

BUNBURY ORAL HISTORY GROUP



Verbatim Transcript of Interview

Interviewee: Mrs Wilhelmina Victoria Poad
(nee Garbett)
Date of Birth: 10 September 1890
Interviewer : Pauline Payne
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Death: 1994
Verbatim Transcript: Meryl Gardiner
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NOTE TO READER

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Mrs Wilhelmina Victoria Poad was interviewed in her home at Glenbrook, Dardanup, by Pauline Payne on the sixth of June, nineteen eighty-five.

And what date were you born?

September the tenth, eighteen ninety. That makes me right doesn't it?

Now I said was born in eighteen ninety-one. I made the mistake of a year. I had to send over east to Northcliffe for my birth certificate and I was a year older. That's what put me out you know, with your mum. She thought I was older than that.

Yes. Tell me about this. (Showing photographs)

Well, that's my parents and my brother. I only had one brother and he was eighteen months older than me. And we lived in Northcliffe, Victoria. And I can't tell you much about that business, because I wasn't very old but when we left Northcliffe to come over here, I was seven. And I can remember the trip over and all that when we came here. We came over on the *Nemesis*, in July, I can't tell you exactly what year, but I was seven so you can work it out yourself. We came over on the *Nemesis* which was a cattle boat and it was a fortnight coming over and we had to put back seven times because in July the weather was very rough. And we landed in Bunbury on a Sunday. My dad was there to meet us. He was here before us. And he couldn't get any kind of conveyance, taxi cab or anything, to bring us out to Picton, which was four miles so we had to walk. Anyhow, dad was there to meet us and he was with us and we got on alright. We walked out to Picton which was four miles to the old Picton Inn which was where we were to stay in. And everything went alright. We were a bit tired but we didn't take much notice of that. And we were there four years.

What was the Picton Inn like?

Well, it was reasonable.

Could you describe the building and the furnishings?

It was a two storey place. Not a very big place, but a two storey place and half of it was let to other people. People by the name of Mathers, and they were there all the time we were there.

Can you remember your first impressions?

No, I was only seven years old, and didn't have many impressions. But it was a very pretty little place, on the river. And we have visited it since and they thought it was a very lovely spot because the old trees were still there, many of them and the birds were magnificent, whistling in all directions. And I don't remember the birds when we were there before, but they were there this time. Anyway, we went to the Picton School. We went for four years and then my dad was shifted.

And what was the Picton School like. How many pupils?

Oh, the Picton School was very good, we got along very well there. I fancy that my teacher's name was Miss Jeffries, but I can't remember any other one, I can only remember her. And we went to Kirup from there, well where we lived it was Upper Capel then. It was called Upper Capel, and my dad was in charge. And while there the Department asked him if he could find another name for Upper Capel, because it was getting mixed up with Capel. So one day a blackfellow came and he said, "Now Bobby, I want a name for this place, what will we call it?" And straight out, he said "Kirrup." And of course then it was spelt with two R's. Now I think it's only spelt with one. And I don't exactly know how long we were there. It weren't so very long, not many years, just a year or two and then dad was shifted again. The next shift was Serpentine.

And now your father was?

In a department, in the Railways. He was really a Stationmaster after, but he started as a Goods clerk in Bunbury. And went to several places, we were at Serpentine, then Wooroloo, North Fremantle, and I think Wooroloo was the last place. They tried to put the Post Office on to him there so he resigned and went farming. He went down to North Boyanup and he had a block of land there and we were there for several years, many years. He even built the house that we lived in.

Is the house still there?

I think it is. Who's in that house Ray? He's gone. Because I helped him to build it. (Laughs) I remember one day holding up a rafter for him and it let it fall and it fell on the back of his hand. But it was very comfortable, we were quite happy there. And eventually he sold that out and he went over east.

He went over East?

Yes, he went back over east.

And what age were you then Mrs Poad?

Oh, when we went to Boyanup I was sixteen, and I used to help him on the farm, we had an orchard and a few cows and I used to do the milking, about half a dozen cows I think we used to keep. We used to hand milk before. And I remember picking up buckets of apples which I didn't like doing, carting them up to the house. And from there he went over east and we stayed here. Eventually he went back to Perth and he was in an auctioneering business. I don't remember much about it. And from there on, I don't remember where we went from there.

So you would have completed your schooling at what time?

When we went to North Boyanup, I was asked whether I wanted to continue school or whether I would come here. Of course, my brother was away, he had been put to a trade. He was in the Workshops, Midland Railway Workshops and there was only me with them and I stayed with them until they sold that place out. And from there on I just can't remember much what we did do. We were in North Boyanup for quite a while, many years. And I had to do all sorts of things, you know, really what a boy would do.

