Full transcript of an interview with

DAVID & ROGER MAGAREY

on 13 October 1997

by Rob Linn

Recording available on CD

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Firstly Roger, where and when were you born?

**RM:** I was born in Adelaide in December 1923.

What about you, David?

**DM:** 12th April, 1920.

**Now, tell me a bit about the background of Nunkri?**

**DM:** Well, Grandfather bought the property from three different people. In 1908 he bought two thirds of it. In 1910 he bought this ten acres where we're sitting now - running up to Turners place. And our Father and uncle planted the orchard, or got it. You know, they worked and got other people to help planting it, but it had a lot of trees on it. A lot of briars and a great numbers of rocks, and they had to get them all out. They then got it ploughed with bullocks and a deep plough, and ploughed it deeply, and then planted it with the trees. And so they bought this particular block we're on here in 1910 but they had perhaps planted some of the others first I think, hadn't they?

**RM:** Yes. In 1909 they planted the rest(?).
But you were wondering about the name, weren't you?

**Yes.**

**RM:** The name was an Aboriginal name but I don't know quite - was Dad's father that got it, wasn't it?

**DM:** Yes.
RM: I have a feeling that they said he got it from in the Dandenongs somewhere. I don't know how he got it from there but that's about all I know of it. They named it. That was in 1909 or something like that.

Roger, do you know what trees that were first put down here? In the orchard?

RM: Yes, we do. David can correct me if I'm wrong but what happened was that Dad's father was not an orchardist. He'd been running his Father's business. His father was a miller - also grazier. Had lots of grazing interests around the country and Dad's father ran his business side for him. He wasn't an orchardist but when he wanted to start something for our Father and uncle, they decided they'd start an orchard here. They were living in Blackwood. He took a lot of advice and then they built it. They planted it mainly for the South African trade. That was only relatively few years after the South African war. And in those days used to sell apples in South Africa going over deck cargo, so they had to be pretty hard type of apples, and most of the varieties were noted for long keeping better than perhaps for eating. They planted it like that but by the time it really came into full production the South Africans were growing their own fruit any rate so they made a lot of mistakes. (Laughter in voice) There were about twelve varieties of apples, weren't there, David?

DM: Yes, I think so.

RM: Many varieties you wouldn't hear of now. But Yates and Dominos, King Davids, and one called Apple of Commerce. Come on, Dave. Romes.

DM: Spitzenburg, Nikajacks.

RM: Then there were Dunn's Seedling, Cleopatras.

DM: Delarose(?). Rokewoods.

RM: Most of the varieties went out long before the Second War. They were useless. You couldn't sell them. It was a long while before this orchard was really producing as it needed to be because it was planted with a lot of wrong varieties.
No pears at all at that stage?

DM: A few pears. About 100 trees, I suppose.

RM: Something like that. They were Buerre Bosc and -

DM: *(caused to decipher words)* whatever you call it, and Duchess.

RM: And those had to be changed, too, afterwards. But we grafted those. We didn't - most of the apples were pulled out and replanted.

Was your Father himself an orchardist?

DM: Well, he'd been to Roseworthy. After he left Prince Alfred College he went to Roseworthy and did two or three years up there. It seems from what you could hear to have majored in wool classing *(Laughter in voice)* and that sort of thing up there.

But then they were looking for something to do, you see, and Dad's father had come up to Blackwood in 1897 because he had TB, and they thought it was better climate for someone like that. So they decided to look around sort of close to where they lived. They owned the two storey house opposite the Police Station up there.

Anyway, they just, for some reason, decided to plant an orchard, you see. They looked around out Meadows way for land. Out in that direction. Ashbourne. Eventually they settled on here. Partly, I suppose, because it was closer to town with horse transport and the house that they were living in.

Did your Father ever tell you about his early memories of coming here at all?

RM: Of coming to Blackwood, do you mean? Or coming to this orchard?

Coming to this orchard.

RM: Well, they did a lot of work. As David said, there was a lot of rock. There were reefs of rock running from, roughly, north east to south west, and they had to blast the rock and break it up so that there was enough soil on top to plant an orchard. And there was hundreds and hundreds - thousands of ton of stone they took out of the orchard. They built walls with it and put it in heaps,
and got rid of it like that in the early stages. There were heaps of rocks when we were young all over the place. Most of them have gone now because people got to wanting them for various things. People came and would take truckloads away because they wanted them. Dad at one stage, when he wasn't finding things too easy, used a lot of it on Ackland Hill - down the lower part of Ackland Hill - filling up washouts with it. So that - instead of paying his rates. We can remember seeing hundreds and hundreds of tons of it, can't we?

**DM:** Yes, well, the road from where you came in by John's house down there, had a heap of rocks all the way around on the south side up nearly to Roger's house, and then there was a big wall right across the back of that house. A great stack around the tank that's further up the hill. Then there were other stacks at other places, weren't there?

**RM:** Yes, that's right. They got very good at blasting out rock, and Dad was still doing a bit of it when we were young. But most of it had been taken out beforehand. I remember he got quite irate because - this is only a bit of a sidelight, but in the War time when we were away, the wife of the school teacher who was there then was telling Dad how the soldiers would have to be well looked after when they came back. She said, 'The trouble is that all the good ground's gone'. And he said, 'What do you mean by that?' And she said, 'Well, all the places without rocks and things have gone'. He said, 'Where do you think the rocks went? They were got out with hard work.' *(Laughter)* I remember how put out he was about this lady thinking that he found it like that. They did a lot of work. Carted a lot of rock out on sledges.

**Did your Father find the orcharding easy work or was it pretty difficult, do you remember?**

**DM:** Pretty hard, wasn't it?

**RM:** It was hard for him because he bought the place from his Father. His Father had a son that needed looking after all the time. He'd been mentally damaged when he was young and he had to be looked after. And he had three sisters. At that stage, three unmarried sisters. Dad's Father was sick. He was
actually dying. He had TB all the time, and he was worried because he had no money to look after his family. And Dad - they tried to sell the orchard all over the place and couldn't sell it. This was from 1920 onwards.

In 1922 I think, Dad bought it but he had to buy - the assumption was that when his Father died he'd get some money from the estate, and that went into it. And also, he borrowed £4,000, which in those days was a lot of money, and that went into - he paid that to his Father, too.

And then, the fact that the varieties were wrong started to bite by that time. And then the Depression came. He had no water. The Sturt didn't touch this place. They couldn't get water from there. They had one bore which hardly produced any water at all - a little bit. And there was a little bit going down this little creek. But he found things in the late 20's and early 30's very tough. He had a terrible time. He did all sorts of things to get by. At one stage they had a little shop in Blackwood, and they ran a retail store in the old part of the East End Market. And he used to run - he used to take truckloads of apples and other produce through the country areas. Places like Pinnaroo, and up north - Jamestown and Whyte-Yarcowie and places like that. He used to be so tired he'd go to sleep at the drop of a hat. He did a lot of work like that. Just to survive really.

The orchard really wasn't - because it was apples, and he didn't have much water, a lot of the time it wasn't producing enough to survive on really, and he was making all these other methods. Even when Dave was (couldn't decipher because of sneeze) he used to help with the stall in the market, didn't you?

DM: Yes. About 1930, I suppose. Go down on Friday nights and Saturday afternoons and look after the stall in that old market. It was quite interesting the things you saw down there. *(Laughter in voice)*

RM: I wasn't much help but I'd be down there. *(Laughter)*

What did you see, David?

DM: Oh, just the people in that time. You know, they'd all crowd in to buy some cheap fruit and that sort of thing. There'd be one or two cheap jacks, you know, selling things that - having mystery parcels and all this sort of thing. There was one crowd came down - Coventry's I think from Stirling - and they used to employ - I don't know whether it was a member of their own family or
something - to play the piano-accordion on the side to entertain the customers.  

