BUNBURY ORAL HISTORY GROUP

Verbatim Transcript of Interview

Interviewee:	Mr Howard Basil Gibbs
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Interviewer :	Norm Flynn
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Can we start please Howard, by getting you to give us your full name and date of Birth?

My full name is Howard Basil Gibbs, but I've always been known – by my nick-name of Nugget or Nugg ever since I was a child, and it is still customary now. That might clear that up – you can put the two names together.

I was born in Bunbury on the 4th of July 1921. And I don't think – from what I can make out, according to my mother, it was not an ordinary hospital. It must have been a mid-wife's place or a nursing home, because the address was Zoe St in Bunbury, and I did say to Mum one day 'What Doctor attended me?' and she said 'Oh, we didn't bother about doctors, they never got there on time anyway so we didn't know, you couldn't tell whether

doctors came afterwards or not'. Incidentally, I weighed ten pounds, which was quite a heavy birth weight. The circumstances how she got in there I think she was probably taken to Bunbury a few days before, but I do not know, because there was only horse transport in those days, it would be, I suppose an hour and a half or two hours driving in a horse and sulky. That's about as much as I can tell you about my birth.

You mentioned your mother - let's talk about your parents, because I am aware you have studied your family origins, so we'll start on the male side. Who was your father?

My father's name was Herbert Cleveland Gibbs, and he was the eldest son of Samuel and Lavinia Gibbs

Your grandparents then must have been very early arrivals?

Yes, well my grandfather was actually brought up on the Ferguson, apart from the family.

Now you will want to know a little bit about that?

Yes

According to what I can make out, the early Gardiners settled on the place joining our place here now, and he was Owen Gardiner; and he married Emma Gibbs who was my grandfather's sister. And they were the children of James Dagley Gibbs and my grandfather was the youngest of the first family.

"my grandfather came on the second trip of the Trusty in 1844"

The first family was James Dagley and Emma Gibbs.

------ No, I'm wrong there.

[Interruption]

So, your grandfather was James Dagley Gibbs, and he married a woman named Charlotte Narroway.

Narroway – Charlotte Narroway

And he was a very early arrival.

Yes, he came on the second trip of the Trusty in 1844

1844 in the Trusty, and he arrived at Australind?

Yes

And they had a family of 7?

They had a family of seven and Emma was the oldest of the family, and

Emma married Owen Gardiner and came to live on Ferguson. And by the time the seventh child, who was my grandfather Sam... .... he was born I think in Bunbury, but his mother died two years afterwards, I presumed in childbirth because there was another child after my grandfather. Very soon afterwards, the old James married again, and Emma who lived on the Ferguson wasn't very happy with the way he was being treated by the new mother – the step-mother, so she more or less just took charge of Sam and brought him over on to the Ferguson and he lived with her and her family. And that's how the Gibbs came to live on the Ferguson.

So, your grandfather Sam, up here, and then subsequently he started his own family on the Ferguson?

Yes. When he was a young man, of about twenty, he took up the adjoining block which his sister and brother-in-law run, which is Wellington Location 661, and the other Gardiner block which was right alongside was Wellington Location 997.

So, Samuel married Lavinia, do you remember her surname?

Yes, Lavinia Hurst. Hurst was her name. I think it was her grandfather who came to Australind on the Parkfield, or one of those original settlers of Australind, anyway.

So both of you - through both sides of your grandparents - you have got a line back to those Australind settlers?

Yes, that's correct –

Right, so –

Do you want to know more about James Dagley Gibbs ? He remarried as I said before, and he had nine more children.

Seven in the first marriage, and nine in the second?

Yes

Do you remember the name of his second wife?

[Interruption for query to person in background]

Her name was Alice Maria Parkes, and they had a further nine children. I don't know a great deal about the second family, except that Amelia – Aunt Milly, married a Fowler, John Fowler, who lived on the Ferguson too – just down the road here, the old Fowler family. He married again. As for the rest of them, I could find out but I don't know a great deal about the second

family. But the other brothers – my grandfathers brothers John and Hal they were prominent builders in Bunbury.

Hal?

John and Hal – J & H. Gibbs and they were in a partnership. One building I can remember they built was the old Congregational Church, which was unfortunately demolished. Its a few years ago now, which is a sore point with us. But most of the buildings that they built - now I don't know if there's any of them left now.

Right, I see

Anyway – that's ----

You did recall, during a break, that Charlotte Narroway was your grandmother, and she was buried –

My great-grandmother. She died and is buried in the old Australind cemetery. And also a little girl of the first marriage, their daughter, died and she is buried alongside her mother in the old Australind cemetery. I don't know where she came in the family, but I think she was in addition to the seven others.

Let's concentrate now on your grandparents, Sam Gibbs and Lavinia Hurst.

How big a family did they have?

My father's brothers and sisters?

Yes.

There were nine of them

Nine of them too. Another big family

...the family. The eldest one was Herbert my dad, then Basil, then Minnie, Genesta, Evangeline, Harold, Ivy, Rhoda and Clarence. How many is that?

That's nine

Do you want to know who was born - about them?

Yes.

My uncle Basil, dad's brother, next to him, was killed in France in 1916. And that's where I got the Basil from, and also Basil was the name of my grandfather, no great grandfather. My grandmother was Lavinia so it would have been my great grandfather wouldn't it?

Your father was the eldest in that family; do you know where he was born?

Not exactly. I know he was born in Bunbury or out here, but I never heard where he was born and it doesn't say on the birth certificate, but I presume it would have been out here, but I don't know ... he could have been born here because old Emma Gardiner, who was his sister, was grown up, and she was the local mid-wife I've been told. She did a lot of that sort of work round the people. So it's possible that he could have been born on the Ferguson, but I'm not a hundred per cent sure of that.

"the original block my father took up was a hundred acres and that's the block that I'm still living on now."

So, his father was farming here - Sam Gibbs – how many acres would he have had on this farm?

The original block he took up was a hundred acres. ... joining to the Gardiner's block and that's the block that I'm still living on now. It's been handed down from Sam Gibbs to Herbert Gibbs to me and that's the only block I still own, the old original hundred acres.

He then took up two more blocks over the road from this one, which my cousin Tom is the owner at the moment, They were both left by Sam Gibbs when he died to Harold Gibbs, his son, my father's eldest brother, who had two one hundred acre blocks there and when he died he left it to his nephew Tom, and Tom still owns those two blocks. –

He had numerous properties, not only that one, he had another one out - actually I think it was in the Donnybrook Shire at the time, it was south east of here in what we call Paddy's Brook, he had another two hundred acres out there which was completely under trees; it had nothing done on that one.

Let's talk about the hundred-acre block your father would have grown up on, and what sort of farming they would have done back in those days. And do you have a date, exactly, when your father was born? It would help to keep it in context.

Yes, my father was born on the 16th of March 1887

Right. So let's talk about something of farming at that time, here on the Ferguson.

Well nearly all of the farmers, I think they supplemented their income by timber work, particularly my family, they did a lot of work in the timber industry and I think that my grandfather used to go out and cut what they

called beams in the bush, long timber that they cleared in the bush, and I presume sleepers too, but I'm not too sure about that, in the meantime they worked on the farm and even when I took the farm over in 1947 a lot of our original block wasn't cleared. I had to clear about half of it after I got it.

I think they used to grow quite a lot of oats, which they cut into chaff and about the time that Millars bought the big mill over at Wellington Mills, a lot of their produce went up there. They ... the chaff and it was cut up and sold to Millars for feeding their horses that were hauling timber – and practically all the old farms had quite a number of fruit trees, you can still see the old fruit trees there, I know my grandfather had quite a number right where the old house was, there would have been an acre or two and over the road. After he bought the other block the was an orchard on that too, that was quite a thing. And they all had a few cows.

So it would not have been whole milk dairying as such, I guess. It would be more buttermilk?

In those days - I think the dairying in those days - they didn't even have separators. They used to milk the cows and set the milk in pans, and after it cooled off, and the cream settled to the top, they skimmed it with a skimmer until the days of the separator. And when the separators came in I can't be sure of, but I know they had little separators, it was a great thing when they got them. A lot of the butter was made on the farm, weighed out - measured out to pounds – one pound or half pound block, wrapped in paper, and sold in Bunbury - and even in my mother's day, they used to salt some of it and put it in those earthen-ware jars, and keep it in there for months afterwards. It was never very palatable, but it was better than nothing. And there were other sources of income. Any jobs that were going – they used to help the neighbours and that a fair bit.

Do you remember your grandfather, Sam?

I can't remember him living here, he left here according to my wife and I find out in my father's books, he left here in 1923 and I was only two years old, but as I grew up a little bit - schooldays I used to spend a lot of holidays with him – he bought ... place just on the Australind side of the Collie Bridge at Australind and I spent a lot of happy days in there with my grandparents after he retired in there.

He retired there, leaving the farm here to ...?

To my father and Uncle Harold – but in the meantime, when Dad got married in 1915, the whole hundred acre lot we are on now, was split into two - two fifty-acre blocks, and whether he bought that, the fifty acres that I'm on now, or whether he didn't, I don't know, but it was transferred to him around about the time of his marriage in 1915.

"My dad married Mary Flynn, her father had a property adjoined dad's"

And who did he marry?

My dad married Mary Flynn.

She was another of the Ferguson –?

She was the daughter of Michael Flynn and Leticia Maslin was my mum's mother

And at the time, was Michael Flynn's farm quite close to your father's property?

Yes, it joined my father's property. Michael Flynn had a property adjoined and he had various properties over the years, too, but I don't know whether you want to know about that or not.

No, they'll probably come into the course of the conversation, but we will just - now that you've raised the other side of the family - you can tell us about your own brothers and sisters - what that family comprised of.

I'm the third child of Herbert and Mary. Arnold ... was my older brother who was five years older than me, he was born on 26th of May 1916 and my sister, Audrey Beryl she was born on 24th of October 1917, unfortunately she died at the age of 33 with a young family, which was one of the biggest blows I've had, which you can imagine.

She was living up here on the Ferguson?

Yes, she married a chap named Fisher Muller and they had three children, three boys, who when their mother died came down - Mullers had a property at Wellington Mills - and when my sister Beryl died, my mother, the children's grandmother, took over the rearing of them, she brought them down on the farm here, also Fisher came down with them and they all lived here for several years and the youngest stayed.

What was those three children's name?

The eldest one was John; the second one was Wayne and the third one Keith.

So you've got Arnold and Beryl -- then you come next, and after you?

One more sister, Mavis. She was born 28th of May 1923. She married in 1945 I think it was, Jack Armitage, and they had two children

What was their names?

Dianne was the daughter and Alan was the son. And unfortunately Jack died at the age of forty and the children were only quite young. He had a – he was a returned serviceman from the Second World War, he was in the 2/16th and he served in New Guinea on the Kokoda Trail, and he got knocked about, he got wounded. Whether that was to do with the war ... we don't know but it was a tumour on the brain probably wasn't to do with the war, and he died at the age of forty, and she married again. - I can't be sure of the date, but it was two or three years after wards - I can't remember exactly when it was, but she married a chap named Percy Williams from Bunbury and she had another daughter, which she named after ... I'm getting it wrong here. But unfortunately, Percy died as a young man, too, so she was widowed twice in the matter of a few years, and the little girl of the second marriage is Helen and she didn't know she was having Helen until after her husband died, and the little girl was born several months after the death of the father.

That was a tragedy. Seeing that we've got everyone's husband and wife there, but we didn't get Arnold's.

Arnold married Jenny Rickson, who was a daughter of the local baker in Dardanup and they - during the war - Arnold left home and took up and started the trucking business, and then he brought a farm on the Ferguson, that was only about two miles down the road from where we are, and they lived there and he carried on the trucking business and the farm and they had six daughters. So he sold the farm when he got a bit older; he reckoned there was not much point in it, trying to hang on not having a son to carry on so he sold the farm back in about 1969 it was twenty five years ago, that's all I know, that would be about 1969 would it?

Now we'll come down the family tree and enlarge on your family, and you married Dorrie and what was her maiden name?

Her maiden name was McSwain

And your family comprises - ?

We have three children the eldest one Ruth, who married to Donald Payne, that was about 1969 too, I think, and our second one was Bruce and he's unmarried and he's living - he bought the farm next door to ours, which was part of Sam Gardiner's ....

How big a property has Bruce got?

Bruce has got – well on the Ferguson at the moment, he's got two hundred and seventy acres that he bought off Sam Gardiner, and since, well a few years ago I made over a hundred and ten acres of ....what was part of ...'s block and he also had other property, I don't know which one over at –

No, we'll just stick to the Ferguson

So what's that?

Three hundred and eighty acres.

Three hundred and eighty acres adjoining our place here. And the youngest son, Gregory, he married Lynette, they call her Lindy, and she was - she was my cousin Tom's daughter, who lived on a property next door, and they have three children now. And I didn't mention the first one has three children.

She's got three children?

Did I mention that?

No.

