Government of South Australia
STATE LIBRARY

# STATE LIBRARY OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA

# J. D. SOMERVILLE ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION

## OH 119/15

Full transcript of an interview with

# REG & GEORGE BALD

circa 1977

By Janice Kelly

Recording available on CD

Access for research: Unrestricted

Right to photocopy: Copies may be made for research and study

Right to quote or publish: Publication only with written permission from the State Library

# NOTES TO THE TRANSCRIPT

This transcript was created by the J. D. Somerville Oral History Collection of the State Library. It conforms to the Somerville Collection's policies for transcription which are explained below.

Readers of this oral history transcript should bear in mind that it is a record of the spoken word and reflects the informal, conversational style that is inherent in such historical sources. The State Library is not responsible for the factual accuracy of the interview, nor for the views expressed therein. As with any historical source, these are for the reader to judge.

It is the Somerville Collection's policy to produce a transcript that is, so far as possible, a verbatim transcript that preserves the interviewee's manner of speaking and the conversational style of the interview. Certain conventions of transcription have been applied (ie. the omission of meaningless noises, false starts and a percentage of the interviewee's crutch words). Where the interviewee has had the opportunity to read the transcript, their suggested alterations have been incorporated in the text (see below). On the whole, the document can be regarded as a raw transcript.

Abbreviations: The interviewee's alterations may be identified by their initials in insertions in the transcript.

Punctuation: Square bracket [ ] indicate material in the transcript that does not occur on the original tape recording. This is usually words, phrases or sentences which the interviewee has inserted to clarify or correct meaning. These are not necessarily differentiated from insertions the interviewer or by Somerville Collection staff which are either minor (a linking word for clarification) or clearly editorial. Relatively insignificant word substitutions or additions by the interviewee as well as minor deletions of words or phrases are often not indicated in the interest of readability. Extensive additional material supplied by the interviewee is usually placed in footnotes at the bottom of the relevant page rather than in square brackets within the text.

A series of dots, **.... .... .... ....** indicates an untranscribable word or phrase.

Sentences that were left unfinished in the normal manner of conversation are shown ending in three dashes, **- - -.**

Spelling: Wherever possible the spelling of proper names and unusual terms has been verified. A parenthesised question mark (?) indicates a word that it has not been possible to verify to date.

Typeface: The interviewer's questions are shown in **bold print**.

Discrepancies between transcript and tape: This proofread transcript represents the authoritative version of this oral history interview. Researchers using the original tape recording of this interview are cautioned to check this transcript for corrections, additions or deletions which have been made by the interviewer or the interviewee but which will not occur on the tape. See the Punctuation section above.) Minor discrepancies of grammar and sentence structure made in the interest of readability can be ignored but significant changes such as deletion of information or correction of fact should be, respectively, duplicated or acknowledged when the tape recorded version of this interview is used for broadcast or any other form of audio publication.

J.D. SOMERVILLE ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION, MORTLOCK LIBRARY OF SOUTH AUSTRALIANA: INTERVIEW NO. OH 119/15

**Janice Kelly interviewing Mr and Mrs Bald *circa* 1977. This recording forms part of the 'Interviews Concerning Parndana…' project of the Somerville Oral History Collection of South Australiana.**

**[NOTE: tape and catalogue are incorrectly labelled; interviewee states interview is with Mrs Reg Bald, and until the final few minutes of the tape, when 'Mr Bald' is introduced, it is Mrs Bald speaking exclusively. During the course of the interview there is the occasional sound of machinery.]**

TAPE 1 SIDE A

**Today's interview is with Mrs Reg Bald at Birchmore. Now, Mrs Bald, I wonder if you could tell us your family, when they had their first contact with the Island.**

Well, my grandfather first came to Kangaroo Island 1867, with his brother and brother-in-law. They came catching seals for skins, and they came in a whale boat, and they were blown ashore at Dashwood Bay. And they went on working there, and later the family joined them at Dashwood Bay. The family were living at Glenelg. They came in an open whale boat with his wife and six small children, and they lived at Casini for five years, where three of the children were born.

**Mrs Bald, just going back, do you know how long it took them to come, in the whale boat?**

I don't know.

**One would think it would have been a considerable journey for them with all these small – – –.**

Well, ….. ….. with sail I imagine they'd have made it in daylight. I don't know.

**That's probably right, too. When they were at Cape Casini they were there for five years. What sort of house did they have?**

Well, they built a house of stone – there's plenty of stone there, the limestone – and mainly it was put together with clay and with a thatched roof. They'd use anything for a thatch that was close and handy. They had to make use of all the natural resources. And naturally they had to live where there was fresh water.

**Was their whale boat their only form of transport?**

The whale boat was the only form of transport, and when they came they brought all their family belongings with them. And they used to – they brought grain for milling

into wheat, they brought a hand mill to grind their grain, they planted little pots of grain and had to fence it to keep the wallabies and all the vermin out, and then they'd harvest it in the right time of the year.

**How did they do their harvesting?**

By hand with a – they'd have what they call a sickle, and then they'd thrash the grain out when it was ripe and put it through the hand mill. When the hand mill wouldn't work and they couldn't grind their grain, well, they had to live on bore wheat. And they all had little vegetable plots where they grew a lot of turnips and cabbages and those kind of things they used to live on.

