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OH 658/24

Full transcript of an interview with

DOUG PERROTT & DENNIS GILES

on 5 June 2003

By John Mannion

Recording available on CD

OH 658/24 **DOUG PERROT & DENNIS GILES**

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J.D. SOMERVILLE ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION, STATE LIBRARY OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA: INTERVIEW NO. OH 658/24

Interview with Doug Perrott and Dennis Giles by John Mannion between Peterborough, South Australia and Broken Hill, New South Wales, on the 4th and 5th June 2003 for The State Library of South Australia's Peterborough Oral History Project 'Relaying Our Tracks'.

(Tape 1 is recorded whilst travelling on train and contains moderate background train noise.)

TAPE 1 SIDE A

It's Wednesday, 4th June 2003. This is John Mannion, and I'm currently sitting in the waiting area of the Peterborough Railway Station. Unusual as it may seem in 2003, I'm waiting to catch a train. And the train I'm boarding, courtesy of Pacific National, the operators of most of the trains that pass through Peterborough now, is heading from Perth to Sydney. It's a mixed freight train consisting mainly of trailer rollers[?]. There was a driver change at Port Augusta, there'll be another driver change at Broken Hill. The drivers on this leg of the trip are two long-term Peterborough residents, both with long connections with the railways, particularly South Australian Railways and, later, Australian National, and now Pacific National. The driver is Dennis Giles and his instructor is Doug Perrott. These two drivers will be relieved at Broken Hill where we'll stay overnight and return tomorrow morning with a similar train heading west.

These two drivers were selected by me and Pacific National because of their connection to Peterborough and the rail industry, and their input into this oral history project we're conducting called 'Relaying Our Tracks'. Doug Perrott in particular is an interesting selection of driver, because Doug actually, in his teens, operated Y Class steam locomotives on this same line out of Broken Hill or, more particularly, Cockburn to Peterborough. Anyway, I've just had a 'phone call from Dennis Giles, they left Port Augusta at ten past five, a few hours late, because of a disruption on the Nullarbor line last week. All the freight trains are delayed. They'll be here about seven and they'll call me from Jamestown by telephone.

Anyway, it's cold and blustery here in the waiting room, I think I'll go and sit somewhere warmer, and when the train pulls in I'll have a yarn with Doug and Dennis. (break in recording)

Well, it's almost seven o'clock, I've just come back to the waiting area of what could really be described as 'an excuse for a railway station', which is a far cry from when Peterborough was in its heyday. There's no light in here, it's quite eerie, the streets are dark, there's lightning out in the east, and I'll just wait for my 'phone call from Dennis. (break in recording)

Twenty-five past seven, or nineteen-twenty-five, I just had a 'phone call from Doug Perrett, they'll be arriving in Peterborough at approximately nineteen-forty, between nineteen-forty and nineteen-forty-five. Just while I'm waiting I'll

describe the railway station. All the doors and windows on the waiting room-*cum*-toilet and refreshment room are all boarded up. There's very little maintenance been done here for the past ten years. Vandals have been through the place, consequently that's why all the doors and windows are boarded up with particle board. There is a sign on some of the boards, it's a paper sticker which says 'A community project of the Peterborough Railway Station Volunteer Group in co-operation with Transport SA and the District Council of Peterborough'. Well, that plan or project seems to have fallen into disrepair (pause) because all you can hear now is the rattle and squeaks of the old louvres from the toilet air vents and the signs just blowing in the breeze.

The building was actually constructed in 1968-69, for standardisation, in conjunction with a new station and signal cabin, so whilst it's only a bit over thirty years old it's quite sad to look at it. It's a besser brick construction, there's breezeways. I guess in 1970 it was quite a contemporary building, and in the future we'll probably look back at it with some nostalgia, although looking at it today I can't see why.