Were you there, in North Boyanup until you married?

No, we went to Perth. We were at Bassendean for quite a while and I came from Bassendean and got married. My husband was at the war, two and a half years in Egypt and we got married when he came back. And that was in January, nineteenth of January, nineteen twenty-one. From there on I lived in here we are now.

Could you give me some thoughts about your schooldays, Mrs Poad?

Well, father being in the Railways, I was moved about so much. I went to so many different schools. I didn't really have much of a chance, because we shifted too often. But I didn't go to any college or anything like that. But I could have gone, but I just didn't want to.

No, what I was wanting was more the type of environment that the school had. Any teacher you particularly liked?

Oh I think I was a bit of a favourite with them all.

There isn't one teacher that stood out in your school life is there?

No, They were all the same.

And so you came back to Dardanup did you?

Came back here, yes. And when we got married we came here. Well, we didn't come here, we went down to the old peoples place. We had a cottage down there. And then afterwards we shifted up here, you see, to this property, on our own.

And what were your first impressions of the farm? Because you were used to farm life.

I always liked farm life. I always liked animals. I used to take the fruit to Boyanup, all this sort of thing, in the spring cart to the train.

And what sort of fruit?

Mostly apples.

And how often did you take the fruit to Boyanup?

Oh, you see, there was only dad there to do it, perhaps twice a week or something like that.

And the fruit was packed in cases, wasn't it? Wooden cases?

Yes,

So when you had a dray, how many cases would you be taking down?

Oh, there would be ten or twelve. You see, I had to unload it, so I wouldn't take too much.

So could you describe Boyanup Railway Station at the time?

Mm, just an ordinary station, nothing very bright.

Could you draw me a mental picture of Boyanup Station then?

Oh, it wasn't like it is now. As you know, just an ordinary station, I suppose just a medium station you'd call it. It wasn't big and it wasn't small. I think there was only a Stationmaster there. He was the only one in charge I think so it couldn't have been very big.

Was it a twenty-four hour station? Then?

I don't think it was open in an evening. Twelve hours, perhaps.

It had a tea-rooms didn't it?

I don't think then. When we got started. You see, I was only sixteen when I went there. That's a good many years ago.

You mean that you took the fruit from your father's farm, not when you were married?

Oh, no.

Because you didn't have an orchard here?

No, just the dairy. We have always had a dairy. We had one when my husband died. That was in nineteen thirty-four, fifty years ago. And I had to go out there then and milk but I had help, like. I had some good boys, two or three real good lads that stuck to me. And even my own eldest son was a good one, and even when he ten he used to milk.

Can you describe the township of Dardanup when you first came here?

Well I used to think it was just like a little far away wheat belt town. Nothing at all. It didn't seem to go ahead till just recently. Then there are lots of new houses up there now to what there was. There is only one store there now, There used to be two and of course the convent. That's been there all the time.

Can you remember if the Convent was there when you first came here?

The convent? Yes

You can't remember the building of the convent?

No I don't think so. I don't remember much about that, because I didn't go there.

Can you remember the Railway Station at Dardanup?

Yes.

Was that very busy then? Was Wellington Mills still very busy at that time?

I don't think so. Not very busy but better than it was in other years when they did away with the station. But I never went very far, I was never one for going out. I was quite satisfied with staying home. And I wasn't a gad about at all. If I had have been I might have known more.

What year would Wellington Mills have closed. Do you know?

No I can't tell you.

Because I believe that Dardanup was a twenty four hour station in those days when Wellington Mills was thriving.

You ought to know more about that than me, anyhow (laughs)

And you were one of the first people in the CWA weren't you?

Yes, I think I did join it when it started. And I joined the Red Cross when that started. I've been, it must be over forty-five years since I've been in the Red Cross now. And I still pay my subs. I've got a certificate there and I've got one for thirty-five years. That was the Red Cross.

And can you tell me how that started. A little bit about it?

Oh, they had their ordinary meeting that they generally have, and we all went, and the President and all was picked out and it started straight away and kept on till, really, until the President died, I think.

Who was your first President?

Mrs Mervyn Gardiner. She was the first President. And I was supposed to be Vice-president and I was Vice-President for thirty-five years, but luckily I didn't have to take the chair very often.

And how many people would there have been?

Oh, now you're asking me. You had better ask Eileen Gardiner, she would know. But I couldn't tell you but quite a fair number, quite a good crowd.

You were very active in the Red Cross during the war too, weren't you?

Yes.

Is there anything that comes to mind, anything special?

No, not particularly. I think, I used to attend all the meetings, very seldom missed a meeting.