**They tried to be as self-sufficient as they could.**

Yes, they had to be to self-sufficient because there was no close neighbours, and their only outlet was with their boat. They'd go backwards and forwards with their skins to Glenelg and pick up supplies there, any other supplies they needed, and backwards and forwards with the boat, you see.

**Well, what about at Kingscote? Was there anything at Kingscote then?**

Oh yes, Kingscote was definitely there, but it was so far, you see, and there was no transport between Casini and Kingscote through on the land. They'd have to go by boat. But they'd usually go to Glenelg because they had to take their skins back, you see.

**This must have been a fairly isolated life.**

It was very isolated. There was two families living at Casini – my grandfather, and his brother-in-law and his family, you see, they lived together. And then they shifted – as the skins, the wallabies and the seals became scarce there, then they shifted by whale boat again to West Bay.

**This seems fantastic for us, to think of anyone ever living at West Bay, but I understand your father was born at West Bay.**

Yes, he was born there. He might have arrived a little earlier than they expected, that was why I think he was really born there. The mother did intend to go back to Adelaide, I think. But there was no medical aid whatsoever, only her fourteen year-old eldest daughter, and she helped her, whatever had to be done with the birth of her

baby.  And they built another little place there, two-roomed hut, out of stone, with a thatched roof, and they lived there for two years.

**Your grandmother, then, she must have really had great strength, inner strength.**

She was only a very small woman, I think she was only five foot tall.

**I really meant like strength of character.**

She did, she was a very, very strong-charactered woman.

**And once again, their transport, they'd be dependant on the boat.**

Definitely.

**Did they plant crops there as well?**

I don't really know.  There's no much land there you could plant anything on, because the hills are so steep and the little bit of flat between the hills where you would grow something – they grew vegetables, they used to grow vegetables, but apart from that I think then, you see, going backwards and forwards, they had to take their skins.  They salted them, they'd get salt from different parts of the Island where there was salt, and they'd salt their skins, but they had to keep on taking them backwards to Adelaide to sell.

**Do you know how long that journey took them?  You still think they'd do it in a day.**

I don't think they'd do it from West Bay in a day.

**No, not from West Bay.**

Because it was only sail, there was no engines in their boat.

**I wonder, did your grandmother stay there, then, with the children while they went off with the skins?**

Oh yes, yes.  Definitely.

**What happened about schooling?**

The children never had any schooling when they were out in those parts.  My father never had a day's school, he never went to – never saw a school.  But when he grew up he taught himself at night and he became quite a clever man.

**It probably sounds good to the children listening not to have any schooling, but I think there were probably lots of other things that children had to do for the family's survival.**

I think the whole family – they all helped, you know, with the different – whatever work they were doing.

**From West Bay, then, I think your family went to Karatta.**

Yes. They took a lease off Karatta, I don't know how many acres, but it was quite a big acreage. But when they were West Bay that was only occupation licence. An occupation licence gives you – you pay so much a year to the government to live on a certain amount of land, and you had to renew that licence every year. But when they went to Karatta he had a lease on that land, because they stayed there about for five years and they tried to grow sheep, they had sheep there. But all the land that was ever cleared, those days, was cleared with an axe and a grubber and cut down and burned. That was the only method they had of clearing land until, in later years, people had bullocks and then they logged – not logged, they used a roller and a bullock team to clear the land. But most of the land was all cleared by axe.

**Were there still two families at this stage, working together, or – – –.**

I don't think. I think my uncle, he went back to Adelaide, and he was the captain of a boat, you see, he had his captain's certificate. And the family was growing up and the eldest boys were getting up that they could work. And they had sheep there. But they used to do a lot of – they'd burn the piece of scrub and the sheep would live on the burned, new, fresh, herbage on the new-burnt. That was mainly where the sheep ran. And then they sold out to Stockdale and Taylor, and they were a company – they came from the South-East, I think – and they brought many thousands of sheep to – – –. They had nearly the whole of the south coast under lease, pastoral lease. But then again, their sheep were mainly run on the burns. They'd burn the scrub and put the sheep out on the burns, but half the time they never found them again because the burns were so extensive the sheep went for miles and miles and they never even found the sheep again.

**Well, with your grandfather and his farming, when it came to dealing with the sheep, did they get organised enough to shear them or did they sell them, or – – –?**

They never had many sheep, they never had many, not like Stockdale and Taylor. Because just recently – even now, I think, you could find some of old Stockdale's and Taylor's fences in the scrub. These old, wire fences through the scrub, even from here right through the south coast, these old fences were there, but the fences were so – and the paddocks were perhaps ten miles square. Well, you see – – –.

**Would have had trouble rounding the stock up.**

I think they did. In fact, they never found them. And not only that, I think a lot of the sheep, they just died with being in the scrub. And I remember my father telling me that back when they first wanted to burn the scrub they had an invention, they made a ball of some kind of very highly inflammable material, put it on a chain and got on a horse and galloped through the scrub – it sound stupid, doesn't it? (laughs) – and set fire to the scrub that way. That was their way of – gallop through the scrub and set fire to the scrub. But I think a lot of the times it was a failure, they lost their fire and, you know, left it behind. (laughter)

**In actual fact, they really couldn't hurt anybody because there was nobody down there –**

Only themselves.