Now, is that what we've recorded? Or .... Now when I first recall going to Bunbury, I think, and I've just remember owning a horse what we called Sally, that was one horse that two or three people could sit on, I can just vaguely remember that – pulling into a water trough that used to be on the mill ... on the top of a ... hill, I can just remember going in that. What I first remember, you could count on one hand the number of motor cars that were in the district. There wouldn't have been – well, Flynns had one, an old Studebaker, Fowlers had one, I think was a Talbot, and Mr. Kerr he had a Dodge Four, and that would be the main ones. I think that up towards the mill there might be two or three.

The roads would be pretty horrendous?

The roads were really bad, they were only more or less a cart track when I first remember. There were no decent roads at Dardanup at all, there was no decent one to Dardanup even. There was a gravel road even to Picton and to Boyanup, it was all gravel. And my father bought his first motor can in 1926 - '26 or '27, I think it was '26 it was a T model Ford. I particularly remember him buying that, and I can even remember the name of the salesman who sold it to him – Mr B. ... and I can't quite remember the Company he was working for, but he was the salesman.

About that time quite a lot of people were starting to get cars, there was no organised, regular transport to Dardanup except the mail. The mail was run by horse-drawn vehicle up to about that time, in fact, my Aunts, Minnie and Nesta and Evangela they actually drove a horse to go to Dardanup to pick up the mail – during the war they did it that way, and my dad did it for a few years, according to the cash book and he got up to about 1923 I think, and he had a horse and sulky that he did that with.

He was the local contractor?

He was the contractor for the P.M.G., they called it the P.M.G. - Post Master General - in those days, he had a contract to deliver the mail, and they used to take a can of cream or two and a few odds and ends that he picked up and bring back, and that was taken down, and things like that, but there was never much room for passengers for it was only a small vehicle, but I don't think they went up the Wellington Mill when they were doing that, they would only go from here to Dardanup.

I think the train was still running to the mill at Wellington and they would have done the mail up there. But when the mill shut down and the people were ... the mail run .... Wellington Mills too, but I don't think my father ever did up to Wellington and I had that records of how much it cost – what money he was getting for running the mail – it was about five pounds a month, to do the mail twice a week, they went down always Tuesday and Friday.

One point I'd like to take up there. You mentioned the railway line to Wellington Mill. Can you tell me a bit more about that please, Howard?

The railway line to Wellington Mill, Millars Trading Company, I'm not sure what they were called that when they first came, but that is what named it afterwards, and they built a three foot six gauge railway from Dardanup up to the big mill up at Wellington Mill which was about, I suppose, thirteen miles from Dardanup, and it was a wholly owned Company section, the Government had nothing to do with it except, I think the Government trucks - the rolling stock used to come up from the Government supply to load timber up at Wellington and it was delivered by the Company ... ... to the State Government Railways.

That reserve that the railway came through was all surveyed out and the actual reserve, the railway was on belonged to the Company, and I think they had an agreement with the settlers when they took over land that they

guaranteed to take produce down and bring it back from Dardanup. I think it might have been at no cost, I'm not sure about that, but they did have little sheds across the road in several places, and that was – these little sheds – they were only about three meters by three meters – and built up to the height of a railway loading because ... out and there was quite a lot of produce ...

And when Millars closed down and they pulled the line up eventually – I think the line wasn't pulled up until after the second world war, and the land that the railway went through – the owners on each side had the right to buy it back again, which they all did, they more or less had to because if any stranger had bought it would cut their farms in half – I think most of it was ... to the State Government, some of them did and some didn't, but they had their cattle to get over from one side to the other and --

Where would that have come through, up this end?

It crossed the road between the river – the Ferguson River that is, and what we call the Nine Mile, that was nine miles from Dardanup, and where the Wellington Mill road branches off from the Upper Ferguson road, the railway crossed the line between the river bridge and that intersection that was only about a mile and a half down from where we are now. The property there belongs to ... which has been in the ... family for three - and the fourth generation there now too I think.

We have just been talking about the line Millars had going from Dardanup up to Wellington Mills. Did they have other lines in the area?

Yes ... When they got the timber cut out to take to down to Millars, which was always carted by horses, it was too far for horses to bring in, so they put in these big tramlines – they were the same gauge as the Government used, but they were sort of tramlines, and they used to put them out into the bush, and the horses would bring the timber in to what they called a landing, and load it on to railway, and bring it into the big mills. And when the timber cut out, they would pull up the railway line, and put them out to where they wanted to go next. And you will find that they nearly all went up the gullies, with the steep grade, and I've heard the old-timers say, part of the drivers job was, bringing loads of logs in, especially where the grade was steep, the engine driver didn't have control of the brakes like they have on the Government railways, they used to have to run along each wagon and individually put the brakes on when they came to a ...

... and when they got to the bottom they would have to run along and take them all off again. -- - -

I've never heard of a serious accident on the one back here at Wellington, not like the one that they had up at Wokalup – was it Wokalup where they had the big one?

"Wellington Mills was one of the biggest timber mills in the State, quite a township. It had a school and a hospital, a hall, a Doctor some of the time, a billiards room"

Yes, I do believe.

I never heard, but I think a few chaps were killed, which is unavoidable, particularly in those days when safety rules weren't quite so strict, and I suppose there were casualties, but I can't recall any of them before my time.

But there's some very steep country through the Ferguson, isn't it?

Yes.

So you were saying the better timber was taken out of the gullies and –

The railway lines normally went up the gullies because ... the grade, sometimes they went up along the ridges but it was quite a ...

Can I just mention Wellington Mills, the mill itself? It was obviously quite a large place.

Wellington Mills was one of the biggest timber mills in the State and it was quite a township there. It had a school and a hospital, a hall and a Doctor some of the time, too. A billiards room, I don't think there was ever a hotel there - I don't think I never ever heard anything about a hotel, I don't think Millars would have encouraged having a hotel.

They used to bring drink up from Dardanup, but I can't tell you much about that, but I don't think they ever had a hotel.

But they had quite a lot of these little mill houses, of four rooms, they were the married quarters, and then they had a row of single men's quarters too, which were more or less only one room cabin sort of thing, but it was quite a big staff. They employed hundreds of employees, not only the men that actually worked in the mill, there were all the fallers and the truck drivers and the train, and the chaps hauling and looking after the horses, and the blacksmiths and all the farriers and all that sort of thing, and I did hear them say that one of the biggest days cutting they ever had was what they called a hundred load of timber. I'm not sure what a load - I think it's fifty cubic feet,

and one of the best days they cut a hundred cubic - no, I'm not sure, but I know that that's fifty cubic feet, so that's a hundred times fifty, that's five thousand cubic feet. And it was beautiful timber they were cutting too, not like you get nowadays, and they took practically all the ... timber within ... miles radius of Wellington.

Now let's come back now to the Ferguson, in your childhood, living virtually where we are now, can you recall your first day at school for example?

No, I can't really recall the first day, but I can talk about the very early days that I –

I had an older brother and sister going of course, and I set out on foot on I think, the first day I went to walk nearly three miles down and back. We didn't start school then until the year we turned – we were over six. ... after when we turned six, so me being – my birthday in the middle of the year, I was six and a half by the time I started school, my birthday is in July, so I would start in the next year. We all - everybody walked, except one lad, he had a horse, he was further on up ..., Fred ..., and he was the only one. I did manage to get hold of a bicycle the last year I went to school, apart from that I walked back and forth.

And the school was where, exactly?

It was at Ferguson, the Upper Ferguson School, it was down the road nearly three miles from here, it was ... three miles, and it's now owned by one of my brother's daughters, ... she married Reg Piggott and they own the property there at the moment. But that's where the school was, and it was established early in 1893, just in time for my father to go to school, because he born in 1887 so he was six years old when the school opened and he was one of the fortunate ones to go to school. Some of the older settlers, Emma Gardiner and Owen Gardiner's family, they were up here earlier and of course their family didn't go to school, so some of them didn't have any schooling. My grandfather Sam who lived with the Gardiners, he didn't go to school either, so school didn't start until my father's generation.

They had a petition in the area to have a school here, and celebrated the centenary last year?

It was in 92 ... wasn't, it had to be 92. There were only about twenty to twenty five students when I was going, but after that there must have been a

quite a few more because there were ..... for a while.

"after Fred Connolly left, a chap named Tonkin took over as teacher, and his elder brother was John Tonkin who was a Premier of West Australia a few years ago."

Can you recall some of the teachers' names, in your time?

One that I can recall, a Mrs Murdoch. She was there when my brother was there, but she was gone by the time I started, and my first teacher was Fred Connolly. Fred was a World War One veteran and he had gone into an Education class - Training school after he'd been repatriated from the First World War. He was badly wounded, he had a withered right arm, he'd been shot through the shoulder and his right arm was practically useless and he was a natural right-hander. He had to learn to write and use his left hand. He had also been gassed and was not in very good health and after ... I used to be ashamed of the way we used to behave sometimes, taking advantage of him. He must have put up with a lot without us playing up. He died, I suppose as a young man, he would have been .... He taught around here for eight years, and when he left Ferguson he went to Dardanup, for two or three years and he died I think in his forties I suppose, he may have been in his fifties .. And after he left, a chap named ... Tonkin, took over, and his elder brother was John Tonkin who was a Premier of West Australia a few years ago.

He'd been a teacher too, hadn't he?

Yes, both of them, old John had been a teacher too and the family was down here. My second teacher and the last year, I had only for one year, we had a migrant from England who'd gone through the Training College after he came out here and his name was Laurie ... and he's still alive to this day, he's about eighty six I think now, because I visited him only a year or two ago. He was in Albany.

Wasn't Ivy Gibbs a teacher there at that school?

Yes, Ivy my Aunt, she was a monitor there – they had a different name there for some time – a monitor or - it doesn't matter. She did her monitoring there before she went to the Training College – she didn't come teaching here after she was a qualified teacher, she was only as a monitor, and that would have been during the war, I think. And another thing, there was only the one teacher in my time. At one stage there might have been two, but there was only the one when I went, and the one teacher had to cope with all the classes, from infants up to sixth grade I think it was.

And they had their hands full because there was - nearly always someone in each class and there used to be ... .. the manual teacher, and they did have a lady who came to teach the girls sewing if there were enough girls to warrant having a teacher, which they did most of the time. One of the sewing teachers in my early days was Miss Ella Gardiner, and she is still alive today too. She later married a ... who by the way's name was Lambert too - and Ella is still a resident of Elanora Villas in Bunbury at the present moment.

Can you remember, for the record, what you would wear to school?

I know something we didn't wear, and that was shoes. It was always bare foot. I think I might have worn a few shoes for the last year. But really, ... we weren't too proud to wear a patch or two, perhaps that was ... to all the world - we were all in the same boat, none of the parents had money to speak of so we weren't dressed in fashion I can tell you, but we were always clean and tidy.... Knowing my mum we'd be pretty clean and tidy because she was a stickler for that.

Did you take your lunch with you?

Yes, we always took a cut lunch. It would be pretty had to down during the summertime, we had no refrigerator, icebox or anything.

Had there ever been times when say, floods stopped you from getting to school?

No, not in my time. Not going to the primary school. We used to have to paddle through water some times and get a bit wet. But after – that was one thing I didn't mention, my Dad was pretty good. After we got the car- we had a car in all my school days. If it was a real wet morning, he would nearly always bundle us into the car and take us down seeing we got to school dry, and at three or four in the afternoon he would sometimes come and get us and bring us home again. And it wasn't ... all the neighbours' kids used to pile in the car somewhere. He was pretty good though; he didn't like to have us in wet clothes all day so he made sure we got to school dry.

In those days, did you have the holiday breaks roughly the same as they have these days?

No, we only had --- what do they have now?

I can remember having a week in May and a week in September, and six weeks at Christmas.

Yes, we did too. We had May and August holidays – one week in August and

one in May and Christmas holidays were still six weeks I think.

But education in those days was a completely different set up altogether to what it is now. It was more or less free education then. It didn't cost our parents very much at all to send us to school, for nearly all the books were provided by the Government, by the Education Department, and also, there weren't all these organised trips that cost quite a bit of money, and we had practically no organised sport, the Department didn't supply us with any sporting equipment I don't think. We had an old bat and a tennis racquet and a ball and sometimes we made a ball out of a blackboy heart or something like that, and home made hockey sticks.

We had no organised sport. We never competed with any other school, except one year which I recall quite vividly was 1929 which was the hundredth anniversary of the State, and we had big celebrations on the old recreation ground in Dardanup where the hall stands now. The Dardanup Hall us on the old Rec, and we competed against Wellington Mill, Waterloo, I'm not sure about ... Dardanup and another little school which was called Paradise. And we had a sports day there – we had no training or anything, we just got down there and was told what we had to do.

And then we had a sack race. In 1929 I was eight years old, and you got into a potato sack or a wool sack and had what we called a sack race, and I remember winning that, and I got two bob, or something like that and I thought I was ..... and I think the Wellington Mill people came down on the train that day, I think the train ran down for the Wellington Mill people and we had a big day. But that's the only organised sporting event I can remember going to.