(Laughter in voice)

I remember once how Mum was upset with Dad - I've forgotten which one now - because Professor Kerr-Grant came along wanting to know whether the oranges came from the river - that they had on the stall, you see.  They said they did.  He wanted local oranges so he said that he didn't want them.  So he went across to another stall.  They happened to watch him, you see, and when he'd gone they asked the stall holder where he got his oranges from, and he said, 'Oh, up the river'.  (Laughter)  So the fellow got the same sort of oranges.

Whether he liked it or not.

DM:  Yeah, that's right.

RM:  It was an interesting place though, wasn't it?

DM:  It was, yes.

Saturday afternoons they had - what do you call them?  Bookmakers, in the pubs.  And they had to have nit keepers to tell them if the Police were coming.  (Laughter in voice)  So they'd always have someone out the back - we knew who they were - watching.  Carrying on.

RM:  And there was Old Black Joe.  He was an Indian I think.  Yes, something like that.  But he was as black as a boot.  We used to talk to him when we were little kids and he didn't like the Italians coming in.  He said that he didn't know - 'Black people oughtn't to be let into the country', he said.  (Laughter)  He was as black as - but he looked on himself as a white man because he came from India and he was part of the Empire.

Where did the people come from who sold in the market - the East End Market?

RM:  That wasn't the East End - that wasn't the wholesale market.  Dad was going into the wholesale market at the same time, but that was a retail market that operated on Friday afternoons and nights, and Saturdays.

So that was on the northern end of the market nearer to North Terrace, was it?
RM: That side of Rundle Street, yes. On the north side, yes.

*(couldn't decipher word)* was at the back of the Botanic Hotel?

RM: Yes.

DM: That was the hotel where we used to see the people going in.

RM: *(couldn't decipher)* was quite kind in helping Mum. Mum was sick and he helped her. I suppose he had nothing else to do actually. *(Laughter)*

Tell me a bit about the wholesale market. Was it mainly from the Adelaide Hills that growers were coming?

DM: Mainly, at that time, in the western suburbs.

RM: And Campbelltown way.

DM: Yeah, Campbelltown way.

RM: Not out Salisbury way but -

Talking about Fulham?

RM: Yes.

DM: Yes, those places. Lockleys.

All on the Torrens.

RM: Yeah, and Marion of course.

Marion?

RM: Yeah. A lot of them came from Marion. And Campbelltown and - along the Torrens. Both sides of the city really. And Sturt -

DM: East and west.

In those days were those small - were those market gardening communities essentially rural areas?

DM & RM: Yes.
DM: Yes, there was no build up of industry or anything there. It was just market gardens and a few residences.

So this is really Campbelltown, Magill, right down the Torrens to Fulham. Then across the Sturt - Marion way?

DM & RM: Yes.

RM: And then, of course, from up in the Hills. Quite a lot of them came from up there. Piccadilly and Uraidla and that area.

People like the Cobbledicks?

RM: Yes, that's right. Cobbledicks, yes. And then some in Brownhill Creek. A few from Brownhill Creek.

DM: Yes, that's right.

And were the Magareys really the only orchardists in Coromandel Valley?

RM: Oh, no. There were lots. Dozens, weren't there really?

DM: Mm.

RM: There was - see, where the High School is with Ashbys orchard, that was quite a big orchard. There was Turners over here, which was a big one. Went right over nearly to where the school is over in Hawthorndene. And then there was -

*(couldn't decipher name)*

RM: No, that was Turners. Their mother was a Turner, you see. And then there was - who was it?

DM: Stan Nichol over -

RM: Stan Nichol and Wescombes over there. And then there was Laffers, which was a big one opposite the gates of the - the bottom gate of the park. And then there was Hannafords, which is up there. And then there was Halsteads in Belair.
DM: Lee Windsor.

RM: Lee Windsor had a big one which was - what do they call it now?

DM: It's on the east side of the railway line, opposite the hotel. Back down towards Hawthorndene Drive.

RM: That was quite a big orchard. He was also Secretary to the Governor for a long while.

And then coming back down this way, there was of course where Sandows were. That was Summers in those days. Then there was Wally Summers who was also - what was he? Secretary of the Department of Ag. And he had an orchard just north of Red Road - in there. And then there was some Gambles. Small orchards of Gambles in what we used to call Waterloo (?) Vale, but which is Hawthorndene now there. And then coming down the side of Summers, which was Sandows afterwards, there was Goldsacks. There was Lights. And there was an orchard where the oval is there, which was Weymouth's orchard. And then there was one up where the school is, wasn't there?

DM: Where Frank (?) Downey (?) was eventually.

RM: Yeah, where the Craigburn school - and there was an orchard over on Craigburn. Over in the Craigburn farm.

So then up the hill from you, there would've been what? Morgans running back -

RM: Oh, Morgans up here. There were lots of various orchards up that way, weren't there?

DM: Mm.

So what was the typical orchard of that period, David, around this area? Did it run more than trees? I mean, were there any properties that had sheep as well?

DM: Some of them kept cows and a few sheep I suppose. See, up in Cherry Gardens there were a number of big orchards, too. And they found they got
hail pretty frequently and so the hail bounced off their cows backs, and so they kept more cows and get away with their orchards. *(Laughter in voice)* But there were a lot of orchards up there, weren't there, at one stage?

**RM:** Yes, there were. It was a district that produced a lot of apples out this way, from Belair outwards. It wasn't a district that produced them like they do now in Lenswood. It was dry grown. Like, Potters out there. They grew a lot of fruit but it was very much biannual in those days. If you got a crop this year, you didn't get a crop next year. Particularly because they couldn't water it in most cases. And they grew small, but hard, and most of it went for export. In those days Sturt Producers, which now is just really a wreck of what it was, was a thriving business really. It wasn't Sturt Producers in the early days. I've forgotten what they were called.

**DM:** I've forgotten what they were called.

**RM:** But burnt down in 1934.

**Was this down - by the back of the railway station?**

**RM:** Yeah, that's right. They used to send away for export, some years, a lot of fruit, didn't they? I don't know many they got up to. I know that out this way at one stage there were a good many hundreds and thousands of cases would've gone away from - not necessarily from just around here but going out in this direction.

**So did people from Belair through to here think of themselves as one community pretty well?**

**DM:** No, I don't think they did. They kept their own identities.

**RM:** They knew one another though.

**DM:** Oh, they knew one another well enough, and they'd go to the same Agricultural Bureau meetings and this sort of thing but they were sort of - you know, I come from Belair. You only come from Coromandel Valley sort of thing. *(Laughter in voice)* And the other way around. But Blackwood sort of came in later. I mean, that was sort of an afterthought - Blackwood was - when the railway came through.
**RM:** By the time we can remember they were less like that but Dad used to say that they were very much like that. If he and his brother, when they were younger, came down this way they risked having the lads of the village chase them with stones and that sort of thing. But that wasn't like that when we remember. But they were quite - one of the differences, of course, was that - just when we went to school, Blackwood children would come down here to school any rate. Coromandel Valley school did the whole district. Not Belair but Blackwood. And people came from a long way up this way, and from Blackwood, and a fair way out the other way, although Cherry Gardens was there then of course - the school.

**DM:** Byron Daly used to walk from out there on Black Road to school every day.

**RM:** That's right, yeah.

**From Black Road to Coro?**

**DM:** Mm.

**That's a long walk.**

**DM:** Yes. He lived right over near Glenloth(?)Winery. Where that was. Where it used to be on Black Road. Not the place it went to afterwards.

**RM:** But of course they had - at one stage they didn't have a school in Happy Valley, did they?

**DM:** No, I don't think they did.

**RM:** They either went to Cherry Gardens - they walked up over *(sounds like, Boko)* there or they came here. So they had to walk a long way.