**– but themselves.**

Only themselves.

**Well, this Stockdale and Taylor that had the lease, I think you were saying that their property actually stretched from somewhere near here, from Birchmore.**

Birchmore pretty well right through to Flinders Chase. And nearly up to the Borda Road, and all the southern side of the Island.

**That's fantastic acreage.**

Nearly half the Island – a third of the Island.

**A third of the Island.**

Yes.

**While the men were busy with the farming, the women would have had quite a job anyway, seeing that there was food and clothing provided for all of the children and the men, too. Can you – or do you know what sort of facilities they had inside their homes?**

They had very little, because they had to bring it with them. And there were the transport over from Kangaroo Island, from Adelaide, they had to bring everything on the boat, and most of them never had very much by the time they got to Kangaroo Island. The women used to spend a lot of their time carrying water for the house from the springs, and the floors were made of a hardened type of dirt and rammed down with a rammer to make the floor hard so they could sweep them. A lot of them slept on beds made out of ….. chaff, if you know what ….. chaff is, it's the, you know, the waste from the grain when it's done.

**All cut up.**

Yes. And they slept on the floor. Some of them had – there might have been one bed for the parents, but a lot of the children slept on the floor and on beds made out of brush, even, when they first came. But as they'd been here a bit longer they gradually got things a little bit more convenient, but not very convenient.

**And what about lighting?**

Well, they had – they made their own candles out of fat, if they could get the fat. That was another problem, because they never had much stock to get fat from, but they used to get fat from the wallabies and kangaroos, wild pigs, they'd save all that kind of fat. Everything. Fat was a very precious thing. Also was sugar. They used to find a lot of wild bees, and to find a beehive in a tree was quite a prize. And, you see, they'd use that as their sweetener. They used to grind their own grain, and the women had to do all that kind of work.

**So they sort of didn't have time to sit round and think about their life, anyway!**

The women worked just outside just the same as what the men did. Take their children with them, the younger children.

**From Karatta, then, your family moved closer to Kingscote.**

No, they sold Karatta to Stockdale and Taylor and got enough money and they went back to Glenelg, and then they bought a fishing boat, *The albatross*, and they tried to take up a fishing business, and it evidently didn't succeed, I don't know why, and then they returned to Kangaroo Island again.

**And where did they go this time?**

They went to Cygnet River and lived at – they lived in quite a few places. There was a lot of work done those days of stripping wattles for bark, and that was used, bundled up and sent away on boats to tanneries to make leather out of the hides, you see, that they'd been catching. There was quite a lot of wattle stripping done. And they used to do that all over the Island. Also quite a lot of wood was cut and shipped away.

**To Adelaide?**

To Adelaide, yes, on the boats that used to call. Of course, there were no jetties in those days. Everything had to be taken out in the water with a dray, out in the water till you met the boat, it would come in close enough to pick it up.

**Just getting back to the stripping of the wattle, they'd actually peel the bark off, would they –**

Yes.

**– and bundle that up and send it?**

Yes, and they used to bundle it up in bundles about four foot long. They'd double it round and strip the wattle. It was mainly the golden wattle was the best wattle. They went all over the Island. They used to get the wattles. They'd follow the creeks – wattles grow along the creeks, you see, and they'd follow all the creeks and rivers, and there was a lot of that done for a – – –. I don't know what price the wattle bark was.

**But it must have been – well, worthwhile to then to have done this so much.**

Definitely.

**About what year are we up to now? This was when – – –.**

We're getting up to nearly 1900, the century.

**Yes. (break in recording) Mrs Bald, you've got two sides of your family have early Island connections besides the grandfather that you've been telling us about.**

Yes. The other – my other grandfather and grandmother came to Kangaroo Island about 1882, I think, and landed then, opened up an application and he took up a block and he got a block on Cygnet River. And they came over – they had five children, they were living at Dublin before that, and he was farming there on

somebody's share farming, or helping a farmer. And they came from Dublin here where they had a horse and a dray and a cow, and they had all their worldly possessions in this dray. They landed at Kingscote, there was no jetty, the horse had to swim ashore, the cow had to swim ashore from the boat, and the dray was floated in, and then, when they'd all got ashore, they set out for Cygnet River eight miles away. And with the little children, and none of them were over eight or nine, the eldest.

**Did they have a home to go to, or a tent, or – – –.**

No. They might have had a tent, but when they got onto this block of land they built a place out of brush shelter for a start, until they could, you know, until they were well-established. But they said that after – they took a certain amount of feed, they were told there was plenty of feed here for a horse and a cow, and after they got the bit of food that they'd brought for the horse and the cow they ran out, they said, they didn't know what to feed the animal on, and the children were sent out to pick the dead leaves off of bushes, and they brought back, and the horses and cow had to eat that and there was nothing else for them to eat. Seems terrible hard for an animal. But they didn't die. They lived – the animals, I mean. But, see, there was very little land cleared until they – and they cleared all that with an axe. Cut the scrub down and dug up and planted a certain amount of grain for themselves. And my mother used to tell me how often they'd go to Kingscote with the horse and dray to get supplies, and they'd run out of flour and no bread, and there'd be no boat come in, and then they'd have to turn around and go back again and there was no provisions. And then somebody said to them that 'the wallabies, you can eat them, they won't poison you. We've been eating them and they're quite good eating.' So they said if they hadn't done that they reckon they'd have starved. And a lot of time when the flour didn't come and the boats didn't come from Adelaide, they lived on turnips, boiled barley. Very hard fare. But it was either that or die. But they persevered and they made good.