And what activities did you have, Mrs Poad?

Oh, they used to do quite a lot, you know. A lot with the second-hand clothes, old rags and things like that. They used to sell bags and bags to the garages. Several of would go and put these rags, tear them or cut them up.

Why would they do that? Why did they give them to the garages?

Well because we got a good price for them.

They sold them did they?

We sold them certainly, yes.

And why did they sell them to the garages?

Well the garages used a terrible lot of rags, you know for wiping grease off

the cars and that, terrible lot they used to use. And then they used to send second-hand clothing up to Headquarters and they used them when there were fires or floods or anything like that happened and they would distribute them. We used to do quite a lot in the Red Cross. We used to have stalls, regular stalls and do well out of them. We used to take anything we had, like fruit or make cakes, and eggs and things like that. We used to do well out of the stalls. Afraid I don't do much now (laughs). I think I've done my bit.

I think you may be excused at this point in time. And the CWA - what did you do? Do you remember the first meeting of the CWA?

No, I don't. I wasn't so interested in the CWA as I was in the Red Cross. But I used to go to the meetings and that sort of thing until I got deaf and then I couldn't hear and I thought if they can't speak out to make me hear, I'm not going (laughs). Because some of them used to be - a good secretary - and would sit next to me and talk to me and tell me things. But other times they wouldn't bother, so I got tired of it so I didn't go. Gave them up. And they didn't let me know, you know. It was hardly fair because, like they had a meeting for members and your mum and I weren't there. And we weren't mentioned in the papers. So that put me against them. I thought we could have got a mention.

How many years had you been a member then?

Oh, I couldn't tell you, a good many. I don't remember exactly when I gave up.

What are the most notable changes you've seen in Dardanup since you've been here?

Well there's a nice lot of new houses gone up, there's a new school, a new State School and the garage, I think that is new.

The garage has been there for a few years.

The garage might have been there, but it has been altered.

Yes.

The Post Office has always been there of course.

Can you remember who was Post Mistress when you first came to Dardanup?

I can't remember Dardanup but I know at Boyanup.

Who was at Boyanup?

Miss Cope. She was Miss Cope. She's now Mrs Harry Hurst. She was the first Post Mistress that I knew. But she's well older than ninety-four. She must be getting on to ninety-six now. She's still living. I think she's in Perth, I think now in a Home. I don't know who was the first one. Oh, I think it was Mrs Holland.

In Dardanup?

Yes, I think it was Mrs Holland.

Mrs Holland was there when you came?

Yes

She was there for many years, wasn't she?

Yes. Perhaps it's not long gone that she died.

I don't know that she has.

Not so very long

And where did your boys go to school?

Dardanup.

In Dardanup

Yes, they used to ride their ponies.

They would ride their ponies?

Yes, they had a pony each and they used to ride their ponies. Even after my husband died they used to ride their ponies.

When you first came back to the farm here, when you first set up in the farm, your only vehicle was a horse and dray, was it, or a horse and sulky?

Yes, we had a horse and sulky. Several horses, but we had the sulky there. Oh yes, that was all we had then. And we had no telephone. We had no car then, as say and no telephone. We had a little girl. My first baby was a girl, and I lost her when she was sixteen months old in a convulsion. It was only for the want of a conveyance. Lew we had to ride down to Buckenara's to phone the doctor. Mr Farmer had a car. He was the only one around here who had a car. He had a Ford car. And we used to go everywhere, either the men would go on a horse and we would go in a sulky. Those were the days.

So different today, aren't they?

Definitely. When you see the number of cars about. I think there's hardly a soul who doesn't have a car.

Still, how many horses would you have had on the property, Mrs Poad?

We had two draughts, and two others. I think we had only four. We had one little light on thing. She had the record of going to Bunbury from here in a quarter of an hour one day. Something was wrong and she did it in a quarter of an hour.

In a sulky?

Yes, I think it was in a sulky. I wouldn't be positive if it was that or on horseback, but I think it was sulky. We used to call her Black Bess.

Did you have her all the time you were here? Was she a foal on the property?

I don't know if we bred her or if he bought her. I couldn't tell you that. Anyhow she was a good little thing.

And what used you use the draught horses for?

Oh, we used to grow crop. We had a binder, a reaper and binder.

You mean oats of hay?

Yes, Oats for chaff. And of course it's now meadow hay. Very little oats about.

How many acres would you have grown of oats?

On the whole farm? It was five hundred. We've got another block three miles up.

But how many acres of crop would you have grown?

Oh, not a great deal. You know, just for our own use. I couldn't tell you exactly how much we put in.

And you milked, how many cows?

