

BUNBURY ORAL HISTORY GROUP



Synopsis of Interview

Interviewee:	Mr Howard Basil Gibbs
Date of Birth:	4 July 1921
Interviewer :	Norm Flynn
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Contents List:

Howard's birth
Family tree
Australind settlers
Farming on the Ferguson
Motor cars
Mail services
Railway line between Wellington Mills & Dardanup
Wellington Mill & township
Going to school
Upper Ferguson school, teachers, students
Christmas tree, Bonfire night

Transport to high school, school buses
Church services on the Ferguson
Old church building, churchyard and burials
Building the new church
Enlistment and war service
Training at Claremont, Belmont & workshop in Wongan Hills
Rail transport of equipment through Kalgoorlie, across Nullabor, Port
Augusta
Ghan train to Alice Springs
Mataranka & Adelaide River camps in Northern Territory
Technical course in Melbourne, and discharge from Army
Death of father
Farming and farm conditions
Marriage & house building attempts
Purchase & removal of house, chimney building
Rationing of fuel, clothing food, & obtaining car fuel, charcoal burner
Growing up through depression and war
Dairy farming and clearing with bulldozers
Expanding of farm property for self and sons
Father's bridge building for road board
Water supply to house
Mother's bread baking and household duties
Milking methods and pig breeding
Change from separating milk to whole milk for cheese
Super-phosphate spreading
Vegetables and fruit; potato growing and selling
New car, vehicles
Dances and balls in the Ferguson hall
Cricket and hockey on the Ferguson
Playing as children, entertainment as adults
Buying a bicycle and bicycle riding
Saturday pictures in Bunbury, travelling by truck
Dances and music, balls and suppers
Hall description and methods of lighting

Gramophones, radios and electricity connection
Ploughing
Aborigines and Italians
Red Cross

SYNOPSIS

Interview with Mr Howard Gibbs at his residence, Ratcliffe Road, Upper Ferguson, 27 December 1994.

Full name Howard Basil Gibbs known as Nugget or Nugg. Born 4 July 1921 in Bunbury, probably at a midwife's residence or nursing home, at Zoe Street. Thought that no doctor was involved at the birth. Weighed 10 pounds. Bunbury was 1 ½ - 2 hour drive in a horse and sulky and he thinks his mother probably went from Ferguson a few days prior to the birth.

Father was Herbert Cleveland Gibbs, eldest son of Samuel and Lavinia Gibbs. Samuel Gibbs grew up on the Ferguson. Owen Gardiner was an early Gardiner to settle at Ferguson and his parents adjoined Howard's present property and he married Emma Gibbs who was Howard's grandfather's sister. Sam and Emma were the children of James Dagley Gibbs who married Charlotte Narroway. Sam was the youngest of the first family. James arrived at Australind on the second trip of the *Trusty* in 1844. (His father was Robert Gibbs and mother was Jane Dagley.)

They had a family of seven and Emma, the eldest, married Owen Gardiner and came to live on the Ferguson. The youngest was Sam. Howard thinks Sam was born in Bunbury and Charlotte died two years after his birth possibly during the birth of a child next in line to Sam. Soon after Charlotte's death James married again and Emma was not happy with the way Sam was being treated by new stepmother so she brought him out to the Ferguson and raised him with her family. That's how the Gibbs first came to arrive at Ferguson.

When Sam was young man about 20 he took up the property adjoining Qwen and Emma Gardiner - location 661 and the Gardiner block which was alongside was 197. Sam Gibbs married Lavinia Hurst and her grandparents Abraham and Anna Hurst were from Leister in U.K. and arrived in the *Diadem* in April 1842 with the original Australind settlers.

On both sides of his grandparents Howard can trace a line back to the Australind settlers.

James Dagley Gibbs' second marriage produced 9 children. Second wife was Alice Maria Parkes. One of her daughters Amelia (Auntie Millie) married John Fowler who also lived on the Ferguson. She married into the old Fowler family just down the road from Howard's.

Sam's brother John and Hal (Harold) were prominent builders in Bunbury - J & H Gibbs, partnership. One of the buildings was the Congregational Church which was demolished about 30 years ago, which was a sore point with the family. There are probably no other buildings left now that they built.

Charlotte Gibbs (nee Narroway) is buried in the Australind cemetery with one of her young daughters.

Sam & Lavinia's family: Herbert (eldest), Basil, Minnie, Genesta (known as Nesta), Evangeline (known as Van), Harold, Ivy, Rhoda, Clarence.