**Did they have any close neighbours?**

There were a few, but they were few and – they were certainly closer there than what they were out back. You know, the Cygnet River did have – there were the Granges and the Wrights were living on Cygnet River, and not that far from where ….. …..

lived, and they had gardens there, the Granges. They were some of the early people, the Granges. But my grandfather on that side of the family, he came from Germany, and he had learned quite a few trades in Germany, and they brought their own vines with them from Germany. And when they came to Kangaroo Island they planted their grapevines to make their own wine, and he had about half an acre of vines that he planted and they made a lot of wine there. And also he had learned how to make bricks, and they made – they've got the right kind of clay and they made a brick kiln, and they made their own bricks and they built their first house out of their own home-made bricks. And the present house at Cygnet Park, the big homestead, is made out of the bricks that my grandfather made. And they were the – you know, he had learned several trades in Germany.

**Your grandfather, then, did he do any eucalyptus stilling? Did he – – –?**

Yes, most of the early people did. But that wasn't till about 1900 that they – like, when they first, back in the early days, there was no eucalyptus oil made because they didn't know about it. And there was no gumming done in the early days. But it was nearly to the turn of the century before yakka gum was cut and also eucalyptus oil made. But then once they found out that these things could be made most of them made their living out of the eucalyptus oil and the gumming.

**Well, at Cygnet River they had a post office, and I believe they had the first school at Cygnet River, too. Is that right, or am I – – –?**

Well, my mother went to a school at Cygnet River and that would be in the 1880s, but there's no sign of that school now and there's hardly any mention made of it. But she went to – and her sisters went with her to school, but they only went for about eighteen months or one year. But I think it was a part-time school. A teacher was one week at Cygnet River and the next week at Wisanger. And, you see, there was no school week in between. But I think the teacher used to ride a horse. See, horseback was the only mode of transport, those days. But everybody had horses by that time and they used to do all their transport by horses or a dray or a horseback – a lot of horseback riding was done.

**Well, between Cygnet River and Kingscote, was there a road or was it a dray track?**

It was only a dray track to start, but it gradually was made. But all those roads were hand-grubbed, and I don't know how they were formed – they never had graders very early in the time. But in the later years, after about 1920, all the roads were hand-grubbed, and then they'd plough them with a plough, and they had horse graders. They used to – a person would have a contract to do the grading of the road to form the road up.

**During the time that your mother was a girl at Cygnet River, what were the facilities like in Kingscote? Was there a hospital?**

There was no hospital, there was no nursing home. There was a doctor, and all babies were – most of the babies were born in the home. And there was an old lady used to go around by the name of Mrs Joe Bates, and she was affectionately called 'Aunt Fanny', and before the baby was to arrive she'd come along about two or three days beforehand or a week, she'd do all the housework, the cooking, everything, and deliver the baby, and then for a week afterwards she'd stay there until the mother was all right again and then she'd go onto the next place, and she'd have pretty well a full-time job. And I think she brought into the world most of those babies on Kangaroo Island. There were a few went to Adelaide, you know, for medical attention, went and had their babies on the mainland, but the majority of women all had theirs in the home.

**And the only way of getting over to the mainland would be by boat –**

Yes.

**– at that stage. Now, the period of time that we've been talking about has really mainly been around about the turn of the century or back into the nineteenth century, so perhaps if we can go a little bit further forward now into more modern day. There has been talk that there was a railway proposed for Kangaroo Island, and I think perhaps you know a little bit about the history of this.**

Well, about in the – nineteen hundred and five, somewhere around that time, the land was surveyed on Kangaroo Island and was thrown open to – these blocks were surveyed and thrown open to application, and there was a lot of new settlers planned. People took up land, a block of land. They came over and they thought there was going to be such a big business done, the District Council of Kingscote went to Adelaide and waited as a deputation on the government to get a railway. They

wanted a railway to cart all their produce that was going to be grown. And it was going to be wheat and wool, and – – –. But there was no super[1] to grow the wheat.

**Actually, you've got some figures written down there on the crops, on what was planted at White Lagoon, just on the second page, I think, is it? Or down the bottom? (break in recording) Now, Mrs Bald, your uncle farmed at White Lagoon, which is at present where Mr Doug Wheaton lives, and you have some facts and figures there that were given describing his crop.**

Well, in nineteen hundred and nine he went to – he was a Councillor, he went to Adelaide as one of the deputation to wait on the Council [*sic*] to get a railway for Kangaroo Island, because this land had been opened up and there was a lot of new settlers. And he had to give his idea of what would be grown and everything else. And he said he had a hundred and fifty acres of crop under barley on his farm at White Lagoon, and wheat and oats [to] which he reckoned the land was very well suited. His barley that year averaged about seven bags to the acre and wheat was six bags to the acre and oats five bags to the acre, and this was grown without super. And also he was making eucalyptus oil at that time at White Lagoon.

