutes

LT: No. Well the whole family all worked together and he used to take the owner’s cattle to the Sydney show in those days on the train and he was offered a job as a herd master, which is an English occupation, by a Mr George Birdsell to come to Berry and take over his herd of cattle here. Mr Birdsell was going on the English name, otherwise a herd master was a dairy farmer who looked after the property and the cattle, and his family were part of the bargain. And so we came here. We left Sydney on the new train that was coming from Sydney to Bombaderry, and we used to call it the green train, because it had green carriages. You could have a cup of tea on the train and you could have your dinner on the train coming down from Sydney. It was a faster train than they’d ever had and we left Sydney, we had early breakfast because we had to be there early for the train, and we had this beautiful trip right down the coast.

LS: How long did it take?

LT: About three hours – it was quick. And Mr Birdsell’s son met us at Berry station to take us out to his property. That property is now owned by Mr McIntosh.

I’ve got to jump back a little bit. My husband and his father were (already) working there. His father came from way out near Cobar, he was a contractor for fencing, clearing and he was a great woodsman when he was in Tasmania and a timber man.

Excuse me going back a bit further. Now this is my husband’s father. His story was, Mr Birdsell was a tannery man, and he owned a big tannery in Mascot [Sydney] and he bought that property out there near the David Berry Hospital [‘Woodside Park’]. It was a neglected property and had a terrible lot of timber on it. He had the contract to clean it. The main house there was built in the early 1920s for the Birdsell family and Bill’s (my husband’s) father cut all the timber for the shingles, the house had a shingle roof – and I can even show you the farm where he got the timber from – and so when he cut the trees down and he cut all the shingles to put on the house and when the work was done, Mr Birdsell’s wife said she’d like another lot of shingles cut in case of any accidents that they had to replace them – so there was another lot of shingles to be cut.

Recording Time: 10:03 minutes

LS: Well, that would have kept him employed for a while?

LT: It did.
LS: So you moved there and your husband was working there with his father?

LT: Yes. By this time it was a Jersey stud and he [Mr Birdsell] had imported quite a few of the Jersey cattle from the Jersey Island – they came out on the boat of course. We had been working with the English shorthorn cattle in Singleton, now if I say Singleton it just means Jerrys Plains, and so I had to take over raising the young stock.

LS: Which you used to do in Singleton?

LT: Yes. I did that in Singleton and I did it here. There was my mother and father, my brother and I were the workers because I had two young sisters who didn’t work on the property; they were at school, they were going to school. They used to walk from the hospital right the way round to the school up here to go to school, and walk home.

LS: That’s a fair way?

LT: The kids walked always. So, I lived out there on the farm [at ‘Woodside Park’]. At first, up above the bails, there was another little cottage and we lived in that one, we were the workers, and it was the house down near the gate – it’s still there, and then the person moved out of that house and we moved down to that house.

LS: Was that a better house, a bigger house?

LT: Yes, it was a bigger house than the one we were in. Well, I worked there and Bill and his father and we got to know each other and we eventually married in May 1936.

LS: And where did you move to then?

LT: It was called Pulmans Lane, the original Berry, and we lived in that house for 19 years. That was my first home after I was married.

LS: Were there many houses there at the time, in Pulman Street?

LT: We were the only one on that side.

LS: Which side was that?

LT: On the opposite side of the road to Wilson’s store [that is, the east side of Pulman Street], right the way down near the gate but my husband said and his father said they did not remember the big house [Wilson’s store] being either a store or a hospital. It was a residence when they first came here. But Bill used to notice the boys down on the creek near the river where the creeks meet. You’ve heard of the ‘Crooked S’?

LS: Yes, I have.

LT: Well, the boats, the floats, used to bring the goods from the Wharf Bridge to the wharf there, right down there, and a Mr Pulman he owned, that’s why it was Pulmans Lane, Mr Pulman had his horse-drawn lories, he used to pick up the goods to bring them up into the new town of Berry to the shops there. They came up there in the floats or barges – they were unloaded at the wharf and sent up there.

Recording Time: 15:10 minutes
LS: What do you remember about Berry itself at the time?