Basil: was killed in France in 1916, that's how Harold obtained his second Christian name. Lavinia's father's name had been Basil too.

Herbert: was born either in Bunbury or at the Ferguson because his Aunt Emma was then grown up and she was the local midwife. She did a lot of work around the Ferguson.

Sam took up 100 acre block which Howard is now living on. The block was handed down to Herbert then Howard. Sam also took up two blocks over the road which are now owned by cousin Tom Gibbs. They were left by Sam when he died, to Harold Gibbs who had two 100 acre blocks and when he died, he left them to his nephew Tom.

Sam also had land in Donnybrook shire SE of Ferguson which was 200 acres out of Paddy's brook, it was completely unimproved. Herbert was born 16.3.1887.

Farmers supplemented their income with timber work, particularly Howard's family who did a lot of work in the timber industry They went out and cut beams in the bush and possibly sleepers too. Howard took the farm over in 1947 and it was only half cleared and he completed the clearing. They used to grow a lot of oats which were cut into chaff. This was around the time Millers built the big mill at Wellington and a lot of the produce went up there. The chaff was feed for the horse teams hauling the timber.

They had a lot of fruit trees and some of these can still be seen. Near the house there was an acre or two and there was quite a lot of orchard across the road. They used to all have a few cows. In the early days they didn't have separators They milked the cows and set the milk in pans and after it cooled and the cream settled on the top they skimmed the top with a skimmer until the days of the separators and he couldn't be sure when they arrived. Butter was made on the farms and measured out into pound and half pound blocks, wrapped in paper and sold in Bunbury. In his mother's day he could remember butter being salted and stored in earthenware jars and kept for months. It wasn't very palatable but it was better than nothing.

For other sources of income they worked for their neighbours.

Howard's grandfather Sam left Ferguson in 1923 when Howard was about two years old and he bought Hurst's place on the Australind side of the Collie Bridge where Howard spent a lot of happy days with his grandparents.

Sam had retired there. He left his farm to his sons Herbert and Harold Gibbs. Herbert was married in 1915 and the 100 acre block was split into two fifty acre blocks and one was transferred to Herbert around the time of his marriage.

Herbert married Mary Flynn, she was the daughter of Michael Flynn who was married to Letitia Maslin. Michael Flynn's farming property adjoined Herbert Gibb's property. Flynn had various properties over the years too.

Herbert's family comprised:

-Arnold Cleve Gibbs, born 26.5.1916 who married Jenny Rickson daughter of the local baker in Dardanup. Arnold had a trucking business and also a farm at Ferguson. The farm was sold about 1969. He had six daughters.

-Audrey, known as Beryl, born 24.10.1917. She died at the age of 33 with young family. This was a great blow to the family. She was married to Fisher Muller and Fisher moved down to live with Howard's mother who helped raise the three children who were John, Wayne and Keith.

-Mavis, born 28.3.1923. In 1945 married Jack Hardistry, they had two children, Dianne and Alan. Unfortunately Jack died at the age of 40. He was a returned serviceman from World War II and served in the Second 16th at Kokoda Trail and was wounded. He died of a tumour on the brain. Mavis married again, two or three years later, Percy Williams of Bunbury. Had another daughter Helen who was born several months after Percy's death. Mavis was not aware she was pregnant at the time of her second husband's death.

-Howard, born 4 July 1921, married Dorrie McSwain and family comprises: Ruth married to Donald Haynes (about 1969), they have three children. Bruce, unmarried, has farm adjoining Howard – 270 acres bought off Sam Gardiner and 110 acres of Michael Flynn's old property made over to him by Howard. Greg, married to Lindy Gibbs. Greg is farming property next to Howard and they have 3 children.

Howard's first recollection of going to Bunbury was in the horse and sulky. Vaguely remembers pulling into the horse trough at the rear of the Ferguson hall. He remembers that you could count on one hand the number of cars in the district. Flynns (Mark or Charlie) had one, and old Studebaker, Fowlers had one which was a Talbot and Mr Kerr had a Dodge 4. There may have been 2 or 3 up at Wellington Mills. Roads were nothing more than cart tracks – it was gravel from Picton to Dardanup and up to the Ferguson. Herbert Gibbs bought his first car in 1926, was a T model Ford. The salesman was Ben Wrestell. Can't remember the company he worked for.