**What happened to the case for the railways?**

Well, I think they just thought that there wasn't anything to warrant it, there wasn't the produce to warrant it, so instead of giving them a railway – they were going to put it through the middle of the Island from Kingscote right down through the centre, and instead of giving them the railway they told them that they would build a jetty at Vivonne Bay, and send a boat round to pick up the produce. And they did built a jetty at Vivonne Bay, and there was only about twice that a boat came in with any, really, supplies.

**Well, I think that probably explains – everybody's probably wondered why there's a jetty at Vivonne Bay!**

Well, the jetty was put there because they'd asked for a railway, and instead of giving them the railway they gave them the jetty. And really there's hardly ever been any produce gone over the jetty. The only thing that really was sent there at all, was shipped there at all, was yakka gum, because there was quite a bit of yakka gum shipped at Vivonne Bay.

---

[1] Superphosphate fertilizer.

**Just going back a little bit, because there was one thing I forgot about asking, and that was about gold mining. Now, I think your ancestors did a little bit of dabbling in gold mining. I wonder if you'd like to tell us about their – – –.**

Well, my grandfather was a prospector and a miner from – he worked on the goldfields of Ballarat, and that's where he first got the idea of gold mining. And while he was on the Island he was always fossicking and looking for gold, because he had looked for it at Ballarat. And one time they were out on the Kyanor Hill and they found a leader that was – and they found gold in it, and they sent it away and had it assayed, and it was very rich. But they never found the main reef; it was only a small leader that ran off a reef. And he really didn't work it. He sold his claim and the Kyanor Mine Company took it over, and they paid him three hundred pounds –

**Which was a lot of money.**

– it was a lot of money those days – for his claim that he had there at the Kyanor.

**Good. (break in recording) Right. Well, Mrs Bald, we've heard now about your mother's side and your father's side of the family and I'd like to bring them both together. When were your parents married?**

My parents were married at Cygnet River in a little old school and it was a church and school combined. They were married in the – I think it was Methodist Church in nineteen hundred and two. Their first home was Kywarra, and they lived there for seven years.

**Now, Kywarra is at present where – or Mr –**

Alfaba.

**– Alfaba.**

They lived there for seven years. He bought the place from Henry Hosking for three hundred pounds, they lived there seven years, and at the end of the seven years was when that ….. in the land boom came on Kangaroo Island, and he sold out to – – –.

END OF TAPE 1 SIDE A: TAPE 1 SIDE B

It was during the land boom and they sold it for – they bought it for three hundred pounds and he sold it for five thousand pounds. That was pounds, not dollars.

**So that was much to their benefit. (sound of rustling paper) Where did they go from there?**

They bought land at Cygnet River because they had three small children by then. The children were just becoming school age and there was no schooling. My father had no education, he never spent a day at school in his life, my mother had twelve months' education, schooling, they couldn't teach the children so they decided to go into Cygnet River where there was a school so the children could go to school. And that was why they really sold out from Kywarra. And the children went to school at Cygnet River.

**And did they do farming at Cygnet River?**

Yes. He bought about eight hundred acres of Cygnet River, and he ran sheep there and also made eucalyptus oil. Eucalyptus oil was considered a better paying proposition than sheep farming or wheat farming or any other kind of farming those days because it was a better price.

**Well, your life, I suppose much of the time was spent going to school. Did you have a teacher all the time then, or – – –?**

Yes, there was a full-time teacher. We went to a school – there's no school there now – it was a school at the – you know where that road that turns off to Edwards' is? –

**Yes, I know them, yes.**

– and during while I was going to school in 1920-something-or-other, there was a new school built at Cygnet River where the present post office was. And we changed over schools there one day, went from the old one to the new one, had a new school built.

**Well, what sort of things did you do, well, in your holiday time and at weekends? What did kids do to amuse themselves in those days?**

Played, mainly. (laughs) We were very keen on our horses. We always had a horse each, and we really lived for our horses. More so, I think, than what children appreciate them today.

**Did you have any sporting things that you went to, sporting events?**

Not when I first went to school, there was nothing at Cygnet River like that. But later on, after I left school, there was a tennis court built and we built a tennis court at Cygnet River and we all played tennis. And we played basketball and golf.

**Can you remember approximately how many kids would have gone to the school?**

When I went to school I think about the peak of the time there was about thirty children ….. ….. ….. school.

**Oh, that's quite a lot.**

Yes, it was quite a – all those little farms were occupied, they all had somebody living on them, and they had all families and children going to school. A lot more than ever there is families there now.

**Well, inside like your home – because really we're still talking about early days – did you have electricity?**

There was no electricity in my early days, no, nothing.

**So that meant your mother had to make candles and – – –.**

No, well, really, in my mother's days, they had kerosene lights, and like in my time we didn't actually have candles to go to bed with at night, but the main rooms would be lit up with kerosene lights.

**And what sort of stove did your mother have for cooking on?**

We had an ordinary wood stove. We didn't in my times have camp ovens and those kinds of things.

**No, so really it's progressed quite a lot.**

Yes, it had progressed. And we had a new house built and we bought new furniture, and that was supposed to be very good.

**Well, how did you get your furniture across then?**

Oh, I think it was at Karatta. The boats used to be coming over, and that was quite – twice a week, once a week in the winter.