But we did, I think occasionally go on a Christmas picnic. One of the locals, my Uncle, whose name was ... Joe, we called him Soapy Joe, but he was ... Mum's sister. They had a cream cart carrying business and they used to organise a truck and we would sometimes go into the beach or into Collie Bridge where I said my other grandfather ... retired, and we would have a picnic in there some years which was a big event. And I think the other big event of my school days was the Christmas tree which we never missed, which was a great event, the whole district used to turn up and they would have a sit down supper and a real slap-up feed ... and sliding around the hall like kids do, and it was great fun, we used to really look forward to that, and that was an annual event.

I still go to the Christmas tree, there was one on just a few nights ago - I still enjoyed it.

Another big event was Guy Fawkes night – bonfire night. It was not organised by the school but when the local farmers did a bit of clearing, coming on to November 5th, they build up some of the paddocks they wanted cleared up and ... right in and dad used to come along with his horse sometimes and ... up ... and build great fires.

"Another big event was Guy Fawkes night – bonfire night. When the local farmers did a bit of clearing and build great fires. We'd all have three or four shillings worth of crackers each"

He'd go to Bunbury with ... kids, they'd all have three or four shillings worth of crackers each and we would have a fine time. I was always disappointed when the powers that be decided it was too dangerous. We never came to any harm, but anyway we don't have Bonfire nights anymore.

Had you ever thought of the bush fire risk in those days?

Yes, occasionally. If there was a fire hazard they wouldn't light it. We used to hate it ... if it was a real early season, getting a bit dry in November, they wouldn't light it, usually it was after – and green as could be there it was too ... the ground was usually stirred up where they'd been clearing, and we had beaut times on those bonfire nights. We used to throw the crackers, you could buy them for two of three shillings. Those were the days you let sky-rockets off.

While we're discussing school, can you remember some of the other kids names that you went to school with?

Yes, I can remember a lot of them – One of them about my age, Alan Gardiner, who lived down near the ...church, down towards Dardanup. He wasn't one of the ... Gardiner's, but he was a relative, there was Fred Guthrie who lived just up the road from us, he had another one and a half mile to walk more than we did to ..., and Dulcie Grover who was my cousin from just up the road here and Dorothy Gardiner and Marjorie Gardiner. She was a relative of mine, she was old Owen and Emma Gardiner's grand-daughter too. They were the ones about my age but there was quite a few older than me, and my brothers and sister of course, only the girl. George Ratcliffe, and Joe Ratcliffe ... Ratcliffe, Dulcie ... and Doreen Hartnett, Ray and Ernie Stephen, the other Grover girls, Shirley and Daphne Grover. Did I mention Dulcie Grover in my class?

Yes, you did.

There were quite a few others I can't recall, but they were the main ones.

What about John Flynn's family. Did any of those go to school?

John's grandchildren? Mark Flynn's daughters, I think there were two of them when I was there. Linda Flynn and Hazel Flynn – but they were quite a bit older, and I only went to school with them for a little while. There was Eric and Ian, commonly known as Dick, and Strick...

What was - ?

They were Gardiners. Strick and Ian (or Dick), Dorothy and Eric and Betty. They were all Gardiners too

There were quite a lot at the school. You said twenty to twenty five.

There were several age groups in that, you know. There were other students, odd ones who came and went, but I just can't remember - there were the Fowlers, Enid and Norma Fowler, .. most of them shifted away .. there's not many old ex-students at the Ferguson now, there's only a few left here now

If we think of anything more to do with the school, we can come back to it. – We got as far as your schooling at the level of sixth standard. After that, what was the case of education here in Ferguson?

Well, most of the children were due to leave, they were nearly fourteen by that time, but there were odd ones that took on correspondence classes but they didn't seem to be very satisfactory. I know I did the last year that was supposed to be correspondence but we never sent the work away, I just did it under the supervision of the primary school teacher and he reckoned I wasn't getting on very well and I reckoned I wasn't getting on very well, so he said something to my father about it and they decided I'd had --- I could knock off, so I jumped at the chance, because I was fed up with it by then.

So that was virtually the end of your schooling days.

That was the end of my formal schooling, but it wasn't for some years after that they started going on to High School. Just after the Second World War, I think just few odd ones boarded in Bunbury, and went to High School from there. And from that, this Fisher Muller who'd married my sister, he had a couple of High School sons and he started running them down to Dardanup to catch Dick Martin's bus service. He came through from Donnybrook through Dardanup picking children up on the way, and he used to take them

down to Dardanup at eight o'clock or whatever in the morning and go and pick them up again in the evening or afternoon. That was, I think, wholly funded by the local parents for a start and they kept on at the Education Department and I think they eventually got it subsidised a bit.

Then after that, my brother Arnold bought an International panel van style of thing, and he put a couple of seats in it along the side and he could put in about eight or ten children, and he did that for some time until it was taken over by - wholly funded bus by the Education Department. And from then on we had a High School bus ever since, although sometimes there's not very many on it from up on the Ferguson - they fill it up on the way between here and Bunbury, I believe. And we also now, that the Ferguson school has closed down in the same time as Wellington Mill, Waterloo and Dardanup Primary schools closed, and they built a bigger school in Dardanup and all the local primary go to the central school now.

You have grandchildren going in on that?

Oh, yes. My grandchildren go in on that. Some of them go to the primary school and one is going to the high school, Ryan the eldest, Greg's eldest son, is going to the high school from here, but when my daughter was going, and my two sons too, we didn't have to subsidise them, there has always been a Government one since our children been going. But they have been left for a long time now.

... the Church denominations that have been catered for on the Ferguson?

The original Ferguson church, was built I think around about 1879 on land that was donated by Mr Ephraim Gardiner, whose property is still in the family. John Gardiner has still got the property that is over the road from that now, and I think it was called at that time a Mission church, and I think it was more or less open to any denomination. It wasn't any particular denomination, I know there were the Anglicans and the Congregationalist actively involved. But whether any other denomination actually held services there I don't know. I don't recall that, because it wasn't any particular denomination, it was more a community church.

A Minister would just visit?

What the arrangements were when I was young - they had the first and third Sunday was a service by the Anglicans, and the second and fourth was done

by the Congregationalist, or it might have been vice-versa, I'm not sure. And the fifth Sunday, when it did come, five Sundays in the month, which happened two or three times a year, there wasn't a service at all on that day. But the general practice was in those days, that the Anglicans went to the Congregational services and vice-versa, and it was a different thing altogether, to what - it was more of a social event, and they had their little service, and there were a few trees around there, and in the summer time, I can well recollect standing with the adults, talking under the trees for an hour or two after the service, it seemed quite a social event that they would go and exchange their views and get a bit of fellowship with one another, and it was good.

"the church was a brick building. I believe the bricks were clay bricks and sun-dried I think."

How many would you say would be attending?

Usually there would be about twenty five or thirty, I would think. There was never a big lot, but that carried on until - during the war I think it was still going until the Ferguson had a big conflagration in the district, a fire went through in April 1950 and unfortunately the old church was no more, it got burnt

But getting back to the origins of the church, it was a brick building, with ... rendered inside and out. I believe the bricks – the mud was obtained somewhere close to there, but I never been able to find out where the mud came from – the clay I mean, not mud, they were not mud bricks, they were clay bricks and sun-dried I think. And evidently the clay was obtained close around there somewhere but I've never been able to find out exactly where.

Was that a volunteer effort to make the bricks?

Well, I don't know that even for sure. It was well before my time. But the land was donated, and stayed vacant there for some time before the church was actually built.

Was the Graveyard on it?

Yes, the old graveyard. ... the burials – I think burials took place some time before the church was built. I think that is what happened, but I'm not one hundred percent sure of that, but some of the graves go back a good way. The cemetery is still being used on odd occasions; there was one burial only about a month or so ago. Mainly, most of the old pioneers have been buried there, but most of them go in to be cremated or are buried in the Bunbury lawn cemetery.

But I don't think there are any Roman Catholics buried in the cemetery, not that I can recall. The last one may have been, he was a Dutch fellow, whether they were or not, I don't know ..

So with Congregational and Anglican services, anyone outside that area, say Roman Catholics would have gone to Dardanup or elsewhere?

Yes. Well even in the early days, my great grandfather, old Harry Flynn, he lived on the Ferguson with his family for some years after and he went to both the local Anglican Church when John Flynn's family, they were Anglicans, he went with them on one Sunday, and when his daughter, who was Mary Slattery, went off to the Catholic Church he used to go with them there too I believe. I think that's information from Norm.

When the fire destroyed that church, you no doubt recall the building of the new one?

Oh yes, I was actively involved in the building of the new one. And it took us from 1950 till 1953 or '54 before we eventually raised enough money to build a new one. I think the date on the tablet down there is wrong, It's fifty four, and should have been fifty three, or vice-versa, and it was done by community effort too. It was the local people who got together, started fund-raising and volunteers for this, and volunteers for that and we even had the timber in the round, the trees, donated mainly by Victor Gardiner and his wife, who had property up the road here. And we got the timber up there and carted it off by voluntary truck up to Mullers mill. Fisher Muller I've mentioned before, his mill was up where Kevin Stone is now living and he cut the timber for the church with a bit of voluntary help, and also he arranged with the Forestry Department to get some she-oak logs out of the country over towards the T.V station area where there was some fairly good she-oak and he cut the timber, she-oak timber, for the pews to be built. And they were manufactured by Jack Inglis, who was a local cabinet maker in Bunbury at the time, and the contractor who built the church was J.G. Hough & Son, the manager, he was getting up in years, he was Percy Hough. I think he only died a few years ago, he was the contractor for the building.

And a lot of the pews were individually financed, and I think the names are on the end of - a lot of the pews have been marked with different ones, different families who donated money, enough money for a pew, and the pulpit was donated by someone else, the alter by someone else. And if you like to go into the Ferguson Church you can find out - there's a little glass

case on the wall now, but unfortunately, the way times have changed, the old church is locked up now. We used to leave it open to everyone, anyone who liked to go and have a look, but we've got so much vandalism, and things and stuff stolen out of it once, so we decided they'd have to lock it, and unfortunately it's locked at the moment.

I did visit it once, and I noticed there's a lot of grave headstones in there too, around the walls. They must have been partly destroyed were they?

There's only that one, I think, that survived the fire, and that was a Memorial to Douglas Gardiner who was killed in the World War One. I think there was a tablet there for my uncle Basil Gibbs who was killed, but the tablet was destroyed of his, but there are a lot of others little name tags around that would be of interest to anyone who's interested in the district, that have family here.

But of course, the Congregationalists amalgamated with the Wesleyans and called it the Uniting Church, and there hasn't been a Uniting Church service held in there for quite a number of years, there's only one or two families left in the district now of the Uniting Church. But the Anglicans still hold only about one service a month, but we had a service down there a couple of nights before Christmas, one was a conventional church service, Carols by Candlelight which filled the church up but it was quite pleasant.

Now let's now talk about your war departure. What age you were, and the circumstances of that.

I turned eighteen years of age in 1939, and you know what happened towards the end of 1939, the war was declared in early September, and I was three months over eighteen so I thought this'll do me, I'm off. But it didn't work out that way. I would have gone then, I was silly enough to have gone then but my parents knew better than I knew and they wouldn't release me because I was in a man-powered job. I got called up to be processed or whatever they called it – everyone from the ages from eighteen up to sixty or something like that had to register, even my old dad, he had to go and register, he got medically unfit – or essential services. I was essential service too, man-powered to stay home, so I stayed home.

At that stage there was only your father and yourself working the home farm?

Yes, I was working at home at the time.

No brothers?

My brother had gone out to the - he had got married, just after the war started. He got married in 1940 just a few months after the war started, and of course he wasn't living at home then. He'd got his own trucking business then. I was working on the farm, and I wasn't at all happy – I'd got educated a bit, all my mates had gone and I was still here, and eventually prevailed on them and they decided they'd let me go. They had to sign a form to allow me to go which I did in April 1942, just a few months before I was twenty one. I joined up and was drafted into general re-enforcements and I joined the A.I.F too, because there was a militia – the Australian Imperial Forces which were allowed to go overseas, and I went straight into the A.I.F. at Claremont and didn't know where I was going this was general re-enforcements, I didn't know what I was going to do.

"things were going bad in the Pacific after the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbour in December 1941. Then early in 1942 Darwin got bombed and that really stirred me up"

Anyway at that time things were going bad in the Pacific, it was just after the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbour in December 1941.

Then early in 1942 Darwin got bombed and that really stirred me up, and I think that alerted a lot of people that things were getting urgent so that's when my parents decided that I could go. It was just after the bombing of Darwin that I enlisted, and I thought I would be going overseas. But just at that time - after Japanese were so rampant in the Pacific the A.I.F was on its way back from the Middle East - and just at that time as they were coming back I got in, and of course I wasn't posted to anywhere in particular.