About that time several others were starting to get cars. There was no regular transport to Dardanup except the mail. The mail was run by horse drawn vehicle up to about that time. His Aunts delivered the mail during the war. His father had the mail run up till about 1923. He was a contractor for the Postmaster General.

He used to carry a few other items but the horse drawn sulky did not have much room. The round did not include Wellington Mills as the train was running then and would have carried the mail. Herbert Gibb's cash book which Howard has, shows that he received about five pounds (\$10) per month to do the mail twice a week.

Mail line

Railway line to Wellington Mills was owned by Millars Timber and Trading Co. They built 3'6" gauge line for a distance of 13 miles for their own use but the Government provided rolling stock for timber carting. A Railway reserve was surveyed and belonged to the company. An arrangement was made where the company carried produce for people along the line. Line was there till after Second World War. The line crossed the road between the Ferguson River and what was called the nine-mile (9 miles from Dardanup) where the Wellington Mills road branches off the Upper Ferguson Road – a mile and a half down from Howard's. The property there has belonged to the Kerr family for four generations.

Tram Lines

The Company had other lines into the bush they called tram lines. Horses would snig logs to landings and they would then be taken by train to the mill. The lines would be shifted as the timber was cut out. The lines were run up the gullies and it was hazardous for drivers coming down loaded, as rail trucks had individual brakes which had to be manually applied and then later released. Howard never heard of any tragedies like the *Jubilee* disaster at Mornington but men were killed in the milling operations.

Wellington Mills

Was one of the biggest timber mills in W.A. and was quite a township. Had a school, hospital, hall, doctor and billiard room. He couldn't recall there being a

hotel and he though drink was brought up from Dardanup. There was a lot of four-roomed houses for married quarters, and a row of one-room cabins for single men's quarters. Had hundreds of employees – in the saw mill, the fallers, train drivers, men looking after horses, blacksmiths, farriers,

Record load

He heard it said that the biggest day was 100 loads of timber which he thinks was 50 cubic feet. Beautiful timber was being cut not like what is being cut today. They cut a good many mile radius of Worsley.

Attending School

Walked there and back the three miles to school from home. Started at age of six and half. Fred Parkin rode a horse but everyone else walked. For his last year of school Howard had a bicycle and rode that. The property where the school was situated now belongs to Howard's niece and her husband, the Piggots. School was established in 1893 just in time for Howard's father to start school as he was born in 1887. Prior to that children of families like Emma and Owen Gardiner didn't get any schooling. Sam Gibbs never went to school. A centenary celebration was held in January 1993. When Howard attended the school the number of students averaged 20/25. Prior to that there must have been more because there were two school rooms being used.

Teachers

Those recalled were Mrs Murdock; Fred Connelly – a World War I veteran who had a withered right arm from a bullet wound and because of being gassed in the war, did not enjoy good health; next one was Stanley Tonkin, brother of John Tonkin a State Premier who was also a teacher; for his last

year he had an Englishman Laurie Lambert – a man who is still alive and is agreed 86 who was visited by Howard a year or two ago, Ivy Gibbs had been a monitor at the school then went to the training college during the war.

School Grades

In Howard's time it was a one-teacher school from infants grade to sixth standard. Teacher had his/her hands full A woman came to teach the girls sewing. One of these women was Mrs Ella Gardiner who later married a teacher by the name of Lambert (no connection to Laurie Lambert). She now lives in Elanora Villas in Bunbury.

School Clothes

Howard attended bare-footed except for his last school year. During the depression "we were not too proud to wear a patch or two on our pants. We were always clean and tidy." Took cut lunch In very wet weather his father took his children and neighbours to and from school. He didn't like the idea of them being in school in wet clothing.

Holidays

They had six weeks at Christmas and a week in May and August.

Free Ed & Sports

Education was free. Books were supplied by the Education Dept and there weren't any organised trips they have today. No organised sport. Never competed against other schools except one year in 1929, the State's Centenary, when a big celebration was held on the recreation ground in Dardanup where the Hall now stands. They competed against Wellington Mills, Waterloo, Dardanup and Paradise. Recalled winning sack race later, at Paradise and collecting prize of two shillings. Had occasional Christmas picnic. Taken into beach at Bunbury or at Collie Bridge.