**David, what would your earliest memories of life around this area be?**

**DM:** Well, when I was about six or seven I went to a kindergarten up in Blackwood, and it was run by some local woman under the auspices of the Methodist Ladies College. So I had to walk to Blackwood and walk home. So walking back from Blackwood, just this side of where the Government orchard
is, there was a chap there who used to grow rose or briar cuttings, and grow roses out of them. And that's something that you haven't seen around here for a long time.

And Frank Smith's father used to keep cows on the property next to us here. You know, things have changed tremendously really.

Beaumonts were another place that had an orchard just down here. Behind where the school is now.

**RM:** Yes, and also opposite the school was an orchard, too. I forgot about that.

**DM:** Yes, on the other side of the road there, there was one.

**RM:** Where Red Road is, was a dairy. And of course, it was the Government orchard there, too. Was mostly orchards, or dairies, or -

**DM:** There was a butcher down here in the Valley, and he used to get his stock brought in to the Blackwood Railway Station. And then they'd - at the appropriate time - they'd drive the animals down the main road. They used to bring, you know, station cattle down. When you saw them coming you got through a fence to be on the other side. *(Laughter)*

**RM:** You'd hear the whip cracking, wouldn't you? So we'd make our way through the fence pretty readily, I tell you.

**DM:** I can remember when I was only - must have been four or something like that, one of them went sort of mad and broke away from the group. It was up in the orchard on the other hill over there. Just down below Potters. I can remember being taken out on the verandah and shown this white animal up on the hill there and they were trying to either shoot it or, you know, get rid of it somehow or other. There was a great panic amongst the women in the house. *(Laughter)*

**What was the yearly routine of the home orchards here in those days?**

**DM:** The Ag Department decided that to conserve moisture you had to break the surface of the soil after every rain because that stopped the water evaporating so much. And so after each rain, if you were a good orchardist,
you got out and you either cultivated or had a tine cultivator or something, and you broke the surface and killed all the weeds so that they didn't use the water. And so the orchards, you know, looked very neat. There were no weeds in them, or anything, you see. But at the end of the year, by the time you'd cultivated perhaps five or six times, the soil was quite loose and sandy kind of thing, and then you got a sudden thunderstorm, about two inches of the topsoil just went off down the creek, you know, into the rivers. *(Laughter in voice)*

And by, you know, the War time the soil was very depleted and, you know, a lot of the topsoil had gone and there was mostly getting down towards the clay and the trees didn't like that too much and they started dying on the tips. And so Dad got some American journals - he used to get them regularly - and they'd decided over there to stop cultivating and grow grass on the ground, and just cut the grass. So we did one patch like that one year and then we went along and did all the rest of it, and stopped the erosion. Things were very different then. It was all clear, and no grass in the orchard. And if it rained you went out in the orchard and you got mud on your feet, and when you carted in the fruit you got dust coming along behind the tractor, or whatever you had.

**TAPE 1 - SIDE B**

*Sorry, Roger, what were you going to say?*

**RM:** I don't remember. Sorry.

**Talking about having a clean orchard -**

**RM:** Well, it was. You wouldn't see a weed, would you?

**DM:** No.

**RM:** They hoed around the trees and they cultivated. I think one year Dad cultivated fourteen times. I think that's right. He was one of the early ones to - well, I think the first one to get a tractor, and horses had been slow, and with a tractor he was able to do it much more quickly, so he lost a lot more soil. *(Laughter)* And so we found out fairly quickly that that was a problem of orchards. That when they first started in these areas they didn't realise the
need for water. And added to that, in this particular district, it was warmer than where they grew apples, say, in Lenswood and that sort of place, and they had to spray a lot. Codling Moth was a tremendous pest in those days. You'd lose 30% of fruit to Codling Moth without any bother at all.

**Was it all hand spraying or -**

**RM:** No. Well, what most people were using was a spray pump pulled by a horse, or by a tractor, and then standing in one spot with long hoses, and then spraying an area around about, and then moving to another spot. Dad tried, in the early days, because he was always trying something, he tried to do what they were doing in America, which was drive-past spraying but he couldn't get a strong enough pump, and he found it difficult. But he used to spray like that for years, didn't he, with driving the tractor and spraying on one side with a hose and what they called a gun, and coming along behind there'd be someone else spraying on the other side. And so they'd move through the orchard like that, with Dad spraying on the side that the wind was taking the spray because that was easier and he had to drive as well, you see.

**It was a furphy cart of some type, was it?**

**DM:** Oh, it was tank - 150 gallons. It held a wooden tank - wooden barrel sort of thing.

**RM:** A vat.

**DM:** A vat. And a petrol driven pump on it. But later on we went to putting a power take-off shaft across and using the tractor power take-off to drive the pump, and we got bigger pumps and bigger tank and so eventually it grew. But when they first started they had this one horse plant with about 70 gallons in a wooden vat, and they'd have a small engine that drove it, and they used for a start what they - they had a sort of a rod about so long I suppose - 1/4” pipe.

**About four feet long?**

**DM:** Yes, something like that. With a couple of nozzles coming out in a vee and they'd, you know, move up and down. All things like this. *(Laughter in voice)* Pretty slow sort of business.
Was this with a Carbaryl type spray?

RM: No. It was arsenate of lead.

Arsenate of lead?

DM: Yes.. It's alright. We've drunk hundreds of gallon of it. We're not dead yet. *(Laughter)*

RM: I can well remember Ted Conlin, who worked here for many years, and he loved to talk. And I remember seeing him going along spraying, and he'd be spraying on the side the wind was from blowing from, you see, and you'd see the white arsenate of lead running out the corner of his mouth, and he'd still be talking, and he - I mean, it might have killed him in the end but he lived for a fair while.

Dad always used to talk about a bloke in Cherry Gardens. I don't know who it was. They found that - I suspect that what was happening was that the Codling Moths were getting immune to arsenate of lead, like does happen, and they found that arsenate of lead which had been a successful spray in the early days, by the time we were young was not doing very well at all.

And Dad used to talk about some bloke in Cherry Gardens who maintained that they weren't making it properly. He used to look at it and float a match in it, and if the match floated in a certain way he'd say you could drink it, and then he'd drink a glass full. *(Laughter)* I don't know whether he lived through that.

But I don't think there was anything wrong with the arsenate of lead. I think the problem was with the insect itself. Because after the War when DDT first came out, of course everybody was using DDT. It was a marvellous way of getting rid of Codling Moth. Going from 30%, at the best, of loss, you could get to nothing. Then within - what? About six or seven years? Less perhaps. We were getting back into the same problem. They were just getting to where they were not being affected by it. And it took a while for people to realise that.

Because, you know, they were looking for some fact that you weren't doing it properly or you weren't using the right spray, or something. It was a while before the scientists woke up to the fact that there was an immunity growing to it.
In your early memories - you were saying about this tilling the soil and tilling too much - did people have much of an understanding of sustainable agriculture in those days? What's called that today.

DM: No, I don't reckon they did, did they?

RM: No. They'd come from England where - I mean, their background was from England, and they had more rain over there. Like, damper summers. And it was a better place for growing apples any rate because apples are a cool climate thing. I don't think they realised the way our soil would wash. Over there they probably didn't even need to cultivate like we did out here. I don't think - see, this place, for instance, hadn't been used as an orchard until 1909. Well, by 1935 or something, there were washouts in it that you couldn't drive a Crawler tractor across in some places. It was just so - it just washed tremendously. And, of course, Dad woke up to that. And we spent a lot of time getting soil from various places. From where it washed to, and from other places, and filling up the washouts, and we spent tremendous amount of time on that effort. And this orchard now is back to where it would've been. No, I don't think they had any idea at all.