Well, that's a question (laughs). We have milked, I think eighty-five, eighty-seven.

When you came back to the farm, when you started the farm?

Oh, we didn't have that many then. I couldn't tell you how many exactly we would have had milked then. But when I was on my own, after my husband

died, we used to milk forty-three. And a man and I used to do that.

By hand?

By hand, yes by hand. And then of course, latterly we got the machine. And we've had machines ever since. We've got all I want now, every convenience.

You milked for cream, didn't you in those days?

We used to. We started off with cream. We used to hand milk. And I used to take the children out, put them in the shed and sit out in the rain with a coat on and milk (laughs). Those were the days.

You were just going to say? [possibly showing photo] This was Alec?

This was Alec. We went to the Harvey show, and he was home and when we got home that boy had nineteen cows milked by hand. He was a good little milker, better than Ray. Ray didn't take to it like him. Ray does all the other jobs you know. Ray can do anything, nothing stops him except electricity. He doesn't touch that. But he can do anything. Alec was good with the animals.

And then you also fed calves, of course, reared all your calves.

Oh yes, reared all our calves. I used to have to feed the calves. Yes, I had more patience than some of the others (laughs)

And what did feeding the calves entail?

Oh, just feeding them out of a bucket, one by one, and now they've got every convenience and they put the buckets in a rack and they feed nine at a time and it's no trouble at all. They have got yards to put them in. Before, we used to just go in with them.

And why did you have to go in with them?

Well, you had to go in and feed them. You had the milk handy and then just feed them one by one and then turn them out.

And how did you feed them?

They drank out of the bucket.

You had to teach them?

Oh yes. You had to teach them with your finger.

And how did you do that?

Just put your hand in the milk and let them suck your finger. It didn't take long. One or two feeds and they were off your finger, you see.

How many calves did you feed?

Oh, different numbers, different times.

When you were hand feeding them, would you have forty-five?

You would feed the little ones with your finger, The others wouldn't need your finger.

Just to teach them. And actually, from your forty-five cows, you actually reared how many calves?

That I couldn't tell you now.

What percentage of your herd would you have reared for your milking?

In those days you know there wasn't the price they are now. Now you don't keep them too long. Ooh, I suppose we'd have twenty perhaps then. Whereas now they'd rear fifty or sixty.

Do you rear your own heifers to milk?

Oh, yes. Always rear our own replacements. Besides the calves, Alec used to keep pigs. He used to feed all them. I had nothing to do with the pigs.

And how many pigs did Alec rear?

A good many. He would rear all his own little ones, and then he would have plenty of pigs on hand for the sows. I couldn't tell you how many he had, I suppose there would have been about thirty. Easy thirty.

How did you build your first milking shed Mrs Poad?

How did we build it?

Yes.

Well, we had a man in to build it. A chap came in and we got him to build the shed. It was just an ordinary cow shed, nothing flash.

Could you describe it? Because other people don't understand how milking sheds are designed.

Well we still got a separator. We still have cream.

You still have cream?

Yes, in the house (laughs).

Do you still turn your separator? Your cream and milk separated by hand?

No it's electric.

Now!

Electric now. Used to be by hand.

Yes, that's what I mean. So you'd have to put all the milk that you milked from your forty-five cows.....

Through the separator, yes, it had to go through the separator and then taken to the factory.

And how was it taken to the factory, like in the very early days?

Oh, I don't know. I think we used to have to take it.

You used to take it?

Yes. But now of course we have tankers come. We have to pay the tanker to come but they still come.

So how would you take it, Mrs Poad. In a dray, would you?

Oh, a spring cart we used to have. It was taken in cans, you see. Five and ten gallon cans.

Where was your depot? Where was the cream factory?

Boyanup. It's always been there.

How often would you take it to Boyanup?

I suppose we would take it every day. I don't know. The latter years we did, but whether from the start I don't know. It all depends on how much we had, how many cows we were milking.

And the milk would go to the calves?

And pigs. Yes, the separated milk would go to the calves. Now they get good milk. We don't have to put anything in it. Before we used to put other stuff in it. Denkavite and things like that.

And the boys would milk before they went to school?

Yes, help.

It would mean an early start in the morning, wouldn't it?

Yes, but not so early as it has been since the tankers have been into it. They come in too early.

Interviewee: Wilhelmina Victoria Poad
Interviewer: Pauline Payne

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END OF THE INTERVIEW

Mrs Poad's parents were Edwin Garbett and the former Edwina Fletcher. Mrs Poad married Lewis Alexander Poad on the nineteenth of January, nineteen twenty-one and two sons were born - Alexander Edwin and Raymond Lewis. Her husband died in nineteen thirty four.