- Other events** Christmas tree was an annual event with a sit-down meal. Always enjoyable function and it is still held. Guy Fawkes bonfire night was not organised by the school but was a community function. His father would buy 3/- or 4/- (thirty or forty cents) worth of fire crackers. This function eventually ceased because of fire risks.
- Students recalled** Howard's age – Alan Gardiner, Fred Ratcliffe, Dulcie Grover, Dorothy Gardiner and Marjorie Gardiner. Those older: His brother and sisters – Arnold, Beryl and Mavis Gibbs, George , Joe, Bess Ratcliffe, Doug, Phil and Doreen Hartnett, Ray & Ernie Stevens, Shirley & Daphne Grover, Linda and Hazel Flynn, Dorothy, Eric and Ian (known as Dick), Betty & Stric. (Strickland) Gardiner, Enid and Norma Fowler.
- Leaving School & Correspondence Courses:** After school at Ferguson most students were nearly fourteen and due to leave school. Some took correspondence classes but they were not satisfactory and though supervised by the Ferguson teacher, Howard was allowed to give them up which pleased him. That was the end of his formal education.
- High School** Later some Ferguson students went on to high school in Bunbury. After Second World War some students boarded in Bunbury and went to school there.
- School Bus** Fisher Muller had two high-school aged children and drove them to Dardanup to catch Dick Martin's bus which then travelled from Donnybrook to Bunbury. Fisher picked them up again in the afternoon This was originally funded by local parents and eventually the Education Dept provided a subsidy. Howard's brother Arnold bought an International panel van which when fitted with

seats could carry 8/10 He did this until the Dept wholly funded a school bus. From then the district has had a high school bus. School bus subsidies applied when Howard's own children attended school.

Central Primary School: Was built in Dardanup to take students from Ferguson, Wellington Mills and Waterloo. Howard's grandchildren now attend school at Dardanup & Ryan attends high school.

Ferguson Church: Howard thinks it was first built about 1879 on the land donated by Ephram Gardiner. John Gardiner owns the surrounding property now. It was first called a mission church and open to any denomination but with Anglicans and Congregationalists the most active. It was a community church. When he was young the Anglicans had a service on 1st and 3rd Sunday and Congregationalists on 2nd and 4th Sundays or vice versa. Each group attended the other's services. It was a social event. After the service the adults would stand under the trees outside and talk for an hour or two. They exchanged news and enjoyed the fellowship. About 20 or 30 would attend.

The building: In April 1950 a bush fire destroyed the church. The old church was made from bricks made from clay found close by with inside and outside rendered. The church had an adjoining graveyard which may have even been in use before the first church was built. There are still occasional burials here. Most of the district's pioneers are buried here. Now most funerals are held in Bunbury at the lawn cemetery or crematorium. He does not think that any Roman Catholics were buried in Ferguson but is not sure about a recent Dutch family's religion.

Catholics: Catholics attended their church in Dardanup which also has an adjoining cemetery. Henry Flynn of the Ferguson attended the Ferguson church with John & Jane Flynn and family and on other occasions attended Dardanup with his daughter Mary Slattery and her family.

New Ferguson Church: Howard was actively involved in building the new church which took from 1950 to 1954 to raise sufficient funds. It was done by community effort. Victor Gardiner and his wife provided timber which volunteers carted to Fisher Muller's mill where it was sawn. Fisher arranged with the Forestry Dept to get Sheoak logs from where the TV Station is now. These were cut for the building of the pews which was carried out by Bunbury cabinet maker Jack Inglis. The contractor who built the church was J. G. Hough & Son. The manager was Percy Hough. The pews were individually financed and have names on them of the families who donated funds. The pulpit and altar were donated by different families. Unfortunately due to vandalism and stealing of items the church now has to be locked. The church has been a memorial to Douglas Gardiner who was killed in the first war. It is thought that a tablet for Basil Gibbs was destroyed in the bush fire. There are many name plates there which would be of interest to anyone who have had family in the district. The Congregationalists amalgamated with the Wesleyians and became the Uniting Church and there are only one or two families left in the district so there hasn't been a Uniting Church service for a long time. Anglicans still hold one service a month. Carols by Candlelight was held to a full church just before Christmas.