LT: Well I found Berry just a bigger place than we had lived in. They had electricity at that time, in the 1930s; my husband remembered the switching on of the electric lights in Berry. But all this is gone because he’s gone too. There was a chap who refused, he didn’t want the electric lights in Berry, he didn’t want them in the streets and if he wanted to go to post a letter he’d do it at night and he’d go with his hurricane lamp, Bill said, and I can show you where he lived, he used go with his hurricane lamp lit up to go to the post office.

LS: At night?

LT: At night.

LS: Why didn’t he go in the day time?

LT: He was telling them what he thought of the electric lights in the street.

LS: Oh, I see. While we’re talking about Bill, when did he die?

LT: Bill died four years ago this November. Yes, he died on my ninetieth birthday.

LS: What sort of work were you doing when you got married? Bill was presumably still working on the farm.

LT: Yes, Bill was with his father. He was clearing and they were farming and all that. But he didn’t farm but he worked for the dairy people and I used to milk cows and rear calves and clean up and I was getting eight shillings and sixpence a week and keep myself.

LS: That’s pretty good. And what happened with the milk? Was it picked up regularly, like every day?

LT: The milk had to go into cans, in the milk cans, they were 10 gallons, I’m going back in time, they were 10 gallon cans, and they were taken on a slide down to the gate, to the road, for a horse and cart to pick them up to bring them in to the Berry factory.

LS: What were the roads like then?

LT: Oh, just ordinary dirt roads with a bit of gravel on them or whatever.

LS: I guess you’ve seen a bit of change in the way the milk was picked up transported?

LT: Well, it was all hand milking and the cans used to go down and we were there a little bit before the chap who came around with his horse and cart. We had to leave them on a little platform and you’d back the cart in and slid them off onto the platform, and when the chappie came along he’d back his cart in and slide the cans onto the cart.

LS: And the Berry milk depot closed down after a while didn’t it?

LT: It was a butter factory then and the milk was taken there to be treated and we used to send cream and we were asked if we could send so much cream and so much milk. They made butter and the local milko used to get his milk at the farm across here, Miller’s farm, and then deliver it around the town – that was our town milk.

Recording Time: 20:12 minutes
LS: And where did you do your other shopping?

LT: There was Chegwidden’s store, and there’s a story about Mr Chegwidden, which I’ll begin shortly. Mr Chegwidden’s store, there was Reynolds – they had a grocery and what not and that. Chegwiddens lot sold anything or everything, Reynolds was a smaller way but they sold everything. You could go there and buy your shoes, your dress, and material at both places. [LS: General goods] It was really general. Logans – he sold groceries and anything for the farm, seed in bulk and produce. Now his store is still there or his building, Jamisons were the only bakers when we came. Waddell’s paper shop was there – my husband was related to the Waddelles on his mother’s side. There were two pubs; there was the bottom pub and the top pub. There was a Commercial bank and I think there was a New Zealand bank, that’s where the museum is, and at the post office was another bank – you could bank at the post office.

LS: Were there many houses in the town at that time?

LT: Yes, there were quite a few houses in the town and all the farmers were all around the place. We had a garage, which was later Bert’s garage. We had two schools – there was the public school and the Catholic school. And I can’t say this for sure but Mr Berry, when the new town was subdivided he gave to the four Christian churches a corner of the town, and each of the churches has its own corner. The Presbyterian Church is on the highest point in Berry, and the original building is still up there, the Catholic Church is over here, the Church of England is down that end and that was a corner of the town then, and the Uniting Church is straight down this street down here. And he gave the land, quite a bit of ground, to each Christian church and he also built the Catholic Church out here at Meroo Meadow and there was another one out … it’ll come.

LS: This was David Berry?

LT: Yes, David Berry – that’s the original Mr Berry.

Recording Time: 25:00 minutes

LS: Although his father was Alexander Berry, who came here first and then David came.

LT: Yes, but I’m not too sure about that bit. Well, that was the four corners.

LS: And when you were living out on the farm did you grow your own vegetables?

LT: Yes, we had our milk and we didn’t have our butter – we bought butter. We could grow our own vegetables and we had our own chooks and all that sort of thing – it was a general farm.

LS: How long were you out there for?

LT: I was there in 1934 and left in 1936, I wasn’t out there for long?

LS: Oh, only a couple of years?