At that time they were calling local smaller units, and I was interviewed; after about three months I did my general rookies course at Claremont Show Ground, and then I shifted up to the Ascot Race Course at Belmont and I was doing a driver and mechanics course on motor trucks which I was quite interested in. I expected it was better to drive a truck than walk, I think might have been the idea. Any way I did a driver's training school there, and then a chap named Bill Blown, he was a mechanical engineer from Kalgoorlie, he had been commissioned to form a mobile workshop, mechanical workshop and he interviewed me to do this workshop, and of all things he was looking for a Batman, and he wanted to know if I would be prepared to be a Batman. Well that was the last thing I wanted, and I told him straight what he could do with his Batman's job. I didn't say much in

many words but he knew that I wasn't interested. Anyway he took me on as a driver anyway at that time, and that was how I came to get into that. We came to Ascot doing a driver training course, and came back to Claremont where he formed his Unit, and we took off from there---

What was that chap's name?

Bill Blown, he was a Major, Major Bill Blown who was a mechanical engineer from Kalgoorlie. He finished up as General Manager of Western Mining Corporation, and we went up to, of all places, a State Farm on Wongan Hills, which is about one hundred and twenty miles north of Perth up through Northam and Goomalling, up the line there. And we started from scratch up on the station – Agricultural Farm, and camped there with tents, and all our mobile workshop gear – we were a mobile workshop, all of our machinery was supposed to be mounted on vehicles, so we could move them, and we'd be mobile. We spent twelve months, which was very aggravating, on the State Farm fixing up staff cars and generally mucking around, and we weren't very happy at all. We weren't doing much, just a waste of time, but I suppose the powers that be reckoned we were there if we were wanted. Any way we stopped there for twelve months.

And from there we got marching orders again – we didn't know where we were going, they just said that we were moving out on such and such a day, so we packed up all our gear and drove into the Wongan Hills railway station and loaded our motor vehicles onto flat-top railway wagons. And from there we went up to Kalgoorlie, and you know what happened there. We had to transfer all our gear on to the four foot six gauge transcontinental railway. So we lashed all our vehicles on to the flat-tops again, and I don't know much about the general movement of the unit, we were about one hundred and sixty strong then and had quite a lot of gear. I went into the advance party to get the camps ready, and my little experience, I suppose I might as well tell you, we got to Kalgoorlie, and had to unload all our trucks from the three foot six gauge on to the four foot eight and a half gauge to go across the Trans'. And it was a pretty hairy ride across there, the only sleeping accommodation we had was in our own motor vehicles, we had no conventional railway wagons, and we even had our own tucker on board, there was no cook or anything on board. We lived pretty hard, even going to the toilet wasn't much fun, going about sixty miles an hour going across the Nullabor.

We stopped once or twice, I think we left Kalgoorlie about, just after dark, which was another bit of a lark; we got into Kalgoorlie, and we were told there was no leave, no-one was to go into the town, we were stopped at Parkes, which was only a kilometre or two out of the town, and within half an hour there were only two of us left at the train, I think all the rest – mostly Kalgoorlie blokes that were in this Unit with Major Blown were all down at the Pub, and another chap named Campbell and myself, he was a Corporal, and we were about the only two left on the train. I wasn't interested in drinking much, I had no one I knew in Kalgoorlie, and I stopped with Jim, and by the time the train was due to go, you could hear the mob coming, most of them turned up and a lot of them were a bit merry.

One chap in particular I remember – we knew he was missing because Jim and I more or less checked them as they came in, and this bloke was missing and we couldn't find him at all, anyway we went without him. He caught up, when the other party caught up with us afterwards, we said to this chap, his name was – it doesn't matter, I've forgotten it, I'll think of it in a minute, he said 'I could hear you calling, but I was too drunk to answer you, I was laying down alongside the tracks, I could hear you calling but I couldn't do anything about it'. He got away with it, they didn't penalise him.

Do you know about what date this would have been when you were leaving Kalgoorlie?

Well, it was late 1943, it would have been about August, I would think. August or September, somewhere round about then.

Can you remember the Unit number?

Yes, at that time we were called the 5th Army Ordinance Workshops, but they changed the name not long afterwards to 5th Infantry Troop Workshops, and anyone with a trade grouping which a lot of them were - they had one, two and three grades of tradesmanship - and we were called craftsmen, not privates, as the general army were. I finished up being a craftsman myself. I went in as a driver, but I got a bit sick of this driving, there wasn't much doing in the way of driving, and I got interested in the mechanical part, and eventually got my driver-mechanic, which was trade group three. Then I saw one of the Captains in charge, or one of the Sergeants, and got myself transferred into the actual working in the workshop, and it wasn't long before I was made a trade group two mechanic which gave me an extra bob a day.

Oh, by the way, the pay we got when I first enlisted was six shillings a day, which is sixty cents in today's currency. And when I got my driver-mechanic's ticket, I got another shilling a day I think it was, and with trade group two mechanic got another shilling. So I was in amongst the money – I got up to eight bob a day. I finished up in the workshop full time. And from there as I say, we went across the Nullabor strapped on the back of these railway trucks, and got to Port Augusta after about two days. It doesn't take long to go across, and we all leapt off the train, there were only about fifteen of us in the advance party, and the local community of Port Augusta took everyone of us and put us in their own homes for that night, and even contacted our parents to tell them where we were. We still take our hats off to those people.

"we got to this little place called Quorn, a big bough shed, trestle tables, and we all got a really good meal. And the ladies of that town ought to have had medals, they must have fed thousands of troops going up there"

And then we had to change trains again there. We had to get off the four foot eight and a half gauge rail, onto the three foot six gauge Ghan, the old train that went up from Port Augusta through Quorn up to Alice Springs. And we transferred on to that on the trip up through Quorn, it was a long drag up out of Port Augusta up over the foothills there, it was just about walking pace; the old steam engine was battling. And when we got to this little place called Quorn, every soldier on the trains that were coming through - it was a staging town - and the local community there had a big bough shed and they had trestle tables, and we all got an honest, really good meal from that. And the ladies of that town ought to have had medals, every one of them. They must have fed thousands of troops going up there, thousands were going up there then, and they did a wonderful job. And we went up to Alice Springs, and unloaded the gear, that was as far as the train went, and we waited there for the rest of our group to arrive.

We had a couple of days at Alice Springs, and it rained like fury. We got a thunderstorm the night we got into Alice Springs, and our second train had a job to get through as all the track was under water. The Todd River was flowing a banker down to Heavi-tree Gap and we were paddling back to our sleeping accommodation after we'd had a meal. It really poured, there must have been several inches of rain.

From there, we unloaded from the three foot six gauge, and drove our motor trucks up to Mataranka where we took two or three days, we could only do

about thirty miles and hour, in those big four wheel drive army trucks. I was in charge of one, I was driving one of those. We went to the 10th Advance Base Workshop in Mataranka where the personnel there had been up there for twelve months without any home leave, and we more or less went up there to relieve them to let them have a bit of leave. And we stopped there, I think about eight months, and that was the most unhappy time I did spend in the army.

I didn't like it at all there. The tucker was something cruel, we nearly starved; the food was almost inedible. There was nothing much to do and we couldn't even buy beer, only two bottles a week, not that that worried me much. There was plenty of what they called lolly water; there was a soft drink factory up there. You could buy it for three pence a bottle I think it was. It was the only thing cold, so we used to buy that and get one bottle of beer a week.

We stopped there for, I think it was eight months, then we packed up all our gear and went up to a place called Adelaide River and we set up camp there. That was getting close to where the business was going on up there, and that was one of the happiest times I've had. The food was good, we got our own cook going again there, we had the same style of food delivered to us I suppose, but our own Sergeant cook put on really good meals, the weather was better and conditions were better. We were working under our own officers, and we were quite happy at Adelaide River and ... stopped there for two or three months and I got sent away to a Tech College course in welding and fitting down at the Melbourne Tech. I went down there in August 1944, I think it was and stopped there....

How did you travel down?

On the 'Ghan' again, down as far as – I don't think we changed trains at Alice Springs -

I think we branched off at Quorn, I think the three foot six gauge went across to Peterborough. And of course we didn't have trucks, we were passengers and were in carriages then but the carriages were grossly overcrowded. My mate and myself, there were two of us went to this course, we lay down in the corridor, it was the only place where we could get some sleep. We had to sleep, we had been in open coal trucks, coming down from Adelaide River to – the railway went down as far as Larimar then – we spent overnight in that, and that was pretty frightening, we were covered with railway cinders out of

the coal by the time we got down there. And then we got into these other carriages that had not enough room, and we were head to toe to fit in the corridor to get a sleep and people wanting to get along the corridor was a bit awkward. Some were getting up in the luggage racks to sleep, and all over the place.

We got to the Tech College in Melbourne and camped at Royal Park then, which is out near the zoo – the Melbourne Zoo. We did a fitting course in Melbourne for a few weeks, and I was just starting to do a welding course and nearly finished up, and I got called into the Orderly room when I got back from work one night and they said 'you're on the train for Western Australia tomorrow' your discharge has come through.

My old dad, unbeknown to me had applied to get me out again in 1944 and I was a civilian within a week. That was my – with hindsight I would have said that I would have done more good by staying home than I did by going, but it satisfied me, but I feel sorry since the way my old dad and my sister were left to carry on the farm. My old dad wasn't very well at the time, he was well up in his fifties, and my young sister, they lived with the help of one of the younger neighbours that weren't of military age, and they ran the farm for two and a half years.

Which sister was that?

Mavis, the one that was out here yesterday – the young one, she's seventy-odd now [small laugh] but she worked pretty hard.

So you weren't resentful when you got back that you'd been dragged home?

No, I'd had enough by then. I'd satisfied my problems, and I'd got sick of the discipline and that, but I had a lot of good times. I had an excellent lot of chaps I was with, they were actually really good fellows, ninety nine percent of them were really good blokes.

Can you recall a few of the Officers' names?

Oh, I can remember – William Blown- was the Commanding Officer, a chap named Cliff Steedman, he was from Ford Motor Company, North Fremantle, and there was Colin Yates, he was a mechanical man too; I don't know much about him and Ross Menzies, he was a Lieutenant – some of them were not much good. And even the Sergeants, and the Warrant Officers, we were more or less, we were on first name terms, not like the British army where you had

to stand to attention to talk to, and that sort of thing. They were all good, most of them were really good fellows, and I enjoyed the comradeship, and there was no stealing, you could leave your gear around, and your money laying around. I never lost anything. You never thought of anything like that.

And the trade that you learnt, would have been quite useful.

It was, it was quite handy. But I was always interested in mechanical things, and it was what I just happened to fall into. It was better than foot-slogging. But as I say, I felt a bit sorry afterwards, the way in which my dad and my sister had to run the farm, for he only lived three years after I came back.

So when exactly was that?

I came home in October 1944. Just two and a half years I spent in the Force.

"I took over the farm in 1947, three years after I got married dad died. The cows were milked and even had quite a bit of fruit for the orchard was in full bearing at that stage"

There would have been plenty of work to do on the farm.

There was plenty to do, the farm was only half cleared then.

Your father died three years after that. Just more or less from when you took the full rein?

Yes, I took over in 1947, three years after I came back. Three years after I got married he died. Are you still recording?

And just to refresh on what we taped last time. Exactly what sort of work was happening on the farm just then?

Well, just the bare necessities. There were no improvements or anything like that, no fences fixed up or that sort of thing. Livestock were looked after, the cows were milked and even he had quite a bit of fruit for the orchard was in full bearing at that stage, and he didn't even have to harvest the apples. They were paid. They sent the assessors around and estimated the crop, and they got paid for the apples without even - there was a big surplus of apples, and they didn't know what to do, and the apples were left to rot and fall off, and they were paid so much a bushel for what the assessors assessed at. That was for one or two years.

But there wouldn't have been any improvements and that going on, a little bit of hay, but hay-making didn't amount to much in those days, and I think the neighbours used to help him a bit. But some of the other families, the husband went and just left the wives and kiddies to run the farm.

I know one of the Gardiners over here – Ralph Gardiner – Leonie's father-in-law, he went in the Air Force, and his wife Edie, she ran the farm on her own, and her old father-in-law, old Jim Gardiner. I don't know how they managed, but they did, they were Britons, there's no doubt about them.

It would have been good at the time, that the whole war over and done with. Most people wanted to get on with their lives.

My brother was still in the district at that time. He was running his truckie business. I think he would have helped Dad with the hay and that sort of thing. But my brother, he would have gone to the war, but he tried to enlist twice, but he was medically 'unfit' he had asthma and they wouldn't take him, so he was still in the district ----

That was Arnold?