Howard's War Service: He turned 18 in 1939 just as war was declared. Was keen to join up but his parents wouldn't release him because he was in a manpowered job. He was called up to be processed and to register. He had to stay home to work the farm with his father. He was not happy about this because all his mates had joined up and gone. Eventually he prevailed on his parents who decided to let him go. He joined up in April 1942 just a few months before turning 21. He joined the AIF and was drafted into general reinforcements. Chose AIF because they could go overseas. Initially went into Claremont. At that time things had gone bad in the Pacific. It was just after the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbour – December 1941 and early in 1942 when Darwin was bombed. These events stirred him into enlisting. Thought he would go overseas but due to Japanese actions, the AIF was on its way back from the Middle East. Not posted anywhere in particular, initially. At that time they were forming smaller local units and after thirteen months completed general rookie course at Claremont show ground and shifted up to Ascot race course, Belmont and did driver/mechanic course on motor trucks which interested him thinking it was better to drive a truck than to walk. A mechanical engineer named Major Bill Blown from Kalgoorlie was commissioned to form a mobile workshop and interviewed Howard. He was looking for a Batman but Howard declined but was taken on as a driver instead. They formed a unit at Claremont and then went up to the State Farm at Wongan Hills where tents were erected. Spent an aggravating 12 months on the farm which was thought a waste of time. Giving marching orders and drove vehicles into Wongan Hills railway station where they were loaded on to flat-topped rail trucks. Went to Kalgoorlie where everything had to be transferred to

the 4'6" gauge rolling stock of the Transcontinental Railway.

Unit was 160 strong and this was an advance party. Only sleeping accommodation was in own trucks there were no conventional railway carriages. Had to cook for themselves. When arriving in Kalgoorlie they were told there would be no leave. Within half an hour there were only two men left at Parkstown with the train as the others were all Kalgoorlie-ites and went into town to the pubs. Corporal Jim Campbell and Howard stayed with the train. When it left the locals rejoined in a fairly merry state. One had to be left behind. He eventually caught up with them and said he heard everyone was calling him but he was too drunk to respond. This was about Aug/Sep 1943. They were the 5th Army Ordnance Workshops. The name was later changed to 5th Infantry Troops Workshop. Anyone with a trade was called a Craftsman rather than the usual Private. Howard became Driver/Mechanic Trade Group 3, so became a Craftsman himself. He later got transferred to the workshops and became Trade Group 2 which paid an extra one shilling a day. When first enlisted his pay was six shillings a day (60c), and when he got his driver/mechanic ticket he got another shilling and then another when achieving Trade Group 2. Eventually got up to eight shillings a day.

Went across the Nullabor with the trucks strapped on the back of the railway trucks and after two days were let off the train at Port Augusta. The local community took each one of the fifteen in the advance party into their own homes that night and even contacted their parents and told them where they were. They had to change trains again from 4'8

½” to 3’6” for the Ghan train that went to Alice Springs. They next reached a staging camp at Quorn where the local ladies did a great job in providing meals from a bough hut. Thousands of troops passed through this point. Continued to Alice Springs where they unloaded and waited for the rest of their unit. Rained heavily making it difficult for the second train to get through. Several inches of rain fell causing the Todd to run a banker. The unit then drove up to base workshops at Mataraka to relieve troops who had not had home leave for 12 months. Howard spent an unhappy eight months here. Nearly starved, nothing much to do and could only buy two bottles of beer a week. There was plenty of soft drink because it was made there. After this they packed up and went to Adelaide River which was closer to the war but they were much happier. The food was better – the weather and conditions better, and they were again working under their own officers. Stopped here for 2-3 months. Howard was then sent on a Tech course in welding and fitting in Melbourne Tech in August 1944. Travelled down on the Ghan. Slept head to toe in the corridor on the over-crowded train. Camped at Royal Park near the Melbourne Zoo. Nearly finished the course when called into the Orderly Room and told he was to be on the train the next day for W.A. his discharge had come through. Unbeknown to him his father had applied to get him out. This was in 1944 and he was a civilian in a week.

In hindsight he felt he could have done more good by staying home than going in the army. He felt sorry for the work-load placed on his father who was in his late fifties and was not well, and his sister Mavis who helped him. With some help from

neighbours they ran the farm for 2 ½ years. In the army was with good lot of blokes, some of whom were Cliff Steadman of Ford Motor Co Fremantle, Colin Yates and Ross Menzies. Comradeship was good and everyone was trustworthy. The trade learned was useful for later years on the farm. Arrived home in October 1944. His father only lived another 3 years. Had been in the forces 2 ½ years.