LT: Yes. Then I came into Berry to live.

LS: You and your husband?

LT: Yes.
LS: And where were you living in Berry – in this place?

LT: No. Just over in Pulman Street. We build this home in, we’ve been in this house over 50 years, since the late 1940s or early 1950s, and I have in there the original deeds when this was subdivided.

LS: When the area of Berry was subdivided?

LT: No, when this property was subdivided from the street just up here right down to Albany Street and the next street.

LS: And that was one block?

LT: That was the ti-tree swamp but it had the tall trees in it. A Mr Stewart owned it. He was an auctioneer and the Stewart family lived up on the hill, and he passed away and this land was his land, and he was an auctioneer and he had his auctioneer room down on the corner. I’m talking about when I came here, where he had his saleyards. When you’ve got to bring cattle and horses in to be sold all this place was used for cattle and horses and if you bought cattle and horses you brought them here. So, after Mr Stewart died this property was then put on the market and a Mr Campbell in Gerringong bought it, and a friend [Jim] said to Bill, ‘You’ve been looking to buy a block of ground’, so they both went to see Mr Campbell in Gerringong and they said what they were after and he said ‘I haven’t subdivided it yet’. So he said to Bill, ‘are you looking for a block of ground too?’ ‘Oh yes’, Jim said, ‘Bill wants one too’. He said, ‘it’s not subdivided but what were you thinking about?’ And Jim said, ‘Oh, I don’t know things like that’ and he said to Bill, ‘what would you like?’ And Bill said, ‘Well, I would like a 64 foot frontage.’ Now that was normal then for a house. And he [Mr Campbell] said, ‘Oh, OK’, he says, ‘you can have it and you’ve got a 64 foot frontage.’ Bill said, ‘Yep’. And what about you Jim? ‘Oh’ he says, ‘I’ll follow Bill.’ So that’s how it came, that’s how I was taught, and all these other ones are smaller [than this place], which goes right the way back. We paid £75 for this block of ground, and how it happened is that when Bill first started work, when he left school, he was talked into an insurance policy that would mature. Now that policy matured just before we were told about Mr Campbell owning this ground and we got it at £75. Bill had just got £100 from his insurance and we were rich. So we paid cash for the block of land - £75. Then we were rearing three kids and then we had to start saving up and saving up and paying rates.

Recording Time: 32:09 minutes

LS: Did you build the house shortly after?

LT: This house was built by my husband. His brother was the builder and he put his name down as the builder for the house but he helped Bill put the frame up and Bill and his wife and his kids done the rest.

LS: Since you’ve been in Berry have there been any big floods?

LT: Oh yes. Now put your mind back to the hospital, and now come to McIntoshes and to the roads up here and right down there. Now the ‘Crooked S’ as we call it serviced that road, I’ve seen that full of water up to the road to that paddock. From the creek right across.

LS: Did it affect you here at all?

LT: No, that was over there. You get a flood here and when the tide comes in, it comes up a bit further.
LS: And what year was that?

LT: Well that happened when we were there, and we were there in the '30s. And I've seen it since.

LS: In the '60s?

LT: Round about. It came along the hospital bridge and then it came further up. And I've seen big droughts here too. When Tom, my second baby, he was only a baby, we had a big drought and the creek that Berry's water supply for the whole of the town and we had to lift a boat up to the bridge, at the hospital bridge – this bridge up here, the new one [Broughton Creek Bridge] – when the old one was there and that was a big cement block and the pump was on this block that pumped the water out of the creek into the mains and we had this big drought.

Recording Time: 35:19 minutes

LS: And about what year was that?

LT: About, Tom was a baby and he's 66. So in the '50s ['40s]. And the water was like mud coming through, and you had to be careful a bit with washing actually, and he [Tom] joined the army – he had khaki nappies, so the kids reckoned that Tom joined the army, because of what he wore.

LS: And what did you and your husband do once you moved into here, what sort of work did he do?

LT: He was working at the milk factory. He was actually an engineer. There used to be a fellah from the council, Berry had their own council, every morning he went out and he'd dig a gutter from the hole of water there to run the water into that hole so that the pump could pump that water, and he kept going up and up and up the creek, running water through from hole to hole.

LS: To get enough water to pump through?