DM: No, I don't think they did. They didn't appreciate what was happening. See, on this place here, the hills behind were owned by the Matthews Estate, and they used to just let the place to a person for twelve months and they'd run sheep on it. Of course, they didn't top dress it or anything like that, and by about February there wouldn't be much grass left on those hills at all. If you got a sudden thunderstorm in the summertime, the water just poured off, you see, and it came down into our place and gouged out great channels down through the orchard. It wasn't until in the 60's I suppose that Frank Chapman started supering, didn't he?

RM: Yes, that's right.

DM: And he didn't overstock.

RM: By that time, of course, we weren't cultivating anyway, but it was sort of the done thing. You had to cultivate. We went to Urrbrae and they'd give you hours of lectures on how you had to stop the moisture getting out from the -
you had to break the crust on top. I mean this was just the thing you did, you see.
The Government orchard was basically spoilt, too, but they didn't use a tractor until the last, and so they just couldn't get through cultivating as much as they would've like to have. But that's all been eroded very badly. But the Government was able to walk away from it and start a new one in Lenswood. If you wanted to stay on, you had to make it work again. So we just, in the 50's, spent an awful lot of time, didn't we, fixing it up?
And even after that when people were building houses in the district, there'd be a lot of dirt coming from where they were digging out, and so a lot of that came in. We've had lots of loads of that come in to fill up washouts, and the orchard is productive again now. We learnt a horrible lesson.

**Well, when did you start replanting the orchard?**

**DM:** Well, virtually just after the War, wasn't it?

**RM:** Well, Dad planted peaches, didn't he, down the end?

**DM:** Yes, that's right. He replanted the peaches before the War. But the bulk of the replanting we did after the War because we had the wrong varieties, as Roger was saying before. The trees were not good enough to graft. They'd sort of gone too far and so we'd pull out a block this year and another block the next year, type of thing, and replant them.

**So the orchard in the pre-War years was a bit of a struggle, was it?**

**DM:** Yes.

**RM:** An immense struggle. It was really - Dad had an awful time really. Oh, a lot of other people did, too. I mean, the Depression wasn't an easy time for anybody, but it wasn't an easy time. He had no water basically, and the orchard was eroded. They had the wrong varieties and he knew it. One of the problems he had was that he'd borrowed money from - in those days the Banks didn't do as much. He borrowed it from a firm of solicitors that had money from the various estates, which they lent. And in the late 20's and early 30's, they wouldn't let him pull the trees out because they said that he’d borrowed this £4,000 and that what they had lent it on was partly the trees, you
see. And they didn't know enough to know that they were talking nonsense. And so he, in the end, just ignored them and pulled some of the trees out any rate. Then afterwards he was able to get a loan from the State Bank, and from then on things looked up a bit.

The State Bank in those times was basically a Bank for funding rural development, was it?

**RM:** Yes, it was. They were good to us, weren't they?

**DM:** Yes.

**RM:** See, Dave and I were both in the Services and we were able to save a bit of money, and Dad did fairly well out of peaches while the War was on, and he had a bit, and we were able, between the three of us, to put in a decent bore and a decent pump, and from then on things looked up a bit.

**Your time away during the War, was that excitement or a bit of a break, or what?**

**DM:** It was a change anyway. *(Laughter in voice)* I spent most of the time in the Northern Territory driving trucks up and down the track between Alice Springs and Larrimah. If they'd had the railway between Alice Springs and Darwin finished, I wouldn't have had to do that. It would've saved me some work. But it was certainly different from working back here. You'd come home from up there - you know, come on leave occasionally and, you know, you felt shut in. You come back in here and you'd see a hill over there and another one there. You couldn't see anywhere up there. You can see for miles.

**Did you go overseas, Roger?**

**RM:** No. I was in the Air Force, and I had one eye that wasn't too good and I never went overseas at all. But I was in for three and a half years. But, no, it was a change. We saw a lot of different things.

**Did you actually learn much while you were away from here?**

**DM:** Well, you learnt all about aeroplane engines.
RM: Yeah. I don't know that did me any good. You would've -

DM: I got a lot of experience on trucks, and truck driving, and fixing them up. Like, I was one of the mechanics who had to come at the back of the convoy. So you found out a few clues about fixing trucks up.

RM: He, in fact, was very good at repairs. In fact, he's got a memory for mechanical things that I haven't got. If you ask him, he'll tell you about a gear box that he saw in the Northern Territory fifty years ago, and he'll explain the lot. By next day I can't remember it anyway. (Laughter)

DM: Oh, it came in handy when we started making boring plants and fixing spray plants.

RM: Oh, yes. It's been very useful. I'm not saying it didn't. It was very good.

So in one sense did the War break that depression that had been over the industry, and freed up your Father a bit with his peaches that he'd put in?

RM: Yeah. In some ways, yes, the War broke the situation, didn't it?

DM: Mm.

RM: We were able to - he got on to peaches just before the War, and they had some dry years and peaches like dry winters, and he had just enough water to keep some of them going. And he did quite well out of it. And then we were able to help him put in a bore and a pump and that made the difference.

How did you go about putting in the bore?

RM: Oh, no, that - we just got a contractor in.

Was that Nobby Buckley(?)?

DM & RM: Yes.

RM: Yes, it was. You know Nobby? (Laughter)

Know of him.

DM: He's a great character, is Nobby.
RM: Yeah. Nobby was a funny old chap. He came here and Dad used to say - we were away but he came here and he was going to divine a spot where they’d get water. And he decided that the only place was down by the cold store - where the cold store is now. And Dad had a great desire to have one on top of the hill because he said the water could come down more easily than go up. *(Laughter)* So he wanted one up the top of the hill, and Nobby said there wasn’t any water up there.

Then they walked past the shed, and there was the tractor in it, and Nobby said, ‘Oh, you've got a Crawler tractor?’. And he said, ‘Yes’. He said, ‘Oh, we might have another look up the top’.

He went off up there. He found water up there. In his defence, there was a lot of water up there but he realised that it might be safe to go up there if the Crawler tractor could pull him out of the orchard if it got wet. Nobby wasn't as stupid as he looked, I can tell you. *(Laughter)*

DM: He got his father-in-law, Mr Crump, to put -

RM: That's right. It wasn't him, it was Crump that did it, wasn't it -

This old fellow put in a bore in 1914 down here, and it was never very good. But he was going around with Nobby. Was Nobby's father-in-law, wasn't he?

DM: Yeah.

RM: Nobby was a funny old fellow. Later on he put another bore in for us over by Potters, over Ackland Hill side there. I had to go and help him. He needed help. He was pulling some pipes up, or doing something, and suddenly he set off running. And I thought, ‘Well, if he’s going to run, I'm going to run’. And so we both ran. And something had broken down the bottom and the wire was going to come up and fall, you see. He didn't bother to tell me. He just left. *(Laughter)* And so I thought, ‘Well, if he’s going to leave, I'm going to leave’. You would've thought he might've said, 'Look, I'm running for -' *(Laughter)* I've never forgotten that. He just left. He was used to working by himself in that situation, in fairness I suppose. *(Laughter)*

DM: The first bore they put down - Crump put it down - they only got down about 80 feet I think, and before they got down there they struck a very hard patch of quartz and he had a lot of trouble. Couldn't get through it. So he put
down a charge of gelignite and blasted it and then he went on. Only his drill must have sneaked off-line, you see. *Laughter in voice* When they put a pump down, they only had four lengths of pipe, but the rods used to slap against the side of the pipe, you see, because of the bend. And so it was never very reliable. Dad was always a bit disgusted with the way he drilled that hole. It wasn't quite straight.

**But you did get the water? What was this? About '47, would it've been?**

**DM:** ‘45, I think it was.

**RM:** I perhaps gave the wrong impression. Did the drilling in ‘44, and we got the pump in ‘45 before the War was finished. It made a lot of difference.