Yes, and he lived just down the road, so he had a bit of a back-up there. But just after the war, things were still pretty grim, too. I mean, I was married in 1947 which was two years after the war finished and I couldn't even get a permit – and I had the money in the Bank – but I couldn't even get enough money – I had the money, I couldn't even get a permit from the Housing Commission to build a house. You had to have a family. A wife wasn't good enough, you had to have some kids as well. So I went to Bunnings, and I got everything down to the last nail, they could have supplied me to build a house, got it all ready, sent it up to the Housing Commission and got a knock back. So we had to live in a little two-roomed house that was on old Victor Gardiner's property just down the road here, we lived for two and a half years. And even then I still couldn't get a permit after two and a half years, and eventually, my brother was employing a native lad on the Native Mission Farm which was opposite the Children's orchard up at Roelands at the time, and another chap at -----

Now this old chap, Powell his name was, he was something to do with the Mission, he was a friend of Albany Bell, who started the Mission Farm I think. He was going to build his house there, but by the time they got it built, his health deteriorated, and he actually hadn't finished building the house, he had the framework up, but it wasn't finished completely. And my brother was up there, talking to the supervisor of the Native Mission Farm, where this lady he had working for him came from, and he told me about this house and I went up and had a look at it, and it was for sale, partly completed. Brand new, it had hadn't been finished, the roof was on, the walls were all up,

the lining was in, the floor was cut out and was turned over but not nailed down fortunately, because it was T & G flooring

Tongue and grooved

and I bought it for eight hundred pounds. I had enough money to pay for it, I bought it for cash. But it was an eight-roomed house, with three more rooms built under the front, it was on a steep side of a hill, and I got the whole lot, eleven rooms, for eight hundred pounds, cash. And I was stoney broke. We pulled it down, bit by bit, and numbered all the pieces, I put the stumps in – restumped it, I put the stumps down, and gradually carted it – we couldn't bring it down in sections, because it was twelve foot walls, and they were too wide to bring home – not that we could have pulled it to bits, I don't think, we didn't have the means of transporting it. But my brother did have a three and a half ton truck, and we pulled it all down, and I couldn't even buy nails, I used to get a pound of nails now and again from a hardware shop in Bunbury, couldn't get bricks, couldn't get anything. Everything was there to finish the house except it didn't have a brick chimney, so I had a tin chimney started on one side, but I didn't want that so I decided I would put in a brick chimney. And I did all the work myself, running the farm, and I employed a young fellow named Syd Gardiner from Wellington Mills, who had been in the Japanese Occupation Forces. And he had just come home from Japan and he was looking for work, and I employed Syd for a couple of weeks, putting in the stumps and that sort of thing and that was the only wages I had to pay.

I concentrated on the back part of it, and finished that off, and we shifted into it in October 1949, I think it was. And even then, I wouldn't have got the bricks to build the chimney if it hadn't been for the local carrier, who knew Bill Prowse, was the Dardanup carrier, he knew the chaps at the brickworks at Waterloo, and he got some bricks for me, enough to build a chimney. But they were horrible bricks, and there was enough decent bricks, you can see them there now, they were the better ones, and I used them where they could be seen and all the ... ones that went up, was covered up, they were twisted and warped and badly burnt and not cooked and all sorts of things, and fell to bits if you dropped them. But they have been standing there for forty-five years now.

But just another bit of interest, I put the foundation down for the chimney and I couldn't lay the bricks myself, so I decided I'd get a couple of local

bricklayers from Bunbury to come and do it, Littlefairs – Bert and - not Bert, Albert, - two of the Littlefairs, well known bricklayers in Bunbury, I've forgotten their Christian names, and they said they would do it for me on week-ends. They were working for Percy Hough I think at the time, the chap that built the Church afterwards. And they were looking for a bit of extra work and they had a utility so they said they would do it, and they wanted to know what I had – I couldn't even get a bag of cement, I put the foundation down with big rocks and all I had to put down to hold them together, or keep them apart, whichever you like, was a bit of sand and lime with mortar, and I just put big rocks down underneath. And it hasn't moved. It's been there I say for forty-five years now.

"I put the foundation down with big rocks and all I had to put down to hold them together was a bit of sand and lime with mortar, and it hasn't moved. It's been there I say for forty-five years now. "

And these chaps built a big concrete lintel – they had a bag of cement, they got from somewhere, the bricklayers, and they made a big concrete lintel to go across the stove, and they came out from Bunbury in their ute, two of them, paid their own travelling, brought this lintel out, worked here from eight o'clock. They had it finished, had all the chimney done, and the stove bricked in, the stove came without, they bricked that in, and rendered round the stove, and they were gone by four o'clock. And they charged me ten pounds. So that's what wages were – and they reckoned that was a good days pay for two of them, and they supplied the lintel and then drove their vehicle out and back, and the chimney's still there today. And that's why the old house – it wasn't designed like we wanted, but it's the thing we got.

The other rationing was, that when I was away, when I'd come home on leave, I wouldn't even ring my parents up or let them know that I was coming home sometimes, because I knew they would go to Dardanup to pick me up off the train, and they just didn't have the petrol to do it. I'd come up on the cream truck or borrow a bike once or twice to get home. They were getting three gallons of petrol a month for their car, and they could use nearly half of that going to Dardanup to pick up their petrol. So I didn't like to say I was coming home, so I just arrived, the best way I could. And then even after I came home, you had coupons to buy clothes, coupons to buy butter and meat and tea, I think, and what else was there – there were several other things that were - Clothing and food, some items of food, right

up until several years after we were still on rations, and it wasn't until quite a few years before you could buy building materials.

My father was trying to put up with this three gallons of petrol, he wasn't going to tell a few little white lies, which I said that when I go home I'm going to do something about it. So I got to work and I told them what our position was, and I didn't actually tell lies, but I might have bent the truth a little bit and we finished up getting fourteen gallons I think it was, after we tried again for it. But some of them were trying to run on power kerosene and that wasn't rationed. You could get power kerosene that they were running a lot of the stationary engines on, but to put it in the car engine, it didn't get hot enough, and they used to have some fun with it. Some of them even tried to use distillate - diesel fuel - but that didn't work very well.

Then my brother, who was doing this carting, he put in what they called a charcoal gas producer on his truck, which was an abomination of a thing – it had a big thing like a hot water system tank built into a cut-away part of the body, to put this in, and you had to burn charcoal in a pit – he didn't burn charcoal, he used to buy it and put it in this hopper thing and then stoke it up, it had several and you used to have to go through before it got to the engine and then it only produced about half power. If you had a crook bag of charcoal it wouldn't go at all. If you got good charcoal it wasn't too bad, you lost a lot of your power – and filthy! You did about thirty miles on a good bag of charcoal, then you had to lift the lid and stand back and throw a match in while it went 'woof' while it burnt all the excess gas out of the way so you could go and put another bag of charcoal in. And after you put the bag of charcoal in it took it a while before it started producing gas again, and then away you'd go. And he looked like an aborigine half the time – he was that black! You'd get it ingrained into your skin and you couldn't get it out. And they put up with that for years, until, I think a Liberal government was installed in Canberra at the time, and one of their election promises was that they'd give up fuel rationing.

The Labour Party reckoned they couldn't manage without fuel rationing and Menzies reckoned he could, and I think that's what put Menzies into business, for this flaming petrol rationing was an absolute abomination. Trying to put up without petrol. Dad used to get diesel fuel for his milking machine alright, he had no restriction for that, he could get plenty of distillate for his milking engine, but he couldn't get petrol for his car.

So things were pretty tough for quite a number of years after the war.

And they slowly got better?

"I left school during the Depression when things were very tight. In the middle of the Depression we didn't have any money. Eventually things got a little bit better, then the war started"

Yes, slowly got better. I was a bit unfortunate in some ways, I suppose. I was born in 1921, and left school during the Depression when things were very tight. I only got a Primary school education and went to work when I was fourteen, and in the middle of the Depression we didn't have any money. Eventually things got a little bit better, just starting come good when the War started, and of course that upset us all again.

I went away for two and a half years, and came back and couldn't even get a permit to build a house. I was a bit disgusted. And I've had no help from the government since.

Can't even get a pension now. But I've survived, we survived quite happily

Let's talk about farming. When you came back from the War, you carried on clearing the property and that allowed you to increase your carrying capacity. So it was mainly beef cattle that you were running?

No, we were still dairying then. We were milking up to about forty cows at that stage of the game. When my old dad died in 1947, I took over the partnership with my mother for a long time. She was as good as a man in the dairy. She used to help me milk for a lot of the time. And we ran it together for a number of years. At that stage, 1949 the first bulldozer arrived on the scene, two years after I took it, and that was the turning point in farming here. The trouble was to find the money. We used every spare pound we had, we put into bulldozing clearing more property. I think we paid about three pounds ten, which is seven dollars in today's currency, an hour for a little bulldozer to clear. It couldn't push big timber, we had to put it in the smaller stuff and clear that first. Some of even the old hundred acres wasn't cleared by then so we finished up clearing this hundred acres, and that was the first I had done. And from then on I eventually - kept on milking - and cleared the rest of the two hundred and ninety acres that my parents had, or just about finished clearing that, and then the Grover's next door who had sold out – they'd sold to a chap named McDonald during the war. McDonald was running the Grover place and he decided he was going to get out of it and close friend and neighbour, Jake Gardiner, who was one of the local

Gardiner's over the hill that I was brought up with, he was like me, he didn't have any money but we decided to buy this place.

We took half each and bought it between us. I had to borrow a bit of money to get that but I cleared that. And got that under way and then another block out at Joshua Brook, which is about three miles away, that came on the market and that was practically all bush and I bought that, which was two hundred acres. It would make you laugh, I paid seventeen thousand dollars for it, or under seventeen thousand which doesn't seem much now, it but when you saw it then it was a different tale, there was only about twenty acres of cleared land. I got it practically all bulldozed, cleared that up and just got that paid for when the slump came in the beef market, in 1974. We didn't have a debt on then, and we had it paid for, we managed without.

Do you still have the Joshua Brook?

Yes, we still have that. It's in the wife's name, that's hers. It's worth a couple of hundred thousand now. Not that much, but well on the way I suppose. But anyway, just before the beef slumped, another old friend, Sam Gardiner who lived just up on the south side, he didn't have any sons, he only had daughters, and he decided he was going to sell out. He was always a great friend of our son Bruce, they got on like a house on fire, he seemed to have a mania that he wanted Bruce to have his farm when he left. So we came to an arrangement and we bought that for Bruce between us and that turned out very well. But the beef slump came just after. We had budgeted on beef prices, as we had gone out of dairying at that time, and we budgeted on buying Bruce's property. But within a few weeks or months, the bottom had dropped out of the beef market completely, and Bruce was in big trouble.

He had no way in the world that he was going to pay for it. He had borrowed money. All he could get from the bank, and they had the first mortgage on it. He got a second mortgage from Sam who was quite happy to let him have the money, the same as the Bank. He knew what we were like, so he was quite happy to lend him money. Otherwise Bruce would have been in big trouble. So Bruce went to work, he didn't have enough money to keep paying from the income from the farm, so went out to Lake Grace working on a wheat farm for a couple of years and Dorrie and I ran the farm, and did everything for a couple of years to get him on his feet. He came out of it on top.

And Greg is farming here? The other son.

Yes, he's farming, and built a house on part of the old Flynn property just up the road, and he's running the Joshua Brook property, and two hundred acres that are here.

But they haven't had to do the work we did, for it was nearly all cleared when they got it and they were running beef. But they still had to go out to work to get a bit of extra money, for farming isn't – buying property on the Ferguson today is out of the question from the farming point of view, it's just un-economic to do it, there's no way you can pay the prices they are asking now and run cattle on it. You can't make interest off it.

"he used to fell all the timber in the local bush, flatten one side for the bed logs and the stringers and sometime he would even cut the decking with a broad-axe"

A lot of hobby type farms?

Yes, well just after the war, nearly every little holding was running a small dairy, and there were twenty or thirty families making a living off the Ferguson, now there's only about half a dozen left that are self sufficient.

…….. being the mail run from Dardanup supplemented his income a little bit, but he used to do quite a lot of work for the Road Board, it wasn't the Shire in those days, it was the Road Board. He was the local bridge builder – timber bridge builder, and he built any amount of them, nearly all the bridges around the Ferguson at once stage would have been built by him. Some times he'd employed his brother or someone to give him a hand, but he was the usual, and he used to fell all the timber in the local bush, flatten one side for the bed logs and the stringers and sometime he would even cut the decking with a broad-axe. Much like a sleeper. Only they would be thinner than a sleeper.

A sleeper was usually four and a half to five inches thick where for bridge timber they would be only three. So he did a lot of that sort of work. And I have got records in his account book where he was paid for quite a number. We had names for the bridges too, so we knew where they were. And also he was quite an accomplished bush carpenter, not an expert but he built quite a number of houses around the place and all wooden ones of course.

He wasn't much of a bricklayer but he was quite good with the carpentry work which was a different style of building altogether then to what it is now. There were no tilings and built in cupboards and hot water systems and septic tanks – none of that.

It was just a shell, just wooden stumps, wooden framework, asbestos or ceiloid linings and no built in things, might have been a built in copper in the wash house, but there was no hot water systems or electric wiring or anything like that, and he did quite a lot of that.

Didn't he build the old house, back of your present house here?

Yes, he built his own home when he and mum were married in 1915. I presume it was ready for habitation when they were first married because I never heard of them living anywhere else. And it was a four-roomed cottage with a verandah back and front – no, a verandah on the front, I'm not sure whether they had a verandah on the back or not. But after a few years he bought another two rooms from his brother-in-law who had married mum's sister, and they were leaving the district and it had only been erected for two or three years and he bought that and erected it onto the back of the present one, making it into a six-roomed place.