LT: Yes. But most of it was mud. Now the factory they needed clean water because they made butter as well, and they put a bore down and it was beautiful water.

LS: Could you drink that water?

LT: Yes. It was as though somebody had made it.

LS: Where was the bore?

LT: It's out the back there. It should still be there. And I'll tell you a bit more about the bore. The fellah who lived near us, he had a dairy farm, and he used to bring me home a 10 gallon can of water because they had the children, it was clear water. Now before that bore was put down, you know about the old hall down in Pulman Street?

LS: No, what about the old hall?

LT: The hall. Well, I'll come back to that. Well that hall is where the Bowling Club started – the bowls – well they wanted their own club. They bought the land where the CWA is at the moment, and a chappie, Mr Jorgensen, he used to have a bullock team, and he went there and he brought that hall over to where the CWA is now.
LS: And where did he take it from?

LT: Up in Pulman Street. He took it over there and the bowlers made that their club house and they needed water. So that bore was put down at the factory, they then got the same fellah to come and put a bore down for them, and they had the two bowling fields there and they got good water. And the Presbyterian Church, they built that church when we first came to Berry. Now there was another ground between the two – between the church and the Bowling Club – so the Bowling Club, when the CWA bought that I was President at the time and the bit between the church bought this other field and that’s where the bore was, and the bore is still there.

*Recording Time: 40:40 minutes*

LS: It not being used though?

LT: I doubt it. Now when that bore was put down the fellah who had the contract, he said that Berry was on a floating lake down there. He said Berry floats on the lake of good water.

LS: Well it must have been good water if the milk factory used it.

LT: Yes, and I believe that whoever looks after the Presbyterian Church business had it sealed off – the bore.

LS: They probably didn’t need to use it.

LT: No.

LS: And looking a bit further afield, what are your recollections about Bomaderry, for instance? Was that a very big place at the time?

LT: Nobody wanted to live at Bomaderry. You know it was that sort of, “Who want’s to live there?” But it grew, it grew, it grew.

LS: Yes, it grew as part of Nowra really.

LT: Now, we call it Rutledge’s house on the corner, then there’s another house beside that.

LS: This is in Bomaderry?

LT: No, I’m sorry, I’m jumping – that’s here, that’s where the hall came from. Well there’s Rutledge’s house and then there’s another house, an old home, then that used to be a big long paddock there – a big block we used to call the paddock, and then you found two really old homes – one was the doctor’s home and one was the saddler’s home. Well that big block of land there that’s where the old hall used to be and there’s houses there now.

LS: Did it become the CWA hall – the one that was moved down?

LT: That’s the CWA rooms, and that’s where that came from.
LS: During your time here in Berry have you ever seen any Aboriginal people or places, or any people who worked around here?

LT: Yes. Where the ground goes down towards the railway station there was an old shed down there and the Aboriginals used to come from further down to pick peas and beans and all that sort of thing.

LS: This is during the wartime?

LT: This is during anytime. Even when I had little babies and Bill's 69 now and they were coming there then to pick peas and beans, and all that top where those houses are now on Pulman Street Mr Watson grew all peas and beans there in season and he used to hire these Aboriginals to come and pick his peas and beans and that was on that side [the east side] and we were the only house on that side.

LS: And they'd come once a year?

LT: Yes, when the peas and beans were ready. And they used to camp down in the block down in the old shed.

LS: Near where the Bowling Club is?

LT: No, closer to Pulman Street and down there was shed and they used to live in there, in the old shed.

Recording Time: 45:11 minutes

LS: And where did they come from, do you know?

LT: They came from further down, Jervis Bay and those places.

LS: Do you know, speaking of the Aboriginal people, do you know of any of their other camping places or living places around here?

LT: Well, they used to live there and they used to come up to our place for water.

LS: Up to Pulman Street?

LT: They used to come up to the house [Woodside Park]. They were down below us and they used to walk up and get the water – I could describe it better if I was there. Year after year, my kids seen them there, our kids grew up and seen them there and I got to know them pretty well and I never, we never once had problems with them. They were people that came to work.

LS: Yes, just like any other workers.