**Well, how would you irrigate the orchard?**

**DM:** In the first place we used to pump it around to the top of a patch where we wanted to water and then we'd have to get a hoe and cut a channel along for the water to run down, and then when you got to a row of trees you'd cut a hole in the side of the little trench you'd made. For a start we used to put bags on it - like, you know, wheat bags - on this spot where you'd cut a hole and then let some run out and the rest go on. And do that to the next one. And then you went down the row and just let it spread, but if it started to run off to one side, then you got your hoe and you dug a little gutter that brought it back into the line again, which meant a lot of work. But each time after you'd cultivated, you had to go through and do all these little gutters again. But then when polythene came into common use, that was a lot better. And we'd get a length of polythene and we'd put a tap in every twenty feet - the rows were twenty feet apart - and have a tap and a hose on it. And so we'd just run that along the top of the patch, and then we could shift the hose around so that if it was, you know, on a bit of a slope, we could run it on the top side of the tree and let it all soak down. But again, you had to leave it there for two or three days to get about eight rows down watered, and you had to look at it twice a day to see it wasn't all running into one row and just running away. So it was a lot of work. But now, of course, we've got the low throw sprinklers underneath the trees and they're all sort of there permanently.
These are the little flippers, are they?

**DM:** It spins. What's it throw out about twenty feet, or something?

**RM:** Ten feet each way, yes. They made a tremendous difference. See, our water will not - you can't put it on the leaves. If you put it on the leaves of the trees it takes them off.

Is it high in mineral salts?

**RM:** Yes. And that was always the problem. There were plenty of sprinklers. You could get sprinklers and systems that were easier to work but they'd take the leaves off the trees. So we always had to run it on the ground, which was a lot of hard work, and a lot of waste of water.

**With evaporation?**

**RM:** Yes. And running and, you know, soaking a lot here but you'd have to leave it soaking there to get it down to there. But these modern little low throw sprinklers have - and all the poly fittings you can get these days has made an enormous difference to us. We would've doubled our production, wouldn't we?

**DM:** Yes.

**RM:** We got to a point where we couldn't get any more water. Although we had a fair bit of water, it wasn't quite enough when we were running it on the ground because it used too much, you see. And so we couldn't fully replant the place. We had to just try and make a living off what we had. But once we got these low throw sprinklers, you use a lot less water. You're watering each tree as well but you're using less water. And so now we're producing - well, we've got the whole place under production really and -

When did these come in? Quite recently?

**RM:** Oh, ten years. Twelve, perhaps. And made a tremendous difference to this place. It's doubled its production, I think.

Was it basically straight after the War, too, you began putting new varieties in here?
RM: No. Peaches, we did. We were trying to go to peaches, and then we had very wet years in the 50's - wet winters - and we just found that we couldn't keep going on peaches because peaches require - they can't stand wet winters. They get wet feet. And the plantings we had started to die. So the apples were all old - the ones we'd kept - the varieties we'd kept - and the peaches were obviously not going to work on our hillsides, so Dave and I decided we'd go for pears, which we did. Lots of people told us we were stupid because we'd be better to subdivide. But one reason and another we stayed on, and from then on we've planted pears, and kept the pears on Nashi's. And plums.

Really, I think, from about the 60's - beginning of the 60's - was when we really made that decision to go for pears.

DM: Pears do a lot better here than they do up in the Lenswood area, you see. It's a bit warmer and not so much damp weather in the spring time. And not so cold at night. So the skin texture is better here. And they can do so much better with apples than we can because of that cold weather and so forth, that it's much better for us to leave them grow the apples and we'll grow the pears. Because even before they started planting apples like they are now, they were growing too many for our local market, and so they had to sell some in other States. But the pears, by and large, South Australia can eat all the pears that are grown in South Australia, so we've kind of got a captive market, as it were, so that it's a safer proposition.

Of course, now they're going for a lot of this export into Asia and so forth - for apples, I mean. And they've got bigger markets and they might do better, but it took them a fair while to get it all worked up to work out that way.

Well, how did you actually market your pears straight after the War into the 50's?

DM: In the market. Just down the East End Market.

You handled them all yourselves?

RM: Yes.

Did you store on the property in those days?
DM: We started the store in 1956, was the first crop put in the store. Before that we used to store in Blackwood - Sturt Producers.

Roger, you were saying, when we were off the tape there, that you thought there were quite a few things that you and Dave could tell about the East End Market we haven't gone over yet. What would they be?

RM: Well, Dave can probably tell you more than I can. But we used to go in as little kids really. I would've only been four or five, and we used to run all over the place, giving one another rides on hand carts, and it was hurting the situation. Those were the days, of course, when it was all - or mostly, early on - was all horse and carts, wasn't it, really?

DM: Yes. Trolleys.

RM: There were a few trucks. Dad had a Ford T, and there were a few Ford T's and a few Chev 4's, and practically that was all the trucks that were. They were mostly horses - couple of horses and a trolley. Every stall had a trough to feed the horses in, and you can imagine what the floor was like. And they used to put the veg down on the floor to sell it. *(Laughter in voice)* It was not very hygienic, I should think you'd say. But we found it - we used to get a lot of fun out of going down. We used to talk to Mr Copeland up in the - they used to keep the hand truck carts up in what they called the truck alley. Up on another storey, above the - and we used to go up and talk to him. He was a brother of a bloke that used to help Dad, and we remember him saying, 'You'll live to see Rundle Street full of horses and carts again'. *(Laughter)* Have to wait a while.
AUSTRALIAN RURAL HISTORY PROJECT.
Interview with David and Roger Magarey on 13th October, 1997.
Interviewer: Rob Linn.

Sorry, Roger. You were saying that you met Mr Copeland who was going to bring the horse and cart back.

RM: He wasn't going to bring them back but he said we'd live to see it. These old fellows were - I don't suppose they were very old. We thought they were. But they used to call the market on the south side of Rundle Street, they'd call that the new market, and to them it was new. And lived all their lives in association with the market, those fellows. They worked there every day. The market was a thriving place in those days. There were commission agents around the outside in those shop-like places along the outside. And then some of the -

People like Charlicks, and all that?

RM: Charlicks were there, yeah. There were butchers. There were two or three butchers. There were - what? Three or four - what do you call them? Blacksmiths, weren't they, Dave?

DM: Yes, there were - further up there were more blacksmiths.

RM: There were hardware places, feed shops. See, there were so many horses, a lot of feed being sold. And all these fellows would come around. They all had their - they came and would see every grower and see whether they wanted anything. And you'd have - well, the grocer, the butcher, the feed store, and probably even the hardware bloke looking for business.

DM: The hardware used to come around every market, didn't they?

RM: Yes, they did. And there were hundreds of truckers. The blokes that pulled the handcarts. They were pretty - what would you say - rough lot, weren't they? (Laughter)
DM: Used to reckon some of them just used it as a second job because they had one at night, robbing houses. (Laughter)

RM: In those days, across Grenfell Street, was a very slummy sort of place. And these Copelands used to tell us about how they were - various gangs that lived there, and what they got up to. And I don't doubt them. It was going back a long while that they were talking about, and these gangs lived in these slums and did a bit of work in the market just so that they could say to the Police they had a means of - what did they used to call it? You know, a lawful means of support. Even though they may have been rough, they were always kind to us, weren't they?

DM: Oh, yes.

RM: They wouldn't - they were good to the kids around the place. Yell a bit if you got in their way too much. What would happen then would be, the market - the growers and the retailers arrived pretty early. Five o'clockish. And no fruit or veg was allowed to shift until seven o'clock. And these fellows would - you wouldn't see them until about half past six, when they'd get their handcarts, and the market would be full of handcarts. Actually solid with - full of handcarts. And they'd all be waiting for seven o'clock. And the moment the whistle went at seven o'clock, they'd all pick up their handcarts and start to run, and then they'd all stop again because it was jammed up anyway. (Laughter)

DM: They'd be shouting at one another.