Farm work after war: There was plenty to do on the farm as it was only half cleared by then. Howard took over the farm in 1947. It was a case of bare necessities – no improvements could be made. Livestock was looked after. He was milking cows. There was a surplus in apples so he was paid by an assessor and the crop was not picked. Only a little hay making was done. Some farms struggled on with only the wife and children to carry on. Ralph Gardiner was in the RAAF and his wife Edie and her old father-in-law Jim Gardiner ran the farm on their own. Howard's brother Arnold was carrying on his trucking business but was declared militarily unfit for the services so could not join up. Just after the war things got tough. Hoard was married in 1947 and though he had the money he couldn't get a permit to build a house. Could only get a permit if you had "a wife and kids as well". Lived in a two-roomed house on Victor Gardiner's property for 2 ½ years.

Building house: House was purchased for eight hundred pounds (\$1600). Had been erected on another site but not completed. Was pulled down with pieces numbered for re-erection. Syd Gardiner helped Howard to put in the stumps but otherwise Howard did all the building himself and completed it and moved in in October 1949. Bill Prout the local carrier was able to get some bricks for the chimney. Two Littlefair

brothers, bricklayers from Bunbury built the chimney. Luckily they were able to get the cement. They came and did the job in one day for ten pounds (\$20). The chimney is still standing.

Rations:

Another item severely rationed was petrol. His parents had a ration of only 3 gallons per month. On his discharge they were still having to use coupons to buy clothes, butter, meat and tea. Couldn't buy building materials for many years after the war. Howard applied and was successful in having petrol ration increased to 14 gallons. Power kerosene was rationed and this was used to run stationary engines. His brother had a charcoal gas producer on his truck. An 'abomination of a thing'. Vehicle travelled at about half power. A good bag of charcoal allowed you to travel about 40 miles. He describes the workings of this fuel. The Liberal Party had an election promise of removing petrol rationing and Howard believes this had a lot to do with them coming to power. Engine for milking machine was run on distillate and this was not rationed. Things were tough for a number of years after the war but slowly improved.

Farming Post War:

Dairying up to 40 cows. In partnership with his mother after his father died. She worked hard in the dairy in addition to her home duties. In 1949 the first bulldozer appeared on the scene. This was the turning point in farming at the Ferguson. Every spare pound was paid into clearing more property. Paid 3.10.0 (\$7) an hour for a smaller dozer to clear the smaller growth. Kept on milking and bought Grover's adjoining property which was run by MacDonald. Joe Gardiner bought the other half. Borrowed some money for this purchase. Cleared this land and then bought a 200 acre block at

Joshua's Brook for \$17000. Only about 20 acres was cleared. Just got this block paid for when the 1974 beef slump occurred. Fortunately he did not have any debts by then. Sam Gardiner wanted Howard's son Bruce to have his property. So arrangements were made to purchase it. Bruce went to work on a wheat farm at Lake Grace for a couple of years to help raise funds. Howard's other son Greg is farming and built a house on the old [Michael] Flynn property. Greg is farming the Joshua Brook property as well as 300 acres at Upper Ferguson. Bruce & Greg both run beef cattle and work off-farm as well. Buying property on the Ferguson today is out of the question from a farming point of view. Uneconomic to run cattle, can't make interest out of it. After the war there were 20 – 30 people making a living from small dairies, Now there would only be half a dozen left that are self sufficient.

Bridge building:

Howard's father worked off-farm as a bridge builder for the Road Board. Sometimes he employed his brother to assist him. He would fall the timber in the local bush and flatten one side for the bed logs and the stringers and decking was at times cut with a broadaxe. Howard has his account book which shows how much was paid for each bridge which had names. He was also an accomplished bush carpenter and built a number of houses in the area.

House building: Houses then were a bare shell on wooden stumps with wooden frame work, asbestos or ceildoid linings. The copper in the washhouse was the only built in item. There was no electric wiring. Herbert built his own house around 1915 and it is still standing. It was a four-roomed cottage with a verandah on the front. Later built an extra two rooms on the back. It was

comfortable in some ways but primitive in others. It had no labour-saving devices.

Home Water Supply: Had 1000 gallon tank for drinking water requirements, with other water carried up from a spring in buckets. Howard can remember in about 1935 or 1936 buying 12 chains of piping and running it from a spring to provide running water for the house. The water gravitated down the hill. "It was like turning on the goldfields water scheme when we got water coming out of the tap on the back verandah". There was only one tap.

Laundry: His mother did the washing in a couple of galvanised tubs on a timber bench with a couple of kerosene tins over an open fire to get boiling water. Got a copper in later years but still had the tubs, which had to be carried out the back and sluiced down the paddock when washing was finished.

Bread making: Howard's mother made bread from the yeast to the finished product. Bread making is fully described. They had a Metters stove and good bread was made in it. Mrs Gibbs was cunning in that she kept it from the family until it was a day or two old because they would eat too much when it was fresh.