LT: Well, we got to know them pretty well. Now, just a few years ago, one of my carers for home care, a young Aboriginal girl she's not like you and me but the dark's been bred out, and she started talking about Berry and that and I said, 'I used to live over there in Pulman Street', and she said, 'Did you'. And I said the names of different Aboriginals I knew. 'You know who you're talking about?', and I said, 'No.' – 'You're talking about my great grandmother.' I'd just be blowed when she said that – Adelaide Bloxsome, and she was a well-built lady and …
LS: What was her name?

LT: Adelaide Bloxsome. Nowra is full of Bloxsomes. So, ‘you’re talking about my great grandmother’, and she said, ‘Please don’t call me an Aboriginal, I’m a Koori.’ But she’s a lovely lady, and then I started talking about other pickers, they were all pickers, and she knew them she said.

LS: So there descendants must still be around in Nowra.

LT: And she said, when we were kids and the peas and beans were finished here, we used to go out and pick fruit, to all the places where the fruit orchards were and pick fruit.

LS: Out west?

LT: Yes, out Griffith and those places.

LS: So they had a fairly travelling life?

LT: Yes, and it was interesting to talk to her.

LS: Yes, it would have been.

LT: We’re not friends but we get on very well together, and she likes to talk about when her great grandma used to do this and uncle so-and-so was …

LS: What is her name?

LT: Cathy, but we don’t know their surnames. We’re not supposed to know where they live or anything but her name’s Cathy, and she’s got a twin sister. But she did tell me she done all her schooling out at Shoalhaven Heads.

LS: So she would be a local girl?

LT: Yes.

LS: OK, well thanks for that. Just while we are talking broader afield, you were saying that people didn’t want to live in Bomaderry because it probably wasn’t that developed …

LT: There’s a lot of Aboriginals there, a fair few of them, and there was the Aboriginal Home there and for some reason or other, but we always got on with them and they lived next door.

Recording Time: 49:56 minutes

LS: Well, why not? And other areas like Gerringong, what was that like when you were growing up here – was it very big?

LT: Gerringong.

LS: Did you go there much?

LT: Yes. My husband’s sister lived in Gerringong. We used to go up there, yes. It had a butter factory. It was about the size of Berry.
LS: And I guess agriculture and dairying …

LT: It was all agriculture and dairying. Now I think it’s all wine grapes and I think Berry is getting that way too.

LS: And what was the transportation like in those days when you went up to Gerringong or you went down to Bomaderry, how did you travel?

LT: We travelled on the train.

LS: You didn’t take the road very much?

LT: No, we didn’t have a car. We used to walk to the railway station. We used to go up to Pulman Street right the way round to the station. We didn’t walk along the railway line but a lot of people did and we had kids so then we’d get off the train at Gerringong. My husband’s sister lived near the Butter Factory.

LS: So it was handy taking the train and you didn’t have to worry about having a car.

LT: No, we’d just go to the train and the kids liked to travel on the train.

LS: And you would have seen a lot of progress or upgrading of the various roads around here?

LT: Yes. A lot of it. You know that at the bridge there were always accidents?

LS: Yes.

LT: My husband worked on that.

LS: Oh, did he? On the new one [Broughton Creek Bridge]?

LT: Before we were married – that’s the new bridge. He worked on that particular bridge because the road came down and it didn’t go over the creek then, it went around and back onto the main road. And he worked on the bridge when they built the bridge there – he was one of the people that worked there.

LS: When would that have been?

LT: That would have been in the 1930s.

LS: And since then they’ve come along and upgraded that bridge?

LT: Yes. It’s been a bad bridge for accidents.

LS: So you’ve seen the proposals for various upgrades over the years for the road. What do you think of the latest one?

LT: I’m going to be truthful to you – I haven’t read them. Because as far as I’m concerned they’re going to put it where they want it. Personally, if it could be done to bypass Berry if they came through Gerringong down the Gerroa hill and we call that the ‘Sand Track’ along the back.
LS: Where's that along the back?

LT: It's a road that goes over near the beach and to Shoalhaven Heads, and it's always been known as the sand track. And it's a national park. And that would be the best way and get to the river and build a new bridge.

LS: And that would bypass Berry miles away.