RM: But they were - you know, you don't see that sort of person now. They had to support themselves. People didn't just go on the dole for the sake of going on the dole. They'd have a job like that. They were strange characters, a lot of them. There was one old bloke I remember who was in the British Army. I don't know whether you remember Boots in Kipling's - and this old fellow - I don't suppose he was as old as all that. I thought he was too old to walk just about. He'd been in the British Army when that march was on and he got sick of marching,
and he put his foot under the wheel of a gun limber so he wouldn't have to go any further. He hadn't liked marching for six weeks. *(Laughter)* There were all sorts of characters there. There was one bloke who called himself - they called Roaring Harry. Do you remember?

**DM:** Yeah. I remember Roaring Harry.

**RM:** He was drunk a lot of the time. And we had an old chap helping Dad who had had a very - he'd been very well off running a business that was a commission agents business, and he went broke in the Depression owing Dad some money - I don't know how much - and he was determined to pay it off. So he came and helped Dad for quite a long while just to pay off his debts. He worked with Dad for a good many years, didn't he?

**DM:** Mm. When I first went into the market - like, myself - I had to go in in 1937 because Dad rolled his foot over when we were playing cricket out on the cow paddock here. Trod on a stone chasing a ball and tore all the ligaments in the side of his foot. He had to keep his foot up for a long time, and so I had to go to market. I'd just come home from Urrbrae. Old Jack Copeland came into the market and sort of showed me what to do. I drove the truck down and then he sort of supervised the selling of the fruit, you see. That's my introduction to the actual selling side of it, in 1937. But old Jack was a great help to me then.

**RM:** He was a good old fellow actually.

**DM:** Yes, he was. I first remember going to the market in 1924, it must've been I think. Because Dad had had a Republic truck that had solid tyres and a chain drive, and that was getting pretty old. In 1924 he bought the T model truck that Roger was talking about. So it must've been before that. This thing had a canvas cabin on it, and it had a sort of a back window that had fallen out or torn out or something. Just had a hole. I remember standing on the back of the truck, and a Chinaman used to be a friend of Dad's and he came along - I don't know whether he was a buyer or a seller - and he saw me there and talked to me, you see. And I was standing up on the truck and I didn't have any shoes on, and he grabbed me by the ankle. He said, 'I want little boy to come and help me on my cluck'. *(Laughter)* I panicked and pulled my foot
out of his hand, dived through the hole in the cabin and curled up in the cabin to get away from him. *(Laughter)*

**RM:** Doubtless horribly surprised.

**DM:** He had the best of intentions. I didn't know about that.

**RM:** There were quite a lot of Chinese in those days.

**DM:** Yeah.

**RM:** That's one of the interesting things. In those days there were Chinese growers around. Quite a few, weren't there?

**DM:** More than Italians. There weren't many Italians.

**RM:** No. And then gradually the Chinese disappeared and then the Italians and Greeks came. The Australian didn't find the Italians and Greeks very easy. And then in the last few years, of course, there's been the Vietnamese and Cambodians and these sort of people coming along, and you get the Italians and Greeks that've been there for years coming along, and saying, 'Oh, you know, these fellows -'. It's exactly the same words as Australians used 30/40/50 years ago, or whatever it was. *(Laughter)* I guess with a little reason.

**So the market was always a place full of interest, was it?**

**DM:** Oh, yes.

**RM:** It was to us, yes.

**DM:** Very colourful.

**RM:** Yeah. The Chinese particularly. The bloke alongside us, who was a Chinaman - not the one Dave was talking about. His sons were going to Prince Alfred College and he was a very educated bloke, and Dad used to tell us about a time when this fellow was able to read - I suppose it was Mandarin, but I don't know what it was. But he could read and a lot of the others couldn't, you see. So they'd bring letters to him to read to them.
One day he was reading a letter to one of his countrymen and there was a fellow that wasn't a very good character that - I suppose he was one of the truckers. He picked up a big apple and said, 'Shut up you yellow so-and-so' to this fellow, and threw the apple at him and hit him in the forehead. And the Chinaman didn't even blink. He didn't look at him or even - he just went on reading to his - Dad was always very impressed with this fellow. That he could have the self control to not even look at the bloke that did that. They were always easy to get on with, weren't they?

DM: Mm.

RM: But they've disappeared entirely. They've gone. Of course, there's still the shops with the name - oh, what are they called, Dave? On the corner there.

Sym Choons.

RM: Sym Choons, yeah. There were there. In those days, of course, the actual Sym Choon people were there.

DM: I think there's still a Sym Choon there, isn't there?

RM: Gladys, I think.

DM: They were talking about it on one of the afternoon programmes one day on the wireless.

RM: I know Dad always used to say one of them was born in the Boer War because his name was Kitchener - Robert(?) Kitchener. I don't know. Somebody else said it was a General in the - (Laughter) - were his Christian names were.

You were saying to me earlier that the timetable for the property here actually revolved around the market. Is that right?

DM: Well, that's the primary thing you've got to think of all the time. Whether you're going to be able to take your fruit into the customer when he wants it, sort of thing. So that, you know, you've got to keep that in the back of your mind. I mean, you might like to go spray or something, but if you're going to
have to go and spray in the day time then you're going to have to get your market ready at night. We did a lot of that. At that time we used to pack a lot of the fruit under Roger's house, in the underground rooms. We used to work there night after night, didn't we?

RM: Mm.

DM: Getting fruit ready for market. The trouble was it all had to be carried in in one case at a time. We couldn't - the passageway's too narrow to get any hand truck business through it. So everything that was carted in had to be carted out again. So we did a lot of work.

RM: But it was nice and cool. That's the only good thing about it.

**How many times a week would you need to go to the market in peak buying season?**

DM: Well, now only once, but in those times with apples and peaches you went three times - Monday, Wednesday and Friday. So as soon as you got home from getting one from going to the market you had to sort of start getting some more ready. And the ones at home had to be doing the other work.

**So would you get into the market by five? Is that right?**

DM: About then I suppose.

RM: About that time, yeah.

It was a very social sort of thing in those days. You knew a lot of the retailers and knew what their problems were, and they knew - you know, they liked to have a chat. They wouldn't just come and say, 'Well, I want three cases of Jonathans', or anything. They'd come along and have a little chat. And some of them, quite a long chat actually. And then they'd go off to another person and have a chat. And so it would take them a fair while.

And then nothing was allowed to be moved until seven o'clock and then it - and then there were other buyers who didn't come in early. Who came in perhaps even at nine o'clock, and tried to get bargains, you see. And so you couldn't get away in those days until ten o'clock probably. There'd be someone coming in - I mean, there might be some times of the year when you just couldn't afford to wait as late as that so you didn't bother about those fellows because they
were only fly-by-nights really. It started - basically you had to be there about five and you might hopefully get away by half past nine or ten. And everybody knew everybody, and knew their problems.
The retailers were very good. In those days they knew fruit very well because they advised all their customers, you see. You know, now they put it in a heap and you go and take what you want but in those days they knew what sort of apple was coming in next, and they knew what sort of plum was coming in.
And they only had relatively small rounds but they had their horse and cart, or little trolley, and they'd have thirty or forty customers perhaps, and off they'd go. And they made a living out of that. Not a big living obviously. But nowadays those sort of fellows are all gone obviously.

**So on the property here you might've been packing till late the night before?**

**RM:** Yes.

**And you'd leave at four in the morning?**

**RM:** Yes. Sometimes we'd only been in bed for a few hours. Very few. *(Laughter in voice)* Christmas time, and then the market started early. So then you probably didn't even bother to go to bed. *(Laughter)*

**DM:** But it was very different. Like you were saying, the people who bought the produce knew that Mrs Jones wanted to make her apricot jam on such-and-such a day in the year, and so they'd get these orders for their customers. They knew just what variety they wanted, and how ripe, and all this. Whereas now, of course, they don't bother to find out what the customer wants. They just put it in a stack and the customer comes and sorts it out themselves. You know it's quite a different set up, isn't it?