Milking: Cows were milked in an open yard in all weathers and milk carried down to a little room where the separator was. After hand turning the machine, the milk residue was carried back and fed to the calves. They had the M.D.K. system of milking – Mum, Dad, and the Kids. A new Lister machine was purchased for one hundred and five pounds (\$210) to drive the separator. Eventually bought a milking machine. Local contractor carted the cream to Bunbury. About 1953/1954 went off separating.

- Pigs:** Separated milk went to calves and also to pigs. Sties were built and young pigs purchased and reared to porker or baconer size. After Howard took over the farm he purchased some sows and bred his own for a few years.
- Whole milk/cheese:** Howard did not like dairying and eventually gave up separating the milk and sent off the whole milk for cheese manufacture. He was the instigator of getting the milk truck to take the whole milk to Harvey. In later years you had to either go on to a quota milk which meant milking 365 days a year or to go out of dairying altogether. Howard opted to get out.
- Superphosphate:** Farming in the area took a lift when the super works in Picton was built. Up until then they couldn't get super and the country was poor without it. Initially feeding out the super was primitive. It was done by broadcasting it from a deal box slung around the neck. There were 12 bags of super to a ton, so it was very heavy work in the hilly country. If 3 or 4 bags were sown before lunch it was a good result. Later they got a spreader (still in the shed as a museum piece) that operated from the back of a spring cart and this saved a lot of time. Super was brought out to the farm in bags on a truck and the unloading and handling was back-breaking work. When a tractor was used for spreading it, required a man riding behind on the spreader emptying the super into the machine. Later super bins came into use for bulk handling.
- Tractor:** First one purchased in 1956 to replace Clydesdale horses.

- Vegetables:** Never grown commercially but always grown for the house and neighbours would share between each other. Same with fruit. Some water melons and pumpkins were grown commercially in the area but not by Howard.
- Potatoes:** Grew a few acres of potatoes. Primitive methods used with horses and a single furrow plough. The method is described. Potato manure was broadcast from a bucket. They were dug with a fork and bagged. This was one of Howard's first jobs after leaving school. Weeds were hoed by hand. Victor Gardiner had Howard dig for him for a shilling (10c) a bag. Could dig six or eight bags per day and this was good pocket money.
- Wages:** Was never paid a steady wage by his parents until after the war. Worked for keep and clothes.
- Potato sales:** Sold to produce merchants in Bunbury – Robert Forrest and Wight and Emmett. George Harris the storekeeper in Dardanup also bought some. A lot of potatoes were grown around Dardanup after the Wellington Dam Irrigation Scheme started. Ferguson lacked water in summer. Potato Board came into being and this was quite satisfactory. Never had problems with disease but frost in August or September could nearly wipe out a winter crop. In 1929 they planted 4 or 5 acres and got the good price of seventeen pounds (\$34) per ton and did well out of it.
- New car:** Because of the good potato returns they sold the T model Ford and purchased a new Durant 6 which was his father's pride and joy. The next year he only got 1.10.0 (\$3) a ton for his potatoes. That was how uncertain the market was in those days.

- Depression:** By 1931 or 1932 everyone was down and out, practically no income/ Wool was bringing about 1/3d a lb (12 cents a pound), butter fat was about the same, fruit was almost unsaleable. The Government opened up a concession in the bush behind them for timber and sleeper cutting. Herbert Gibbs did this for 2 or 3 years to keep his family fed. They never went without food. They managed to scrape through and always had enough to keep the car running.
- Vehicles:** They never owned a truck. The Durant car was eventually made into a utility which kept going until Howard bought a new Holden utility in 1953. After a few years with a young family growing up he bought a station wagon
- Social Activities:** There were monthly dances held in the hall during the war to raise funds for the comfort fund. The old hall was built in 1905 and called an Agricultural Hall. They used to have an anniversary ball each year with a sit-down dinner. Trestles would be set up and taken away for the dance.
- New Hall:** The old hall was replaced in 1966 when it became dilapidated. The rate payers were rated to cover a loan for the building and ongoing maintenance.
- Cricket:** A cricket pitch was near the hall and cricket was a great source of entertainment. Herbert Gibbs was a good cricketer. It was a social event.
- Football:** Ferguson never had enough players to form a football team but some locals played in the Wellington Mills team.