"It was about the year after I left school in 1935 or 36 that we got running water on. We tapped it into a spring up the creek. It was like turning on the goldfields water scheme when we got water coming out"

It was comfortable in some ways, but very primitive in others. It was dry and reasonably warm, but there was no labour-saving devices. And I often wondered how Mum coped. We didn't have running water laid on in the early days. All we had was a one thousand gallon tank which didn't last long in the summer time when you had four kids to draw on it, and all the household use. So consequently it didn't get used except for drinking water. And all the other water came up from a hole down by the creek which was about seventy or eighty yards away, with two kerosene tins or a couple of buckets bringing it up.

I can always remember we conned him into buying a few lengths of pipe, a good many lengths actually, I think it was about twelve chain which was quite an expense in those days, of galvanized iron piping. We tapped it into a spring up the creek up behind the house, which fortunately didn't have to be pumped, it gravitated down. We dug the trench and it all had to go well underground. We dug it all out by hand and put it in. It was about the year after I left school in 1935 or 36 that we got running water on. It was like turning on the goldfields water scheme when we got water coming out the tap on the back verandah. We only had the one tap, but it was one of the most labour-saving devices you could ever think of.

Just one tap on the back verandah, and now we growl if they're not in every wash basin and all over the garden and everywhere else. But it just shows you what things were like then.

Also, my mum used to do the washing in galvanised iron tubs on a wooden bench with a couple of kerosene tins on an open fire to do the boiling and get the hot water. In later years she did manage to get a copper which dad did the bricklaying, he practised a bit and he can brick in coppers, which helped her quite a bit too. But she still had the tubs. And those tubs were drained. And when they had to be emptied they had to be carried out the back and sluiced down the paddocks.

And also, mum used to make all the bread, right from the yeast up to the finished product which was a bit of a hassle. She would get a bit of yeast from the previous week's baking. She'd get a bit of this yeast, and she would mix up some potato and all this sort of jazz, and stir it up and put it in a bottle and tie the cork down. And it would go off bang in the middle of the night so she would know her yeast was working. After that she'd get some flour and stuff and make it into a sponge, and then she used to put that by the fire and get up half a dozen times during the night to see that it was still kept warm, until the sponge had risen far enough and then she would eventually make it into the loaves. She did have a Metters stove, which was quite a good stove and she used to cook this bread in the Metters stove. And it was good bread too.

She was pretty cunning, she didn't always bring it out when it was real fresh. We always ate too much when it was fresh. She'd wait till it was a day or two old before she'd get us on to it. And she did that for years, apart from looking after the four of us and doing all the housekeeping, helping milk the cows which over the years went by, we got more and more. When I was little I think we only had about eight or ten, which she had to do a share of the milking and then of course there was the washing up afterwards and I think she fell for a fair share of that. Dad wasn't lazy, I don't want to give you that impression, he was anything but, he was very industrious but he had other work to do – the farm work. Mum never went out on farm-work. She always ...

What would happen to that milk, at that time?

Well, we had a little separator in those days. And it was carried in buckets from the milking yard which was – we had no shelter to milk in, the cows

were just in an open yard, in all weathers, you can imagine in winter time it wasn't very pleasant and the milk was carried down to the little room we built under the lilac tree with a separator in it, and we separated with the hand-turned machine and carried the milk back down again to give to the calves. So the milk arrived down and back.

Afterwards we got up to about twenty-five or thirty cows as we got a bit more land cleared, it was always a hassle getting the land cleared of course. But getting back to the dairying, we got up to twenty-five cows we had what we called the MDK system milking the cows. That was Mum, Dad and the Kids. And we got a bit fed up with this. My younger sister and I were falling for it after we left school were falling for the bulk of it 'cause my other brother and sister had gone.

We worked on him for a couple of years before we got him to consider getting an engine. We got him to build a new shed down over the road, and we got a brand new Lister diesel engine to drive the separator. And that was something like the goldfields water scheme! It was a great event when this old Lister – well it was a new Lister then. Incidentally, the Lister cost one hundred and five pounds, which was a lot of money in those days. We had it going on the separator for a year or two, then my sister and I kept working on him and we eventually talked him into getting this milking machine. And that was really an event when we got the milking machine, we could do the milking in a fraction of the time that we used to do it.

That was all produced through the separator, the butter fat. How would you get that to ....?

Our dairy produce, milk, was all separated. We had our own separator in those days. And we had a local contractor carting the cream into what was the Sunny West Dairies – I think it's had half a dozen names, but it finished up as the Sunny West Diaries, and we had a truck picking it up here and taking it to Bunbury in my time. It wasn't until about 1954 or 1953, somewhere about that, we went off the separating. By the way, while we were doing the separating, the cream went to Bunbury, and the separated milk we fed to calves, and at that stage we started to get a few pigs.

We had built some sties for the pigs and we used to run quite a few pigs. Pretty often buy in little pigs and raise them up to porker or bacon size. It wasn't till after I took over that I eventually got some sows and bred my own for a few years. I never liked dairying.

I didn't mind cows out in the paddock, but I didn't like them in the dairy much. I never liked milking. And I always declared that I wasn't going to keep on dairying for the rest of my life. So eventually, after my Dad died in 1947 at the age of 60, when I took over the place I eventually, in a couple of years, I did away with the separating and just sent the whole-milk for cheese manufacture.

I was the instigator for getting the milk trucks coming up from Dardanup to pick up the milk - there were three of us started off, my brother Arnold and Max Kerr at that time had taken over his uncle's farm just down the road, and the three of us got together and we got a milk truck to take the whole-milk up to Harvey where it was turned into cheese, mainly. Then in later years, we had to go on to quota milk, which meant milking three hundred and sixty five days of the year or go out of dairying altogether. So I opted to go out of dairying as I didn't want to be tied up with the cows all of my life. But that was how the dairying started up here – the whole-milk business.

So you went straight on from school, staying on the family property, until it became your own in 1947?

Yes, well when I left school at fourteen, things were pretty primitive in the farming scene here. It was only just about that time that, a couple of years before that that the super-phosphate works at Picton had been built. And up till then we hadn't been able to get fertiliser, and our country is no good without super-phosphate. And it wasn't until about that stage that farming really took a lift in the area when the super-phosphate works got going. Spreading super-phosphate was one job I must mention because it really was primitive.

The first super-phosphate sown when I left school was with a deal box, a soft wood box, with a strap around your neck, tossing it out with both hands as you walked. And you know how heavy super is – twelve bags of it weighs a ton, so you couldn't put too big a box, and it was pretty hard work, particularly on these hills. If you went out and sowed three or four bags before lunch you were doing pretty well. I don't know if you would do that much. And then we eventually we got a spreader, which I still got in the shed as a museum piece now, that we put on the back of a spring cart and did it with a horse, and that saved a lot of time and a lot of effort.

The super was brought out by a truck and was dumped in the paddock, or in the shed, and you had to man-handle all these bags and lift it up onto the

cart which was up waist high, and for the average man he was battling to lift these bags that weighed one hundred and ninety pounds each, and it took a bit of shifting and that's why most of the cockies have bad backs I think. We did that for some years, and then we eventually got rid of the horses and we got tractors drawing a spreader behind. But you always had to have a man on the back tipping the super into the spreader which was a work of art. Two travelling along a bit better than walking pace and on the rough paddocks, balancing a hundred and ninety pounds of super, trying to lift it up into the hopper. We did that for years

"I got a tractor in 1956, I think it was '56, up till then I was driving Clydesdale horses."

Do you remember when you got your first tractor?

I got a tractor in 1956, I think it was '56, up till then I was driving Clydesdale horses. And then we hooked the tractors, got the super spreader then. And a few years after that we got what we called the leg bins, and a bulk spreader, and we got rid of the old hopper thing which only held a bag or so, and we got the super spreader that held a ton, and the leg bins, you could back the spreader underneath the bin and pull a lever, and a ton run in while you were looking at it. There was no effort whatsoever, all you had to do was more or less drive the tractor and it made a lot of difference to super handling.

On the farm generally, did you go in for vegetable growing in a large spot?

No, we never grew vegetables commercially, but we nearly always had a vegetable garden for the house, and neighbours used to share them. One neighbour had a few things surplus and he would give them to you and when you got a few surplus ones you'd – same with the fruit. We would reciprocate in that way. But no, we didn't actually. There were a few who grew a few vegetables, water melons and pumpkins and things like commercially, that but we never did.

Were potatoes grown around here?

Yes, that's another thing, we grew quite a few acres of potatoes. And that was pretty primitive compared to today's methods of handling. We used to plough them in with two Clydesdale horses with a single-furrow plough, and we'd put them two rows apart every second row. We used a bag, which we used to call a 'coota'. It was a bag with a string about half-way down tied on to the bag, which you tied on to your waist and on the other end of the bag

you had a loop which went round your neck, and you had like a kangaroo's pouch tied in front of you with about thirty or forty pound of potato seed hanging about your neck and your waist, and your head down and your behind up and you had to plant them along the furrow. And you had to get round half as many times as the horse, because he had to do two laps. But even then, if the horses stepped out it took about two good men to keep up with the horses.

And then we had another man sowing the potato manure out of a bucket. He could go along a lot quicker of course, because he could stand up and walk and he only had to sow the amount of potato manure and that was the way we used to plant them. And when it came to digging them it was a matter of digging them out with a fork, picking them up and bag them into Australian Standard corn sacks, which was sixteen to the ton with potatoes, which wasn't quite as heavy as the manure. That was one of the first jobs I ever did when I left school. We used to go through the potatoes after they got to a certain stage, and hoe a bit of manure into them, or hoe the weeds out. That was always done by hand, with hand held hoes. And that was the first job I did when I left school, to hoe the potatoes. So it must have been about September when I left school. And then when it came to digging time, one of our neighbours, Victor Gardiner who lived just over the hill from us, he had a crop, not a very big crop, but he wanted someone to help him and he asked me if I would go and dig for him. So away I went with a fork, and I dug these potatoes. And you can imagine, a potato bag holds one hundred and forty pound of potatoes, and you had to dig them, and pick them up, all for ten cents a bag – that was a shilling a bag in those days, and a boy of my age, I could dig six or eight bags a day, so that was six or eight bob a day, and I reckoned it was good money. And that was my pocket money.

I never got paid a wage from my parents, not a real steady wage until after the war. I used to just work on the farm – pretty hard at that – for my keep and all my clothing and medical expenses and dental and there wasn't much of that, but clothes were supplied and all my food and a bit of pocket money. If he got a good butter cheque, he would probably give us five pounds each or something like that, but we never had a fixed wage until I enlisted in 1942, and I was twenty then.

I want to come to that, as a separate subject.

Just before we leave the potato growing, how would you dispose of the potatoes once they had all been dug and bagged?

We'd send them to produce merchants in Bunbury, who were agents for the potatoes, and we could just go and negotiate with the agents, who were Robert Forrest and Wight & Emmett in Bunbury, were the two main agents; oh the local storekeeper in Dardanup, George Harris, handled thousands of tons of potatoes, some years. There were a lot of potatoes grown around Dardanup, particularly after the Wellington dam went in, and they had irrigation. We didn't have the means of growing summer potatoes up here because of lack of moisture, but in Dardanup they grew thousands of tons of them in some years.

It all seems to have gone now. We did it commercially for a few years and just after the war there was a bit of a glut of them and the Potato Board started and they all went through a Board then, which we found to be quite satisfactory. Some years before I was actually involved in the running of the farm, when I was only a child, they used to grow a few potatoes here, and some years they would get a payable price and sometimes they would get perhaps only one pound ten a ton, which didn't cover the cost of growing and digging them. They were left in the ground sometimes.

What about disease. Did you ever lose crops?

No, we never had much problem with disease. The biggest hassle we had was frosts with the winter crops. If you got a late frost, after they'd come up, you usually planted them in June or July, and they would come up in about a month, so if you got frost in August or September sometimes we would get them wiped out or nearly wiped out with frost. But apart from that, no we never had much disease.

One year particularly, 1929, I remember, when I was only eight year old, I remember as if was yesterday, he had about the biggest patch he ever planted, he must have been optimistic I think, and he planted four or five acres which was a fair bit in those days, and when it came time to dig them he could get seventeen or eighteen pounds a ton for them, and he did very well out of it.

That's when he got rid of the T-model Ford and bought his new motor car which was his pride and joy. He bought a brand new Durant Six which quite a prestige car in those days. Little he could see what was around the corner.

He got this car just paid for, I think he had enough money because of the potato crop, and bought this car. Of course, next year he was going to make some money so in he put some more potatoes, and got one pound ten a ton for them, so he came a cropper. That's how uncertain the market was in those days. He made money sometimes.

"Wool was bringing about one and threepence a pound I think, butterfat was about the same. Fruit was almost unsaleable because nobody had money to buy it."

That was leading up to the Depression, I'm talking about, of course - the slump, everything went bust. All in a few months, here. About 1931-32 they were absolutely down and out. There was practically no income. Wool was bringing about one and threepence a pound I think, butterfat was about the same. Fruit was almost unsaleable because nobody had money to buy it. So the Government opened up a concession out in the bush behind our place for timber cutting, sleeper cutting. So my dad went sleeper cutting to supplement our income. And he did that for two or three years. He was anything but lazy, and he went out and did this to keep us fed. We never went without a feed. I'll say that about him, never. And we were always clothed and we always had a little bit of money and he always had enough to keep the car running. But he slaved out there for a good many years.