**RM:** Yes, it is. It's very different.

Those fellows were very knowledgeable - those retailers in those days. They'd probably been in the business, you know, twenty years or more, a lot of them. And they knew - there were more varieties of apples and, particularly, of plums and that sort of thing. And they'd know when each one came in and they'd know what it was good for and whether you could make jam out of it. They
knew Mrs so-and-so that always had that variety and needed to get it. They were very good really. But that's all gone now.

**Even though you had such strong contact with the city, did you still think of yourselves as country people, fundamentally?**

**DM & RM:** Yes.

**RM:** Coromandel Valley was a very rural place then. And so was Belair even. Belair and Blackwood and Coromandel Valley were - Blackwood wasn't quite as much. There were quite a few people worked in the city from Blackwood but Coromandel Valley was very rural really. It didn't alter until the War time. There were fellows here that worked on the orchards and grew a bit of veg themselves. Kept a few cows, and they had no thought of working in the city until the War started. They either went into the Services or they got a job in a munitions factory, or something, and that changed their outlook altogether. Those small veg growing places - there were quite a lot around here - just disappeared. There were Conlins over here, and Bausts(?) and Driscolls down - there were, what? Nine or ten I suppose, small veg growing places that just went out with the War.

**Well, what you be doing in the local community here away from the orchard? How did you have your fun or your social life?**

**DM:** Used to have dances. Used to have all kinds of things up in the Blackwood Boys Club Hall. Debating Society. They had skating and billiards. All sorts of things like that, didn't they?

**RM:** Yes.

**DM:** They didn't have any TV or anything so they had to make their own amusement, and everybody did.

**RM:** Lots of concerts which - some of them were quite good really. Not always local people. I mean, they weren't professional. They were only amateurs. But there'd be quite good concerts really. You sometimes wonder whether the TV wouldn't have been better if they'd get some of them.
Of course, we played cricket. And so that was pretty much what we did in the summer because we were working a lot any rate. We shouldn't have probably but we thought we had to work on Sundays. We'd go to Church in the mornings and then we'd have to get a market load ready for Monday very often. And we always had water to do so we were pretty busy in the summer. The winter wasn't quite so bad.

**Did you play sport in the winter as well?**

**RM:** No, I didn't.

**DM:** No, we didn't.

**RM:** I used to go and watch the football quite a bit but I didn't play. The War sort of cut us out in a sense. For me, any rate, I was still sixteen when the War started, and 22 or something when the War finished, and didn't play any sport while the War was on. By that time it was a bit late for me to start. I tried to play football but I wasn't - I was playing with ones that were younger and fitter and knew more about it than I did, and it wasn't worth trying. A lot of people played football, of course, around here. Some of the girls played hockey.

**Was the Church a strong community centre?**

**DM:** Yes, it was. During War time it wasn't. They got down to about three people I think.

**RM:** Yeah. It had been in - this Church down here, this Methodist Church down here, had been very strong in the First War - by the First War. And they had - I mean, it wasn't very big but it was full, I imagine. And they had a good choir and they bought themselves a very expensive organ and they were going very well. But the Church literally fell apart between the Wars I think. That's my understanding. By the time we can remember, Sunday School was - they'd have had -what? Fifty children going to Sunday School? But probably only fifteen or twenty people in Church. Everybody sent their kids to Sunday School but they - most of them when they left Sunday School, that was the finish, if you know what I mean.
Was there a strong sense of community though locally? Did people feel very close to each other, or know each other well?

**RM:** We had the disadvantage early on because Dad had come from Blackwood, and he was a Blackwood person. *(Laughter)*

**An outsider!**

**RM:** Yes.

**DM:** We were always outsiders. Mum always said we were always outsiders.

**RM:** After the War, we were not.

**DM:** No.

**RM:** That was partly because Dad wasn't a fellow that perhaps got to know people easily, and he'd come from Blackwood and was sort of - that was where he thought about. Back that way. But in the War time he got to know some of the younger people down here and for various reasons - and after the War we were much more part of Coromandel Valley, particularly in the CFS. CFS was in effect a very large part of the social part of Coromandel Valley for - that and the old Agricultural Bureau was very strong.

**Coro had its own Bureau?**

**RM:** Well, it was called Blackwood but it met down in the Government orchard. Or in the Valley school. They would've had fifty members at one stage, wouldn't they? It was very strong.

**DM:** They came from Belair as well.

**RM:** But after the War it was quite strong.

**Was your Father involved with that?**

**DM:** Oh, yes.

I wonder whether that's where he got his ideas for his American books from, would he?
RM: He, of course - he'd been to Roseworthy and he liked reading, and he also was always on the lookout for new things. He would've got them somewhere or other any rate. I mean, he always was - if he got a chance, he was reading something. Those days, he used to get books from the circulating library in Adelaide, on North Terrace.

A couple of more general questions. On the property itself, what would be the biggest changes over the last fifty years, say, David?

DM: Over the last fifty years I suppose the water made the biggest difference I suppose. But also the replanting.

RM: And the small sprinkler.

DM: Yes. The little sprinklers, yes.

What about the way that apples were prepared for - sorry, pears were prepared for market as well? Has that changed?

DM: It's changed in as much as we put everything over - or most things over the grader now and we didn't have a grader before the War. And even after the War for quite a while. We had to sort everything by hand. So when we got this grader - it came from - the basic part of it we bought from up at - oh, the big dam they built up -

RM: The South Para Reservoir.

DM: South Para Reservoir. That flooded an area, and the chap called Ross, I think his name was, had an orchard there and we bought his grader. Brought it down here and we've since modified it out of all knowledge. He wouldn't recognise it. But that was the sort of start of our mechanical grading, although Dad had tried one - a Harvey (?) one I think it was - before the War. Quite early, back in about 1932 or something, he bought one. It didn't work effectively and he had to wind it by hand. So that fell into disrepair. I think they took it back again, didn't they?

RM: Yes.
DM: So the grading was changed altogether with the advent of getting a grader, instead of having to cart everything into the underground rooms and sort them by hand and then take them all out again. The cold stores made a big difference, too. Everything had to - you had to pick it and take it up to Blackwood and unload it up there, and when you wanted to get your market loaded you had to go up and get some fruit out and bring it back. Cart it into the underground rooms and sort it. A lot of work. Oh, the other major change I suppose would be bulk handling, wouldn't it?

RM: Mm.

DM: See, before we had bulk handling, which we got in ’66 I think, Roger and I would have to get up early and go to a stack where we had a whole heap of - a shed, and we had a whole heap of cases in, and put a load on a truck and then take it out to the orchard and run down the rows and unload the cases, you know, in little groups all the way along for the pickers. And then when they knocked off for lunch we’d have to go along and load them all up. Put the full ones up on the truck and bring them into the cold store and unload them onto pallets, and then push them into the cold store, and then unload them off pallets into stacks. And you had to do a lot of that after tea as well. So you were sort of working very long hours.

And then we got the bulk bins and we were able to, you know, put two bins on a trailer and they picked straight into the bins. Got a fork lift and unloaded it when you got to the cold store and just took them in with a fork and that was that sort of thing. Made a very big difference.

RM: Tremendous.

Most apple growers got bad backs because what you do is you pick a case of apples up and then you swivel around and put it on a truck, and many of them got bad backs through just wearing their back out. But we were lucky that, as Dave said in the 60’s, bulk handling came along before we’d worn our backs out completely. But it was a lot of work. Even taking fruit to Sturt Producers. If you put 200 or so on a truck and go up there and then they’d have two people taking them from you, and you had to handpick up a case, turn round and hand it to one bloke, and while he stacked it on the pallet, you had to get the next one for the other bloke. And you were
running with sweat by the time you'd finished. *(Laughter in voice)* It was hard work, and a lot of work with that sort of thing.