**And more reliable service – – –.**

Yes, no strikes. (laughter)

**Better than what we've got now. Did you have the telephone on?**

The telephones never came into the country districts till in the 1920s, and they put the public telephones in. There was one put to Cygnet River, one to Wisanger, one

to North Cape, Shell Bay, and we had the public telephone at Cygnet River in our home.

**Well, what about in Kingscote then? Was there like a baker, for bread?**

Oh, yes, there'd been a baker there for many, many years before that. There was always a baker in Kingscote.

**So it was really quite a well-established town.**

Yes. It was one of the first to be established in South Australia, but it didn't grow very much for a start.

**No.**

And then they had a paper, they did have an Island paper right back before the turn of the century.

**Well, even though, well, Kingscote was quite a good town and not very far away, what form of transport did you have for going there?**

Well, when I was going to school those days we had horse and buggies, or rode a horse. I remember when I went in and did my – we called it the Qualifying Certificate – we went to Grade Seven, and they called it the Qualifying Certificate, and all the country children had to go in to Kingscote to do their Qualifying Certificate at the Kingscote School, and I know I rode a horse in.

**How long did it take?**

About half an hour.

**Not so long, really.**

If you rode fast.

**I think earlier on you said that your husband, he actually did work on a lot of the roads that were eventually put down on the Island. Could you tell us a little bit about that?**

Well, in the 1920s they put a new road through to Cape Borda from the top of the Kyanor Hill, and that was only a two-wheel buggy track or a dray track, and it wound all the way winding along. And then the Council got a grant of money from the government to put a new road to Cape Borda, and it was all hand-grubbed. There was no bulldozers or anything like that, those days, and they had to hand-grub

it. They had to hand-grub that road to Cape Borda thirty feet wide and a lot of it, the dearest was eight shillings a chain down to four shillings a chain – the lighter country was grubbed for that. And then, after it was grubbed, they had a man to come along with a plough and plough the ground, and then what had been grubbed, and horse graders, men driving horses on a grader, graded all that road, that was before the tractors and bulldozers were – – –. It was certainly very hard work.

**And we drive over these roads today and don't give a thought for all the back-breaking effort that went into making it possible.**

Quite true. (break in recording of approximately ten seconds' duration)

**Mrs Bald, the history of Snug Cove, your family's had connections there for quite a number of years now, and I wonder if you can tell us a little bit about – well, first of all, Mr and Mrs Hearst, who lived there and owned the land.**

Well, Mr and Mrs Hearst came to Snug Cove about 1864 or '5, and they came from Port Lincoln way in a boat and brought all their worldly belongings with them. He had several stations, one in the Gawler Range and another at Port Augusta, and the droughts had droughted him out and he came over to Kangaroo Island and brought his stock and his plants and his servants. They had lived in high society in England and he tried to carry on the same king of living here, ….. ….. ….. …..

**It must have been a bit hard, since it was so isolated down there.**

Yes, well, the only way they had was by boat. He did have a boat of his own as well.

**For getting in and out.**

To Adelaide.

**Mrs Sheridan told me they entertained the Governor.**

Yes. The Governor came in on the boat, came in, and they stayed in the house with them, and they were entertaining there for dinner one night that had everything that it was possible to have, the best of silver and crockery and really, it was beautiful.

**Well, their property originally was very extensive.**

He took up fifty-four thousand acres from the government under a pastoral lease, and after some time – considerable time, he surrendered the fifty-four thousand acres and they gave him seven thousand acres of freehold in its place.

**For surrendering the land. He was apparently a bit of a card.**

Yes, he was. He was what you'd call a practical joker. He had quite a few practical jokes he used to play.

**Would you like to tell your story about the donkey, which – not for school use, but for your use.**

Well, that was in England before he came to Australia. He was always getting into trouble playing practical jokes and getting the family into trouble. And one day, at a big banquet given by his people, for a practical joke he brought in a donkey and tied the donkey's tail to the tablecloth and sent the donkey out through the door and the donkey pulled the tablecloth and all the food onto the floor! (laughter) And for that reason it was one of the main reasons why he was sent out of England, because they never knew what he'd be up to next.

**Well, with their home, it's not where the homestead is now at Snug Cove.**

No, there's very little of the old homestead. He built that himself, with his men. It was really – a lot of it was done – it was all stone, but it was what they called, a lot of that was done with drystone work, if you know what that is.

**No.**

Well, it's stones packed on top of one another – not so much the house, but all the outbuildings were built that way, with just dry stones and no pug in between the stones, and they just – – –. They had a store where he used to keep and sell provisions, he had a lot of working men. There were men working on the – they had a sawmill, and he used to sell provisions to the people that used to work on the sawmill.

**Well, the sawmill originally came – – –.**

From Cygnet River. And that was down at the ….. The ….. River was on his property, and it was big, heavy-timbered country.

**Well, at the time that you first became familiar with Hearts and Snug Cove, were there still a lot of workmen there?**

When my father took up Snug Cove about 1923, and old Mr Hearst had died about nineteen hundred and eleven. And old Mrs Hearst had lived there on her own with her adopted daughter, and the place had just sort of deteriorated. And when my father took over the place there was quite a few wild sheep that had never been shorn for years running on the property, the place was overgrown with prickly bush and all that kind of rubbishy kind of stuff, and they had to get these sheep in and clean them out before they could put their own sheep there, because the sheep were so wild they couldn't do anything with them. And my father took our sheep and put them on the place and he bought Snug Cove for two thousand pounds. That was the going price those days, valuation.