LT: There are roadways into Berry anyway from the sand track. Good roads. And Cleary, the sand track's here and we have a road that comes along here to Berry and he's talking about this Golf Club and glory knows what he's going to build there. Don't know when but there's a lot of talk at the moment. And if they're going to put a Golf Club there they've got to have accommodation, so that would be a good road to come here to Berry.

Recording Time: 55:09 minutes

LS: I don't know whether anybody has taken that sort of option into account.

LT: But they'd have to widen the sand track and they'd have to come through the national park, but then you come further that comes up and you come out at, I'm going to call it Gerry Baileys, that's the only name we ever knew it, that's Shoalhaven Heads.

LS: What was the name you knew it as?

LT: Gerry Bailey – that was the name of it when I came to Berry and my husband always called it Gerry Bailey.

LS: Well, thank you very much for your time.

Recording Time: 55:47 minutes
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Preferred title:
- [ ] Mr
- [ ] Ms
- [ ] Miss
- [x] Mrs
- [ ] Other (please specify)

Name: Helen Chittick

Address: R.M.B. 353 Princes Highway, GERRINGONG, NSW 2534

Signed: [Signature]

Date: 23 September 2008

Interviewer: (please print) Dr Lindsay M. Smith

Company: Navin Officer Heritage Consultants Pty Ltd

Signed: [Signature]

Date of interview: 23 September 2008

Location of interview: R.M.B. 353 Princes Highway, GERRINGONG, NSW 2534
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Preferred title:
- [x] Mr
- [ ] Ms
- [ ] Miss
- [ ] Mrs
- [ ] Other (please specify)

Name:       Bill Jorgenson
Address:    134 Yurunga Street, NORTH NOWRA NSW 2542

Signed:     
Date:       23 September 2008

Interviewer: (please print) Dr Lindsay M. Smith
Company:    Navin Officer Heritage Consultants Pty Ltd

Signed:     
Date of interview: 23 September 2008

Location of interview: 134 Yurunga Street, NORTH NOWRA NSW 2542
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Preferred title:

☐ Mr
☐ Ms
☐ Miss
☒ Mrs
☐ Other (please specify) ________________________________

Name: Mary L. Lidbetter

Address: "Rosebud" 16 King Street, BERRY NSW 2535

Signed: ________________________________

Date: 12 September 2008

Interviewer: (please print) Dr Lindsay M. Smith

Company: Navin Officer Heritage Consultants Pty Ltd

Signed: ________________________________

Date of interview: 12 September 2008

Location of interview: 16 King Street, BERRY NSW 2535
I authorise the NSW Roads and Traffic Authority (RTA) to use all or part of this interview for research, publication, transcription and broadcasting as required, and for copies of the interview and material prepared from such interview to be lodged with State Records Authority for similar use by bona fide researchers, biographers, historians, journalists, broadcasters, etc. subject to any special conditions listed on this form.

Preferred title:

☐ Mr
☒ Ms
☐ Miss
☐ Mrs
☐ Other (please specify) __________________________________________________________

Name: Sally Lindsay

Address: “Constable’s Cottage” A15 Princes Highway BERRY NSW 2535

Signed: ____________________________

Date: 20 August 2008

Interviewer: (please print) Dr Lindsay M. Smith

Company: Navin Officer Heritage Consultants Pty Ltd

Signed: ____________________________

Date of interview: 20 August 2008

Location of interview: “Constable’s Cottage” A15 Princes Highway BERRY NSW 2535
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Preferred title:

☒ Mr
☐ Ms
☐ Miss
☒ Mrs
☐ Other (please specify) ____________________________

Name: ____________________________

☐ Bruce & Nora McIntosh

Address: ____________________________

‘Woodside Park’ 94 Tannery Road, BERRY NSW 2535

Signed: ____________________________

Date: 20 August 2008

Interviewer: (please print) ____________________________

☐ Dr Lindsay M. Smith

Company: ____________________________

☐ Navin Officer Heritage Consultants Pty Ltd

Signed: ____________________________

Date of interview: 20 August 2008

Location of interview: ‘Woodside Park’ 94 Tannery Road, BERRY NSW 2535
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Preferred title:

- [x] Mr
- [ ] Ms
- [ ] Miss
- [ ] Mrs
- [ ] Other (please specify) ____________________________