He had a T-model and then he bought his new car. Do you know how to spell that?

Durant.

Did you have a truck at all?

No, when he died in 1947, we still had the old Durant. We had it from 1929 to 1947 and I took the farm over then, in 1947 and the old car was getting a bit worse for wear then, that's about eighteen years old and she'd done good service and the hood and that was becoming a bit dilapidated. So I cut the thing – and made it into a utility, and that's the first utility I had, the old Durant car. And that defeated its purpose, for when we got married and had a couple of children, the vehicle wasn't big enough. But I'd bought a Holden utility in the meantime, in 1953 I think it was. I bought a brand new Holden utility in 1953. Had that for a few years. We had three children – two children I think by then, and then we reckoned that was no good so we got rid of that after five years and bought our first station wagon to fit the kids in. That's a bit of the history of the transport of the place.

And a very interesting history, too. We'll stay pre-war again for the time being and have a chat about the social activities in the area when you left school and working. Did you go dancing?

Yes, particularly during the war. They used to have a monthly dance in the hall raising money for the Comforts Fund and Red Cross and that sort of thing. But I didn't see much of that, as I was away in the army myself. But even before and after that the old hall was used quite a lot actually. They used often to have dances, and there was one particular event. The old hall was built in 1905, and they called it an Agricultural Hall. I've never been able to find out for sure why it was called an Agricultural Hall unless it was some Government scheme that subsidised the rural community, could have been, to build these halls. Anyway they used to have a Grand Ball, what they called the Anniversary Ball, every year around about the same time. And it really was a slap-up – like I said about the Christmas tree. It was a real sit-down supper with sandwiches and cream puffs and jelly and ice-cream and the whole works, a two or three course meal. They had big trestle tables that they put up. They would sell the tickets with different colours, and the tables would hold so many people at a time, and depending what colour ticket you had was when you got your supper. But the ladies really must have slaved.

Was this just local committee of people running it?

Yes.

Was that hall where the present hall is?

The old hall got dilapidated after the war, and there was a lot of talk about whether it would be fixed up or whether it would be pulled down and rebuilt. Eventually they decided to rebuild. Before that, the hall was owned by a committee. The Ferguson Hall Committee owned it. But when they wanted to build a new one – I think it was 1966 they built the new one, we had to get it invested in the Shire because we had to raise a bit of money and the Banks wouldn't loan money to a Committee. The Local Government had to subsidise it or take over. They organised the finance, but they let the committee still run it just the same and that's happening even today.

And also they raised a district loan, not for the whole shire, just for the Ferguson district to build it, and they rated it and all the landowners in the District had to pay for it because it was on the rates, and we thought it was the fairest way to do it. If you take a hat around, some would give a bit and some would give none, it was very fair we thought.

And even when they got it paid for, they could have wiped the rate out, but they left a little rate on the books on the Shire to maintain the hall, and it's still working today. They have a beautiful little hall down there, they have everything they want, and nobody complains about the little rate that's on it. They have got hot water, and have just put in another big rainwater tank, they relined it and they painted it, and it's a credit to the district now. And it's worked very well, this little rate that's been on it.

And the old one, built in 1905 I guess where all weddings we held and ...?

Yes, well there was a cricket pitch just over the creek from the hall too which was another great source of entertainment. The cricket club, at the Ferguson. And the hall was always brought into service then for morning and afternoon teas and lunches. The cricket pitch was only just a couple of hundred yards over in Waddi Harris' paddock and the old pitch is still there, the concrete pitch.

Did you play cricket yourself?

Yes, I played a little bit there. But I was never much good. My dad was a real good cricketer, he was one of – I've got a medal here, a couple of medals, and he got the batting average for – and he didn't hand it on to this son anyway. I played, but I wasn't much good, but I used to enjoy it. A social event, it was very social cricket they played. Once you got into the Association it was a bit more serious, but a lot of the matches were amongst the same sort of community that we were ourselves, we really enjoyed the social event. If you won, fair enough, if you didn't nobody was downhearted.

What about football?

Well, no, Ferguson never in my memory of the Ferguson ever had a football club, but Wellington Mills did. And a lot of them, some of them from Ferguson used to play with the Wellington Mills club, but no, there was never a football club on the Ferguson as far as I know, because there was eighteen in a football club and the full district - it was a bit harder to find than eleven to play a cricket match. But we had a hockey club, which the hockey club started in the mid 1935 I think, or about the mid-1930's and that carried on for a long, long time. I played in that as soon as I left school. I played in that for quite a number of years, and I had a break during the war but I played for a few years after, but I had to give that away because the milking used to come into that. You would play a late game and you'd be late getting home to milk and that was no fun if you got home on a winters night nearly dark

and you had to go and milk about forty cows, the hockey wasn't worth it.

So that pretty well wraps up the sporting social side. Tennis?

Yes, intermittently they had a tennis club, but I was never, yes I think I joined for a while but I didn't play much tennis. They had a tennis court opposite the hall, but the road got truncated there and wiped that out a few years after it was built. We didn't look ahead far enough and the tennis club I think would be defunct at the time. But there has been a lot of good hockey players produced on the Ferguson since the Ferguson Hockey Club folded up. They all played for Boyanup afterwards, and some of the better players in the Boyanup Club, a lot of them have come from the Ferguson. But I played hockey before the war. I've still got one of the original hockey sticks here, too, which is a bit of an antique now.

We are just about to the end of this side, so that's quite a good point to have a break and then when we tape again I'd like to discuss when you left to go to way and how many men from here would have joined up at the same time.

We are resuming recording today on the 3rd January 1995, at the home of Mr Howard Gibbs, in Ratcliffe Road, Upper Ferguson.

Let's take up your story from the point of view of home entertainments in your youth.

Well, as we were children, we made our own entertainment which was playing with various things, cricket bats and marbles – we played a lot of marbles and making hill trolleys, go-cart things for down the hills and numerous things like that. Also we played with the neighbours' children on weekends and holidays we'd pretty often go and visit other children of the district, cousins and near neighbours and we made our own entertainment and nothing cost much, bits and pieces we picked up here and there to play with. We had a ball and a few things like that.

What about horses? Did you have horses?

No, we never did, our family never did – I didn't learn to ride for quite a while after I left school. As children we had draught horses on the farm but they were strictly for draught work, they were never used for riding or anything like that. And as we grew older, we used to visit one another in the evenings and play cards, rummy and euchre and things – I don't know whether euchre, but some of the simpler games, and even at home we had a

Bobs set – I don't know if you know what that is – something like billiards with a little wooden frame with holes in you would hit with a cue with a ball and get them in the right pockets, and oh quite a few of the other board games, too, like Ludo and Snakes and Ladders and --

Can you remember a few of the names of your closest mates in those days?

Well, the Gardiner family mainly, who were Chris and Bertha Gardiner's family who were - these would be grandchildren of Owen and Emma Gardiner's. They lived next door to us, and the Grover children who lived on the farm next who were my first cousins, their mother was Sophie who was Sophie Grover, my mother's sister. We had a lot to do with them, we used to go to school with them of course, and we'd make plans for doing things at weekends and that sort of thing. And the Ratcliffe boys who lived just up the road just a little bit further, they were children around about our age.

"I badly wanted a bike, some of my cousins and neighbours were getting them and I talked my dad into subsidising me to the tune of about three pounds something, to buy this bike"

And as we grew older, well we started – well one of my bit of entertainments as we got a bit older was a push-bike. I walked to school from here which was nearly three – this is getting away from the entertainment part of it, but I suppose the bike would have been one of my treasured possessions. It was in my last year of school when I was thirteen.

I had about four pounds saved up I think it was, and I badly wanted a bike, because some of my cousins and neighbours were getting them and I talked my dad into subsidising me to the tune of about three pounds something, to buy this bike. And I bought a brand new one, not a second-hand one and it was the pride and joy of my life.

Where would you have bought it?

I bought it from a cycle agency in Bunbury for three pounds - er -seven pounds, nine and sixpence, or something similar, that might not be the exact figure, but around that and I used to keep that shone up like a Rolls Royce and oiled and cleaned up and –

How did you negotiate the rough, gravel roads?

Well, we just learned to ride on them, we came numerous 'gutsers' as we called them, and we got skinned knees and arms, but we were never seriously

hurt, but it's a wonder we weren't for the way we used to ride them, but then I didn't have a motor-car as soon as I turned seventeen. We couldn't get a license in those days until we were eighteen. Even then we only had the family car and we didn't get that as often as we wanted it, there was a limit, I can understand it. But we used to go to town then pretty frequently, which wasn't home entertainment, but it was entertainment. Did I mention this on the tape before?

No, you were going to tell us about the ride on the trucks to Bunbury.

Oh, yes, well we use to, when we got into our teen-age we used to nearly always go to Bunbury on a Saturday night or Saturday afternoon, depending on what was going on on the farm. If we had to milk of course, we had to take it in turns, or when the cows were out particularly, we didn't milk all the year round then, we had about three months from January to about April when we were free of the milking, and we eased up and go to town in Bunbury and go to the pictures mainly, to the 'flicks' as we called them. You could do it for about two and sixpence and that was our main entertainment. There were numerous dances of course, but –

Who would have taken it in?

Well, mainly these Gardiner boys I was talking about – Sam and Lionel – Mike was his nick-name – and Ken and Randall. They had bought a truck around about the early 1930's, a one-ton A-Model Ford, and they used to – they rigged up a bit of a seat that ran down the length of the truck and they could take about a dozen. And we used to often have parties going to town like that, even in the winter time when it was bitterly cold, we would still go, come home half frozen.

Open back?

Open back, yes, no cover. Had a coat as a rug perhaps, but even when it was wet we had to stand the elements. There was only room for two or perhaps three in the front of the vehicle, which wasn't all that comfortable either, because there were no side curtains, just an open cab sort of thing, a wooden sort of a cab, no wind-up windows or side curtains on it.

That was going to the picture shows in Bunbury?

Yes,

What about the dances? Were you the dancing types?

Well, yes we went to a lot of dances around about that time.

Around about – a few up in Wellington Mill, they had a hall up there, and over as far as a little place we called Yabberup, which was over on the Lowden-Donnybrook road, or just the other side of Lowden on the Boyup Brook road. No I never went to the big Balls as they called them, I only went to the local dances. I wasn't an extra keen dancer, I was a bit - I had three feet sort of thing, I wasn't very light on my feet, but still you can enjoy it. Particularly when you came to the Barn dances and those sort of things, we had a lot of fun, and I'll say. this much, there wasn't a drink at the things there in those days. They'd have a bottle or two perhaps, but there was never anyone, or very seldom, anyone caused any trouble through drink. We used to drink a bit, but not to any extent, and of course we couldn't get - didn't have anything to drive, so they didn't get us for drunken driving on the 08, except –

"there would be a pianist and a drummer, and perhaps someone with a saxophone or some other instrument"

This is the dances at Ferguson Hall?

Yes, we held quite a lot of dances in the Ferguson Hall.

Dardanup?

Yes, a few in Dardanup. Well I suppose – a lot in Dardanup, but during the war of course, they held regular monthly ones for raising funds for the Comforts Fund and things like that but I didn't actually attend many of them because I was away myself for two and a half years.

We'll go into that in a moment. At the dance, who would have been providing the music?

Well sometimes, unless it was a fairly formal sort of a one, when they used to try and hire a two or three piece dance band, there would be a pianist and a drummer, and perhaps someone with a saxophone or some other instrument, they would have a better type of dances, but just the hops as we called them, the local hop, an accordion pretty often, which was played by Walter Grover who used to do it sometimes, he was my uncle by marriage, and Charlie Flynn, who was one of the Flynn's of the family too.

What did Charlie play?

He played a button accordion. When I say an accordion, I mean a button accordion, not a piano accordion. And in the early days too, another local chap named Edgar Parkin, he taught himself to play the violin, and he used to go down and play that, but that would be before my time, but I've heard

the others say. And he was a man that only went to primary school, and taught himself to play a violin, which was no mean feat. And there were others - I think Liza Flynn, she used to play a piano accordion too, who was Charlie's sister and there were numerous ones around who could beat out a tune which was quite good. The accordion was quite good to dance to.

With those 'hops' as you used to call them, would there have been a supper laid on?

No, not the hops – kind of a 'bring a plate' kind of thing. It was only for what they called a Ball that they had these posh sit down suppers. Did I mention them for the Ball? They used to have a real flash, slap-up dinner, we used to call it almost, for some of the bigger Balls, where they charged a bit more money. And they used to have different coloured tickets, so there was thirty or forty in one colour, then whatever the other colours, and different colours would go in for the supper when they were ready. And they would have to wash up and get the next lot ready before the next lot got their sit down supper. They were really sumptuous feasts more or less, and people used to come just for the feed, apart from the dancing and social occasion. But they were run only for the more formal occasions.

Then they would clear it away for the dance afterwards?