**Well, was your father then like travelling from Cygnet River to Snug Cove?**

Our family lived at Cygnet River and we used to go out about once – backwards and forwards and work the place. But Mrs Hearst lived there about two years after we bought the place. She lived on the place, stopped there. She had no other home. Until she decided – the girl that she had adopted got married, and then she went to Adelaide and left.

**Well, when you travelled back and forth you went in horse and buggy?**

We went with horse and buggy for a start, in the first years, then we bought motors and we went by motors. But the horse and buggy, we used to go two horses in the buggy and we'd leave home about eight o'clock in the morning and we'd get there about half past four in the afternoon.

**Oh, that wasn't too bad.**

No. We'd average about eight or ten mile an hour. We had good horses.

**Did your family actually ever – did you live there?**

We'd only live there perhaps two or three months at a time. They did a lot of yakka gumming out there, and we'd be there perhaps three months at a time, two or three months through the different part of the year, shearing time.

**Because some of the time it must have been inaccessible, when it was very wet. Could you always get down there?**

Well, Snug Cove, when we first went there, never had the road that is in there now. My father made that. They used to – when we used to drive the horse and buggy we'd leave the horse and buggy on top of the hill because we were too frightened to drive it down the hill.

**Well, so how did your father do that? Did he cut it in by hand, or – – –?**

Yes, he started off with one horse and a plough and he ploughed around. He took his levels on the cutting and then ploughed around with a single plough for a start, and gradually widened it out that way, and he did a tremendous lot of work with a grubber and spade making the cutting.

**And do you know how long it took for him to do that?**

Well, he was always working at it, making it bigger and better, if you know what I mean. And there's still a tremendous lot of work could be done on it now! (laughter)

**Actually, I think it's a bit scary going down there.**

It is, it is.

**Well, when Hearsts were there, was by sea – was that their main way for getting stuff in?**

Yes, yes, yes. There was a track along the coast, and there was the Borda Road several miles in, you see, that used to go through to Borda, but it was a real two-wheel track. But most of it was by sea. Boats used to come in and pick up their goods that they'd have, and I remember they used to catch a lot of wallabies, you know, skins – and they used to – – –. Skins were about the most profitable thing in those days, that's in the early days. And one time old Mr Hearst and another friend of his in the boat took a load of skins to Port Adelaide and a shark followed them, and they reckoned that the shark could smell these skins. And they became very frightened of the shark, he was a very big shark, and he followed them for miles. And in the end the shark rushed up and grabbed the boat and shook it. And when they got to Port Adelaide there was a shark's teeth still in the wood, that he'd broken off and left his teeth in the wood. But they'd start throwing bundles of wallaby skins over for it so the shark would – – –.

**Yes, to keep it at bay.**

When he came up and shook the boat they were very frightened and they started throwing the wallaby skins, bundles of wallaby skins, over for him. But they lost a lot of their wallaby skins. (laughs)

**By doing it, yes. (break in recording) Well, once your father started farming down there, how did he get his wool out?**

When he first had his wool at Snug Cove they used to shear about a thousand sheep there – I don't know how many bales of wool that was, forgotten – but the ketches used to come in and pick it up. And he'd know when the ketches were going to come in, they'd notify him that they'd be there on a certain date, they'd go down with the horse and dray and take the bales of wool out in a dray to the cargo boat and they'd put them in the cargo boat and take them to the big boat. That's how most of the loading was done on the north coast. But it was very bad weather – I mean, any of the coasts on Kangaroo Island are, very uncertain, you know. You never knew if it was going to be fine of if you would be able to get your wool away, or sometimes you'd wait weeks before you could get it away. But all the wool went out, and he'd make a lot of yakka gum there and that also went out by the ketches.

**So the yakka gumming, can you describe how they went about that?**

Well, they do it different nowadays to what they used to. They used to cut the top out of the yakka with an axe, clear all the rubbish away, and they had a sort of a shield they'd put around the yakka, and then they'd chop the side of the yakka and the yakka spears with the gum would fly out and hit this shield and fall down on the base, and then they used to gather it up and put it in through a jigger and winnower.

**Was that part – did you ever have to help with that?**

I never did, but my father used to have men ….. ….., and they used to cart it down in the dray down the Snug Cove hill, down that horrible cutting that you were talking about.

**Well, Mrs Bald, with your life, you got your QC which, after all, was about as far as anybody could go in education those days, wasn't it, really, here?**

Yes.

**What did you – when you'd finished your schooling, did you get a job, or did you work at home?**

We worked at home. We had a dairy and we used to milk cows, us girls. But the QC was as far as you could go here on Kangaroo Island, that was Grade Seven, and there was no further education here on Kangaroo Island. If you wanted to go to high school you had to go to Adelaide. It was the only high school there was.

**I think this would apply anyway, with most people, I think, throughout the state, that the QC would have been their main aim, wouldn't it, to get as far as that?**

Yes. If you wanted anything more you had to go to Adelaide, or somewhere where there was a – there was no high school here on Kangaroo Island.