Name: John & Gus Miller
Address: 117 North Street, BERRY NSW 2535

Signed: ____________________________
Date: 22 August 2008

Interviewer: (please print) Dr Lindsay M. Smith
Company: Navin Officer Heritage Consultants Pty Ltd

Signed: ____________________________
Date of interview: 22 August 2008
Location of interview: 117 North Street, BERRY NSW 2535
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Preferred title:

X Mr
☐ Ms
☐ Miss
☐ Mrs
☐ Other (please specify)

Name: Terry Robinson
Address: 539 Coolangatta Road, FAR MEADOW NSW

Signed:

Date: 19 August 2008

Interviewer: (please print) Dr Lindsay M. Smith
Company: Navin Officer Heritage Consultants Pty Ltd

Signed:

Date of interview: 19 August 2008

Location of interview: 1534 Bolong Road, SHELLHARBOUR HEADS NSW
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Preferred title:
- [x] Mr
- [ ] Ms
- [ ] Miss
- [ ] Mrs
- [ ] Other (please specify) __________________________

Name:  Raymond Berry Rutledge

Address:  1 Pulman Street, BERRY, NSW (Former Wilson's Store)

Signed:  

Date:  25 January 2008

Interviewer:  (please print)  Dr Lindsay M. Smith

Company:  Navin Officer Heritage Consultants Pty Ltd

Signed:  

Date of interview:  25 January 2008

Location of interview:  1 Pulman Street, BERRY, NSW 2535
I authorise the NSW Roads and Traffic Authority (RTA) to use all or part of this interview for research, publication, transcription and broadcasting as required, and for copies of the interview and material prepared from such interview to be lodged with State Records Authority for similar use by bona fide researchers, biographers, historians, journalists, broadcasters, etc. subject to any special conditions listed on this form.

Preferred title:

☒  Mr
☐  Ms
☐  Miss
☒  Mrs
☐  Other (please specify)

Name:  Colin & Margaret Sharpe

Address:  ‘Bryn-y-Mor’ 295 Princes Highway, TOOLJOOA NSW

Signed:  [Signature]

Date:  21 August 2008

Interviewer:  (please print)  Dr Lindsay M. Smith

Company:  Navin Officer Heritage Consultants Pty Ltd

Signed:  [Signature]

Date of interview:  21 August 2008

Location of interview:  ‘Bryn-y-Mor’ 295 Princes Highway, TOOLJOOA NSW
I authorise the NSW Roads and Traffic Authority (RTA) to use all or part of this interview for research, publication, transcription and broadcasting as required, and for copies of the interview and material prepared from such interview to be lodged with State Records Authority for similar use by bona fide researchers, biographers, historians, journalists, broadcasters, etc. subject to any special conditions listed on this form.

Preferred title:
- [X] Mr
- [ ] Ms
- [ ] Miss
- [ ] Mrs
- [ ] Other (please specify) ____________________________

Name:  Henry (Sonny) Simms

Address:  Unit 9B, Filter Road, WEST NOWRA NSW 2541

Signed:  ____________________________

Date:  12 September 2008

Interviewer:  (please print)  Dr Lindsay M. Smith

Company:  Navin Officer Heritage Consultants Pty Ltd

Signed:  ____________________________

Date of interview:  12 September 2008

Location of interview:  Nowra Local Aboriginal Land Council Offices, 59 Beinda Street, BOMADERRY, NSW
I authorise the NSW Roads and Traffic Authority (RTA) to use all or part of this interview for research, publication, transcription and broadcasting as required, and for copies of the interview and material prepared from such interview to be lodged with State Records Authority for similar use by bona fide researchers, biographers, historians, journalists, broadcasters, etc. subject to any special conditions listed on this form.

Preferred title:
- [ ] Mr
- [ ] Ms
- [x] Miss
- [ ] Mrs
- [ ] Other (please specify)

Name: Lily Toohey

Address: 31 Albert Street, BERRY NSW 2535

Signed: Lily Toohey

Date: 19 August 2008

Interviewer: (please print) Dr Lindsay M. Smith

Company: Navin Officer Heritage Consultants Pty Ltd

Signed: [Signature]

Date of interview: 19 August 2008

Location of interview: 31 Albert Street, BERRY NSW 2535