- Hockey:** Club started around 1935 and Howard played for years until his milking became a problem. Ferguson produced many good hockey players who later played in Boyanup.
- Tennis:** Intermittently there were clubs in the district.
- Home :** As a child bought a bicycle in Bunbury for 7.9.6 (\$15) which was his pride and joy.
- Mates:** Chris and Bertha Gardiner's family. Grandchildren of Owen & Emma Gardiner, Sophie Grover's children who were his first cousins and the Ratcliffe boys.
- Car License:** Obtained when 18. Borrowed family car occasionally and went to Bunbury picture shows on Saturday afternoon or evenings if not milking. No milking from Jan-April.
- Pictures:** Cost two shillings and sixpence (25c).
- Dances:** Used to go with Sam & Lionel (known as Mike) Gardiner. Also Ken and Randal Gardiner had bought a one ton A Model Ford truck (early 1930s) which could take about a dozen into town. Truck was open and they went in the summer and winter. Dances were attended at Wellington Mills, Yabberup, Ferguson and Dardanup. There was no drink at dances (except perhaps a bottle or two) and there was never any trouble because of it.
- Dance Music:** Pianist, drummer and perhaps saxophone hired for the better class of dances but for the 'local hop' it was a button accordion played by Walter Grover, Charlie Flynn and Eliza Flynn. Edgar Parkin taught himself to play the violin.

- Supper:** Usually 'bring a plate'. The balls had a sit down dinner with coloured tickets served to distinguish the 'sittings'. The meals were provided in the supper room adjoining the main hall.
- Hall lighting:** Had Wizard light – steel pressure container pumped up with a motor vehicle pump. Petrol mixture was forced out from fine pipes that ran from the cylinder to two light fixtures, one at each end of the hall with another one or two in the supper room. When the lights dimmed someone had to run outside and pump up the cylinder.. Worked well. Dardanup Hall went on to electricity before Ferguson so their 12 volt system was bought. It had a Lister petrol engine. In about 1970 connected to SEC. Howard not sure of the system that operated when the hall opened in 1905.
- Ferguson Hall:** During the war entertainment was put on in the hall including Dave Howard saxophonist/comedian. Local radio personalities may have appeared.
- Pianos:** Not common in homes. One in the hall but very few about.
- Gramophones:** Many had these. Records provided music for dances. Doug Fowler from Donnybrook provided a sound system during and after the war.
- Radio:** Crystal sets appeared about 1930s. Ray Stevens had one. He lived in Richards Road where Eustace and Dorothy Fowler now live. Ray & his brother Ernie were radio salesmen. The sets were battery operated and pretty crude. Many were manufactured by Perth company C.S. Baty & Co. The first sets Ray sold were Australian General Electric Band Masters distributed by Atkins W.A. Ltd.

Howard still has his family's first set bought in 1936. Was a console with three 45 volt batteries plus a two volt wet cell. Big batteries only lasted 9 – 12 months and cost five or six pounds (\$10/12) to replace plus getting the 2 volt one recharged every five or six weeks.

Radio Stations: The nearest – 6WA Wagin was built around 1935-36. Could only just pick it up. 6TZ built at Dardanup after the war. There was also 6AM & 6PR from Perth and 6WB Katanning.

Electricity: Ferguson got it after the war. A contributory scheme was set up. Each user was levied a fee. Had to have a dairy to have power put on. Cost sixteen pounds and this was over a 30 year period from 1971. Scheme worked well. Power came from Picton power station but not aware of its source.

Ploughing: Howard used an Oliver Twenty for the age of 14. Herbert Gibbs was an expert ploughman. Full description given of methods.

Aborigines: Very few lived in the area. Howard once found a grinding stone artefact. Billy Webb and Frank Corbett were two farm workers who were living with their families in an old house of Pat & Mary Slattery's at the junction of Ferguson and Ironstone Roads. Both had families who attended Ferguson School.

Italian POWs: None about by 1944 when Howard returned from the army. His family had spoken of some being in the area digging potatoes. They were based at the Harvey camp.

Red Cross: Branch formed at Ferguson in the early days of the second world war and very active during the war. Worked for the comfort fund, knitted socks and prepared food parcels. Later, local ladies attended Dardanup Branch including Howard's wife Dorrie, and Gwen Ratcliffe who both also attended the Red Cross Opportunity Shop in Bunbury. Dorrie has received a 25 year badge and bar award. Dorrie and Howard have taken up collection around Ferguson for the March appeal over several years but have now ceased.