Well, they had the supper room adjacent. They had the main hall and then they had an area about the same width of the hall stretching the whole length of it, which was quite a big room, where they laid out trestle tables. Probably about thirty or so people could be seated at once, and then they had a little kitchen on the end of it, and they had another room outside where all the odds and ends were stored.

And another little thing that enters my head too, was the lighting in the hall because there was no electricity in those days. The first lights I can remember there was what we called Wizard lights. Now that wouldn't mean much to the ordinary people, but it had a steel pressure container which was pumped up with compressed air with a motor vehicle tyre pump. And you had the petrol mixture, and the petrol mixture was forced out through very fine pipes which ran from the cylinder to light fixtures, I think there were two in the hall, one towards each end and another one or two in the supper room, I think. And that was the light. And being petrol you'd think there could have been danger from fires, but I never heard of any trouble with them at all, except every now and again the lights used to dim and someone would have

to shoot out with the pump and put some more air pressure in. But they worked very well, and then I think we got a – oh, Dardanup Hall went on to electricity before we did and they had a – I think it was only a twelve-volt lighting system we bought that off them with a little Lister petrol engine, and that was a big step up to the electric light compared to the Wizard, it was so much more convenient. And then in about 1970, which was getting into the modern stuff, the S.E.C [State Electricity Commission] came on of course. I can't remember the lighting before the petrol Wizard was there. I really don't know. The hall was built in 1905 and what lighting was installed then I don't know but could possibly have been those Wizard lights right from the word go.

And talking of the Ferguson Hall, can you remember any other entertainments? Would there have been travelling shows or anything like that?

I can't remember many travelling shows. No, there would have been nothing like that. During the war I know they had a few visiting artists come down and performed. Dave Howard for one. I don't suppose you remember Dave Howard, he was a saxophonist-comedian, and a few others like that, but I just can't remember them. I think some of the local radio personalities might have come a few times, but I wasn't there during a lot of that period. But that was more modern times, that was during the 1940's.

We'll go back to the home side of things. Was it common for people to have pianos and gramophones and that sort of thing?

Well, pianos weren't very common, not in the early days. There was one in the hall I suppose but I don't think there were many of the residents had pianos. But quite a few people had gramophones. And getting back to these dances and entertainments that were held before the war and during the war, they had recordings. They used to have different records for different dances and they used to play over – what did they call them? – a loud speaker sort of thing from the gramophone style of thing. And that was a lot cheaper than hiring a band, but the music was never as good as a live band, it just didn't seem to have the atmosphere or something, and it was a bit more monotonous. Still they used them for years, and a chap named Doug Fowler, he's still alive and living over at Donnybrook, he used to come over and use his equipment a lot. He was a local radio and sound recording sort of – well he wasn't an expert but he was just about.

He was quite good with that sort of thing and he did a lot of it during the war and early in the piece. Pianos – well there were very few pianos. Most of them didn't have the chance to learn. A few of the ladies who came into the district afterwards, who married into the Ferguson families, had pianos, but in the early days I don't think there were very many.

So if you visited a neighbour, it would just be for a chat and a cup of tea, or something?

Yes, that sort of thing mainly. Play cards and a lot of them would have gramophones and we would go and listen to the music. That was the main entertainment.

"the first radios were Australian General Electric Bandmasters. I've still got the old set over in the old house here"

Do you remember the first radio set you ever saw?

The first radio's that came, I suppose, the crystal set, towards round about the 1930's. A local boy named Ray Stephen, he had what they called the crystal set. And he lived on Richards Road, which is called Richards Road now on the top of the Hall hill, which Eustace and Dorothy Fowler now own. Ray Stephen and his brother Ernie, they had this little crystal set, and Ray was a bit of a radio fan and after the crystal set, he got interested in the other set, and he finished up taking on, when radio broadcasting stations were first established, Ray took on the job as a radio salesman. And he sold nearly all the radios in the district round in the mid 1930's.

These would be battery sets?

But they were all battery sets of course, and they were pretty crude. There was one local company named C.S. Baker and Company made the local ones in Perth and in later years there were dozens of them around, but the first ones that Ray sold were Australian General Electric Bandmasters, which were distributed by Atkins W.A. Ltd. in Perth, and I've still got the old set over in the old house here, which was the first one that my parents and my elder brother they bought in 1936. And that was one of the better type things, a console with three forty five volt batteries plus the two volt wet cells and a couple of ... batteries. They were quite expensive, they would only run for – depending on the use – which was pretty constant in those days, they were a novelty – and the batteries didn't last probably not more than nine to twelve months with the big batteries, and it cost five to six pounds every time you had to replace them, plus getting the two volt ones recharged every five to six weeks.

But the nearest radio station to here was I think 6W.A. Wagin which was built probably about that time, about 1935 or 36, but we could pick it up but it was a lot of static and a lot of distortion, particularly at night. You could get a stronger signal at night but the distortion was pretty hard to put up with. And it wasn't till later on that the crystal – no, not the crystal, the what do you call them, that took over from the valves – the transistors took over, and then they seemed to do away with a lot of that distortion and the reception came in a lot clearer. Of course then afterwards they built 6TZ down here at Dardanup, but that wasn't till after the war.

So Wagin had a radio station before Bunbury?

Yes, Wagin was the big Government transmitter for the whole South West. They built about a four hundred foot tower out there and we could pick it up which was a hundred miles away from here, but even on the old sets in those days, we could pick it up quite clearly. But there were quite a few stations in Perth we could get. 6AM, 6PR, 6WB Katanning, we could get that one, mainly at night – the signals used to come in a lot stronger at night and we did a lot of listening to radios in that period.

And can you recall when Ferguson first got power?

Yes, it wasn't till after the war. We had – they had a contributory scheme for the country consumers, and they went round, and we applied, and they went round and assessed the district to see how many subscribers there were and what it would cost to put the line and everything in and then they averaged it out, how ever many consumers there were in that particular area, and they levied us, so much each, to subsidise. The Government would put in so much, and we were levied so many pounds each to get it going. You had to have a dairy farm, using a bit more electricity, to be considered for that. The private residents had a job to get it on, as they didn't have a dairy. And incidentally it cost me sixteen pounds something, which was – actually it wasn't given to the Government, it was only loaned to them, this subsidiary scheme, I don't know what they called it. It was the rural policy of the Government at that time anyway, and they took it over a thirty-year period and that was in 1971 that we eventually arrived at a scheme that was put on from Dardanup up on the Ferguson Valley in 1971. And they were true to their word because I got my thirty dollars, my sixteen pounds, which was thirty-two dollars, they gave me back in 1991, which was thirty years since. And the scheme worked very well.

That wasn't just a local town supply coming from Dardanup. It was coming from the main powerhouse in Bunbury?

Well the main powerhouse was – I don't know where it was. I don't think the Bunbury powerhouse was built at that time. It may have been very soon afterward, I think it was coming from – no I'm not sure where. They had a sub-station at Picton, but the powerhouse could have been coming down from Perth. They built the big one at Muja afterwards and also I think the Bunbury one may have been built very soon after the war.

You had power from the SEC?

Yes, from the SEC.

Reading in the very early newspapers, I see one of the things that seemed to occupy farmers' interests was ploughing competitions. And that rather interested me. Can you recall them here at the Ferguson?

To my knowledge there was never a ploughing competition held in the district. But there was a lot of ploughing done. Mainly with the single furrow ploughs. Single furrow ploughs with two horses. Some of them had double furrow ploughs with two or three horses, but I learnt to plough with what we called an Oliver Twenty plough which was one of the old American style ploughs, one with a wooden beam. I started ploughing with that when I was fourteen years old. I can still remember the first bit of ground I ploughed. It wasn't as easy as it looked. It looked easy to see my dad, my dad was an expert ploughman, like he did with everything else, he took great pride in it. And if he had two good horses, which he insisted on having, although occasionally he used to have a bit of trouble, but if he had two good horses, he could plough as straight as straight could be, and when he was – this might be getting of the subject a bit, but it doesn't matter I suppose – he was that particular, that when he used to strike out a furrow – he used to call it 'striking out' - he used to have a number of little wooden stakes about six feet long – five to six feet long, and he would measure each one exactly the same length, and he would measure them across from where he started, so many whatever widths he wanted, what they called 'lands', he'd plough his lands up and back –

Lands?

Yes, l-a-n-d-s. If you went too wide, you did a lot of travelling on the headlands as they called it, that was at the ends, for unproductive work, so

they didn't make them too big, they'd want to be going up and down the hill, too. Soil erosion didn't seem to worry them so much in those days. And he would measure these things out to within, each one would be within an inch, and he would put those pegs up and he'd drive the two horses up, one on each side of those pegs, and when he finished the 'land' a he called it, he would have a little bit of land left about just the width of one cut of the plough, and it was the same width at one end as it was up at the other end, even if it was ten chain away. He just made a thing about having them exactly right. And also, if he was ploughing along and he hit a stone or a stump with the shear of the plough, and it got what he called 'kicked out', kicked out of the furrow, he wouldn't just let the horses go on and put the plough back in five or six feet away, he'd stop the horses, pull the plough back by hand and then he wouldn't leave any land that wasn't turned over, except where the actual obstruction was. Some ploughmen would just get kicked out, and they would put the plough back in three or four yards up the track and it didn't worry them, but he didn't like to see anything left like that. He was really an expert ploughman.

Interesting you used the term 'kicked out', that was probably where the common term derives from, to kick someone out. The plough kicking out of the ground, quite likely.

Yes.

Aboriginals in the Ferguson area. What do you recall?

Well, there were no aboriginals in the district when I can first remember, except perhaps one or two in Dardanup. There were an odd family or two who worked in the district during or just before the war, but no, I had nothing to do with aborigines. But I've only ever found one aboriginal artifact, and that was a little grinding stone I picked up here once, and that was only a thing about six or seven inches across with a hollow ground depression in the middle where they had been grinding seed or something. That's the only artifact that I've ever seen that I know has been found here. So no, I can't enlighten you on aborigines at all.

You did mention here at one stage, Billy Webb and Frank Corbett?

Yes, well they were the only two families that I can recall. And they were living in an old house that used to be Pat and Mary Slattery's, down at the junction of Ferguson Road and what is called Iron Stone Road now. And they were living in the old house there, for some time before the war and they did

district local seasonal work, like potato planting and digging and that sort of thing. And they both had families going, I think they went to the Ferguson school for some time. And they were quite decent people. That's the only contact I've had with aborigines.

Right. Now, the Italian Prisoners of War. Did you see any sign of them working on the Ferguson at all?

No, by the time I came back in - I came back in October 1944, there wasn't much –I did hear my family and some of the neighbours talking about when they had the prisoners of war digging potatoes, and that's the only thing I know about them. I don't think I ever saw them. I think they were pretty well finished by the time I came back. But they were in the district. I think they were coming from Harvey prisoner of war camp. I think that was where they were - but according from what I could hear, they were a pretty good bunch of chaps who didn't need much supervision. They were much happier digging spuds than they were dodging bullets I think, and they were quite happy to behave themselves and stop here from what I can hear of them.

So you never really had Italian migration into this area, like, say, Donnybrook did?

Well they did in Dardanup but that was long before the war. They would be about the third or fourth generation, a lot of the Italian families around Dardanup now. There are a lot of Italian people still around, Italian names, but you don't know them from us now as far as customs and speaking is concerned. There are a lot of people of Italian descent, but not on the Ferguson, they never actually came into the Ferguson very much.

Right.

In fact, that ... which are down here now, came into the district - I don't think there was an Italian family here, and they've only been here for I suppose about ten years now. But no, we didn't have an influx of migrants.

There are a couple of short topics we'll discuss before this tape runs out, and one of them was the Red Cross in this area. Was that something perhaps your wife Dorrie might have known about?

Well, yes, I think that was – I don't know about the First World War, but the Red Cross Branch was formed in Ferguson during the early stage of the war. It was very, very active during the war. The local, I think it was called the Ferguson Branch then, and they did an awful lot of Comforts Fund and

raising money, and knitting socks and sending food parcels and all that sort of thing. They were very busy with that sort of thing, but I don't know when the Ferguson branch closed down, but the Dardanup one was formed about the same time, it might have even formed before the war, but a few of the local ladies joined the Dardanup branch, and some of them are still up here, one or two from the Ferguson. My wife Dorrie mainly is the only one left up here I think. Gwen Ratcliffe who was our neighbour just up the road, she has only just shifted to Bunbury and she and Dorrie have been going to Bunbury for a bit of work, to man the Opportunity Shop in Wellington Street in Bunbury. And Dorrie has been going to that for years, and she has been a member of the Red Cross, well she's been long enough to get a Twenty Five Year badge and bar as well now. And I don't think there's anyone else on the Ferguson who goes now. There's always been a collection around in the March Appeal for the Red Cross. I helped do that for a good many years, I've been the driver and Dorrie has done the collecting for that, for quite a number of years. But we've finished at last. We've done our last dash. We are getting a bit long in the tooth now so a couple of ladies from Wellington Mills, Lyn Davey and some lady named Hagen have volunteered to carry on with it next year, so it's not going to die out completely, although they are not members of the ...

END OF THE INTERVIEW