**Good. Mr Bald, your family settled many years ago on Pioneer Bend.**

G.B.: Yes.

**I wonder if you could tell us what it was like when you were there as a lad.**

G.B.: At Pioneer Bend? Well, you had a horse and buggies to go out in, you went to Kingscote once in three months to get groceries, you got mail once a fortnight, and my father was getting through the years thirty shillings a week.

**That was his wage.**

G.B.: That was his wage for years. And to make up the difference they just had to catch wallabies and kangaroos, you know.

**And skin. I suppose catching the wallabies could have been part of your job, as a boy.**

G.B.: Well, it was. But then we had the money for the skins to make a living, you see. They had to be caught to keep them off the place, because there used to be around about a thousand wallabies caught every year off the Pioneer Bend, every year. And we lived on wallaby meat for six months of the year.

**And what about possums?**

G.B.: Yes, they used to – in my early days they used to ….. about six months of the year, and there was a bit of money to be made out of them because if you were living out there you couldn't go away ….. ….. like a lot of them do. We used to catch round about a hundred dozen around on the Pioneer Bend area.

**Did you have neighbours?**

G.B.: Neighbours? Well, from the time my father went there Stokes Bay was the only neighbours until I suppose 1925. ….. ….. ….. ….. ….. different ones went to ….. …..

**But that would still be – I mean, that was quite a distance, really.**

G.B.: Oh, it's only seven miles. There was no-one else close. But you see there had been settlers all along. There was Geislers, old man Geisler. See, that was up just down below the hill face. And people named Schultz, and old Jenkins there, Dr Smith was ….. ….. ….. ….. ….. That was when Jenkins' father used to live there, and he had a lot of men cutting scrub. There was no other neighbours, you never heard anything from anyone else. You never saw anybody for twelve months if you didn't go into Kingscote. We'd go ….. fishing through the summer ….. ….. …..

**What about your schooling?**

G.B.: Correspondence.

**So this depended on the mailman coming.**

G.B.: That's right, we got the mail once a fortnight, that was it.

**And where would your lessons go, where would the lessons be sent to?**

G.B.: To Adelaide, Correspondence School, Adelaide. I always remembered my teacher but I've forgotten her now. I remembered her for years.

**Did you have a set routine, like a certain time of each day for doing your lessons?**

G.B.: Yes, you had to. You had a certain – you had to do it every day to keep up. It was much the same as school. You had to do so much a day to keep up with your fortnightly returns, you see, otherwise you – like you are at school now, you missed out, you see.

**If you didn't keep up.**

G.B.: Yes. You had to keep up with it, otherwise – – –.

R.B.: Shoal Bay.

G.B.: Then I went to Shoal Bay after that, Shoal Bay, that was ….. ….. ….. ….. football oval, but of course while I was getting a lot older then I didn't have too good a time at school. (laughs)

**Well, with the correspondence lessons, was it up to your mother to supervise?**

G.B.: Yes, it's either mother or father. My mother had to, my father wouldn't care whether you got into school or not as long as you worked.

**Well, this is what I was wondering – were there times when your father, perhaps, might have wanted you working on the farm instead of doing your schooling? Or was schooling very important?**

G.B.: Oh, well, while the correspondence was going I kept that up pretty well. Mother was a bit frightened that there might be trouble if it wasn't sent over. My father didn't care ….., he used to think there's work got to be done. But with that part of it, he would take me away from Shoal Bay ….. ….. ….. ….. ….. ….. ….. …..

**Well, when you went to school at Shoal Bay, did you have to board there or did you go – – –.**

G.B.: No, I had to board. We used to live ….. ….. ….. ….. ….. – do you know where the ….. is?

**No.**

G.B.: No, well, as you turn off going to Emu Bay from Kingscote, you go along about half a mile towards the ….. house and ….. ….. ….. ….. ….. is now, used to board there.

**Oh yes, yes. And how far – did you go and sit the QC certificate, or – – –?**

G.B.: No, ….. ….. ….. ….. ….. two years. No, very little – all of us finished up with very little school. Except Beth, my younger sister. When I left ….. ….. she started to go to school ….. ….. ….. ….., and she's the only one really who finished up with proper schooling.

**Well, what did you used to do in your spare time?**

G.B.: Never got any, had to go to work! (laughs) You're asking something now – we had to go kangarooing Saturdays and Sundays, that was the routine every week for six months of the year. ….. ….. ….. done mostly to get enough money to go to terrible shows.

**So how did you catch the kangaroos, anyway?**

G.B.: With dogs.

**Run them down?**

G.B.: They'd run them down. You'd have good dogs who'd catch them and run them down. We used to go all through the country where you live.

**Perhaps we'd better get you back again, I think.**

G.B.: Well, that's one good point I'd like to bring up. They talk about all the protection of animals. Now, right from when I was a boy – and that's well over sixty years ago – they caught wallabies, kangaroos and possums year in and year out, and yet there were just as many to catch the next year. Admittedly they were thinner, but they stopped it altogether and what have they got? They've become a curse everywhere. Not kept ….. down.

**I think this does happen, yes.**

G.B.: I don't care! That's on tape, too. I'm in this, too.

END OF TAPE: END OF INTERVIEW