

BUNBURY ORAL HISTORY GROUP



Synopsis of Interview

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| Interviewee: | Mr. Robert William Wight |
| Date of Birth: | 26 February 1916 |
| Interviewer : | Valerie Spence |
| Date of Interview: | 7 November 1985 |
| Date of Death: | 25 November 2004 |
| Synopsis: | Elaine Gorddard |
| BOHG No: | 1985-005 |
| Total Length: | 48 mins 19 secs |

Bob Wight was born 26 February 1916 at Wellington Mills

Father – John Robert born 26 May 1896 Echuca Victoria.

Mother – Annie Florence Jackson born Rockhampton Queensland

Siblings – John Edward, Arthur Norman and Barbara Isobel.

Married in Donnybrook 1947.

Children - two boys and one girl.

Schooling was a Wellington Mills where there were about 30 children from

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grade one through. Just the one big classroom. Most of the children left school at 14 years and hopefully got a job in the mill, or farm work around the area. Rafferty rules for a lot of the kids who wagged school as much as they could –going out into the bush to shoot kangaroos or watch the men felling trees. Got up to a lot of mischief. The school was burnt down in the bush fire 14 April 1950 which also destroyed several houses in Wellington Mills and surrounding areas.

One of Bob's earliest memories was at the age of three when his grandfather took sick and was carried away on a stretcher to hospital where he eventually died.

Bob's grandfather came over from the Eastern States in the late 1800s and first worked at Demark for the Millar's timber mill. When work ran out in Denmark he was transferred up to Wellington Mills and became the foreman. He took up a farming lot in 1906 and the family has stayed there ever since. Bob's grandfather, was foreman there, and then his father took over that job when the grandfather died.

Horse and sulky or walking was the main mode of transport. Train used to go into Dardanup on a Saturday afternoon about 1pm and came back at 4pm. Houses in general were all timber (some taken from rejected timber the yards) iron roof, walls were weatherboard with hessian and paper glued on to it. Money was tight - two pounds five shillings a week [£2-05-00]

In the height of the timber industry. Wellington Mills hosted a bakery, butcher, general store, post office, hospital outpost, doctor, as well as the school.

There was usually a dance on a Saturday night somewhere in the district that

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all used to go to. Tennis, cricket, football were other pastimes.

Millar's worked the Wellington Mills area between 1906 –1929. Two trainloads of timber left Wellington Mills each day with timber which was exported mainly to India. Bob's grandfather-in-law came over from Victoria to Lyall's mill to work the bullock teams which were used to drag timber out of the bush, but not used a great deal at Wellington Mill. Horses were mainly used there. Tractors took over from the horses after the Second World War.

Bob started work at 13 and worked most of his life in the bush falling trees and using the broadaxe to cut sleepers and build bridges. He explains the art of using the broadaxe to cut sleepers and in bridge building. Bob worked in building bridges from Northam - York all the way down to Northcliffe - Pemberton in his time. When not working on timber, Bob did farm work around the area, also on his own farm.

Although the broadaxe is not used as much today, they still used the art in some bridge building

Although it was a dangerous industry, not a lot of accidents happened. When they did they were usually big ones.

He talks about the methods of fire control – now and then.

He relates a couple of stories of some of the local identities around the place.

END OF THE SYNOPSIS