**TAPE 2 - SIDE B**

**What about in the orchard itself? Were there changes in the way the trees were planted, or prepared for harvesting, or whatever?**

**DM:** Well, the first lot, all the original planting was planted on the diagonal with staggered sort of rows twenty feet apart across between trees but the rows were seventeen foot four, or something, apart. Now, of course, we've gone to some - lot of trellises a bit closer together, so you're getting more rows to the acre and a lot more trees in the row. So that's meant that the trees don't need to be so big, but you've got to buy more trees when you're planting them.

**RM:** Yeah. More and more of our planting have been on trellises in the last ten years I suppose.

**DM:** Yes.

**RM:** Because they're easier to pick and easier to prune.

**It's not espalier as such, is it?**

**RM:** It's a vee that's - I think it's 60 degrees. And it's about ten feet high, isn't it, from memory?

**DM:** About that.

**RM:** And they just fill the whole trellis right up. It's much easier to pick and easier to prune. See, the problem with picking has always been a problem as we used to grow fruit because pear trees want to grow big.

**They sure do! *(Laughter)***

**RM:** We started out - Dave made these machines but we started out using an old Blitz truck - a second-hand Blitz truck we bought from ETSA - and we
started by putting people up on the Blitz truck and driving along the rows, and they could pick fairly high. And then Dave and I would come along with ladders and pick the tops.

But then we found that - well, Dave altered the Blitz trucks quite completely really. He put a front axle on the back so that four wheels would steer, and then he put a hydraulic ram so that you could lift the tray up. And that tray would - you could put a bin on the tray and the pickers just drive along the row and stop and pick where they can from standing on the truck at normal truck height, and then when they've picked all those they just started the engine and lift the tray up. It goes up to ten feet. So they can pick up to seventeen feet, roughly. Seventeen or eighteen feet. So that the size of the tree can be overcome. It's slower than picking off a trellis and you wouldn't do it now but we've still got a good many acres of the old plantings that were planted in the 60's, and they are seventeen or eighteen feet high, so you've got to do something. Either you pick with ladders or you pick with those things. Or now you pick with these mobile ladders that they have these days. In some ways the picking trucks are better because you can get three people up to the top height. We've been picking with those things for about - another ten years more I suppose now. Fifteen perhaps.

**DM:** Getting a bit old now.

**RM:** And we've got a couple of those. But now we use a couple of those and four or five of the, what we call, *sounds like, a-frons* but they're mobile ladders. You know the sort of thing we mean?

**Like a small cherry picker?**

**RM:** Yes, that's it. And so there was a time when we had fewer trees but Dave and I were doing all the ladder work because mostly you couldn't get people that wanted to use a ladder, and so we would do the ladder work and they would do all the bottoms. That wasn't very easy but now you can even have women working on those things, you see. It doesn't make any difference to them whether they're ten feet high or four feet high. But eventually it's not the way to go. It's not the way we will go as the older - I'm sure the younger fellows will go more for trellises, or even smaller than that. Like, closer planting, we've got at least twice as many trees on the orchard as we had ten
years ago now. They're closer together and they don't produce as much as they used to on each tree obviously but they're producing nearly as much off a tree. Because we've got the small sprinklers and the trellises make a big difference.

You were also talking about broader changes in the market place as such, and you were saying that since the East End Market closed in 1989, that about a third of the growers have disappeared. Is that right?

RM: Yes. Not so much the apple growers, although quite a few of them - or apple and pear growers, yes. I think at least a third would've disappeared. The bigger ones are taking more space up.

We ourselves started with one stand out there and now we're using two, and often three and a bit, because we've had so much more fruit. We've been fortunate that we started to get bigger production just as it became necessary to be bigger. The buyers that would've bought - what? - four or five cases, fifteen years ago, now want 25. They buy them on a pallet actually. Eight to a level, so that they buy up to forty on a pallet. Whereas in the old days, they would come and collect everything that you sold, or send a trucker for it, nowadays we have to deliver everything. That means you've got to have forklifts. So you can't really - you know, if you've only got eighty or ninety cases on, then you don't fit in with the bigger buyer because he wants to buy 24 cases or something. Well, they're crates now, of course. So the small grower's up against it because if he can't afford to have a forklift he's got to deliver them on some sort of a hand thing or something, and he can't get the better buyers, and the small buyers have gone out of business. So just left or gone broke or sold their businesses to someone else that's gone broke. They've just disappeared. The small buyers have disappeared in dozens. Whereas there were lots of retailers that'd buy fruit that was marked or something like that - not necessarily bad but marked - nowadays you can't find anybody to buy that sort of stuff unless you sell it through the chains or through the Central Market. And the Central Market people will buy - you know, they want 30 or 32 or 40 or something like that. They don't go in for two or threes. It's too much trouble for them to go around to five buyers. They go to one and that's it.
Instead of having two hours perhaps while the retailers went around and talked to growers, they don't come around at all. They just haven't got time. They're not allowed in there early enough.

And we do all our selling now by phone. The day before the market we ring up about 35 buyers, and we know what we're going to sell before - like, on Tuesday night, we know how many we're going to sell tomorrow without - we'd be taking down now five or six hundred - 530 crates. And we might have two or three on that aren't sold just to say we've got some on. One time we would've taken half the load in and sold them still.

**DM:** On spec.

**Now, just an overview of all this.**

*Have you always somehow felt that people who live in rural communities - and I guess in a sense you still are a rural community here. An isolated patch -*

**RM:** Just a little one, yes.

**Do you feel they're somehow different from people in urban areas?**

**DM:** I'm sure they are. They've got to live by their wits kind of thing. I mean, you've got the elements you've got to deal with, and you've got all kinds of problems that come up at any time, and so you've got to be pretty versatile at picking what's going wrong or what you ought to do, or whatever. You're sort of geared to this kind of enterprise. Whereas the bulk of the people in this town now, you know, work in town on a job somewhere and they know their job. They might know it very well but they don't know much about anything else. Whereas in this kind of business you sort of naturally find out about other pursuits in agriculture because of the various things you see and read and so forth. So I think in many ways you've got a broader outlook than they have, although they might be a lot better at computers than you are, sort of thing. When it came to getting out in the scrub and looking after yourself, I reckon you'd leave them for dead, sort of thing.

**RM:** I think the CFS illustrates that. Twenty years ago, if you went to a fire with the CFS from Coromandel Valley for instance, there'd be perhaps fifteen fellows on the thing that would know as much about scrub fires, for instance, as
any of the fire officers. I was a fire officer for years and mostly all I needed to
do was hide behind the truck while they decided what to do and then tell them
to do it - if you know what I mean. People knew the district, they knew how fire
worked, they knew what to do, how to go up hillsides and all this sort of stuff. It
may be that not many people need to do that but they did have a broad
knowledge of what would happen around the place, and they had trust in one
another and respect for one another. Didn't pay you to step out of line or they'd
do something to you. *(Laughter in voice)*

But there was a feeling of community in Coromandel Valley at least for thirty
years I reckon that we enjoyed that you don't get now. You know, I mean, at
times people got cross with one another and that sort of thing but basically they
knew one another and respected one another even though - it's not modern
peoples fault, it's just that they live here and work perhaps out at Elizabeth, or
somewhere like that, and they spend a couple of hours driving. They don't get
to know one another and they don't get to know one another's capabilities and
faults, and get to learn, you know, to put up with them. I think that is a shame
that that's gone but I don't know how you can overcome it.

Well, I'd like to say thank you, David, and thank you, Roger. It's been
great to talk with you both.