Just across the main line here towards the main street there sits a little Y Class steam loco, which silhouetted in the light looks quite nostalgic. Anyway, we'll wait till the train comes in, we'll hear the dinging of the signal bells. (break in recording)

If you listen carefully you can hear the gongs going off at the west end crossing here in Peterborough, and I can see the lights have been activated now. (sound of distant engine) So legend has it that it's every boy's dream to be an engine driver, so I guess mine's about to come true, in a way. (break in recording)

The headlight of the loco is coming into view now, and just across the street heading across from the Peterborough Hotel I can see the familiar stance of Carlene Gaudi[?]. Carlene spends never-ending hours walking the streets of Peterborough, day and night, and I can see her just walking up the street now. (break in recording)

I guess the engine is about fifty yards from me now and it's extremely quiet. All you can hear is the rumble of the diesel, just idling over. Anyway, I'm about to get on board. (break in recording)

The time is twenty-oh-seven. (sound of train engine commences) Right, now I'm on board the locomotive – NR 51, isn't it, Doug?

DP: That's correct.

And I'm talking to Doug Perrett. Doug, can you just tell me what your position is on the train? Apart from sitting?

DP: At the moment I'm acting as a co-driver, making observations of the track, the trailing train, making notes of the track over time running of the train, also calling out signals to my driver.

Well, we'll just go back – I've known you for a while, but can you tell me a bit about yourself, where you were born?

DP: I was born in Adelaide and I lived there, went to school until I was fourteen, and then the opportunity for a job came up in Peterborough, where I had relations. I had a number of relatives who were actually in the railway industry, so I packed my bags, left Adelaide, went to Peterborough, where I actually boarded with an uncle and auntie, and from there I joined the Railways in 1967 and stayed in Peterborough until 1992, and then transferred to Port Augusta until 1994, and then joined National Rail in Port Pirie. I was there for just over a year and then got transferred in National Rail to Port Augusta, and I've been there since, now working with Pacific National.

But you've been based in Peterborough all this time, you've lived in Peterborough.

DP: I've lived in Peterborough since 19 – actually, in Peterborough since 1966.

Yes. Who were your uncle and auntie, who were they?

DP: Gordon and Roma Heggerson[?]. Gordon used to be a wagon maintainer down at the old Loco in Peterborough.

And so what did you first join the Railways as?

DP: I joined as a cleaner and I was cleaning for – used to clean the locos, the old steam locos, diesels, the old 75 Class railcars, and I was cleaner for twelve months. In that time I did all my safe working rules to be qualified as a fireman, and then – it was actually on the seventeenth birthday – I then became a fireman.

And when you say 'cleaning', what do you actually mean by that?

DP: You used to start off as a cleaner and you used to clean the locos, with the steam engines used to clean the boilers – just an overall, just cleaned the locomotives. It was like an apprenticeship to become a fireman.

Yes. Was it very dirty?

DP: Yes. We used to – the worst part of the job was we used to clean the boilers of the steam engines, we used to use tallow, and tallow was like ...., and it used to actually – when it was hot it melted and it used to make the boilers nice

and black, but the only problem was it all used to seep into the pores of your hands and your skin. And we used to go to the cabarets of a Saturday night and all the sheilas, you'd stand up against the wall and all the sheilas would be ten foot away from you, you could smell all this tallow coming through. It wouldn't matter how much you scrubbed, you just couldn't get rid of it.

That's pig fat, isn't it?

DP: Yes, yes. Dennis would be able to tell you all about that.

DG: Oh, I wasn't into that. (laughs)

So what did you use to do with the tallow, rub it on the boiler?

DP: Rub it on the boiler, and it used to melt and actually made the boiler nice and black.

This was on the outside of –

DP: The outside, yes.

– the cowling.

DP: Yes.

Did that attract the dust?

DP: It did, yes.

So you'd have to clean it again.

DP: Yes, well, used to clean it with tallow, and then you used to get a dry piece of cloth or what they used to call 'waste' and actually wipe it back over. It come up pretty good, used to shine it up, come up quite good.

So how long did you stay cleaning for?

DP: Twelve months I was a cleaner. You couldn't go out firing until you were seventeen years of age. On my seventeenth birthday I went out firing on the shunter. The first job was the West End shunter. There used to be two shunters in Peterborough, there used to be the West End shunter and the East End shunter.

Could you explain what they are?

DP: Well, basically the West End shunter – in Peterborough, where the shunt yards used to be used to be between Hillsden Street and Silver Street, and if you were on the shunter, the Silver Street end of the yard that was the East End shunter and on Hillsden end was the West End shunter.

So what did the shunting entail?

DP: Shunting vehicles around the place, marshalling and remarshalling trains. Used to be quite busy, actually, you know, years ago. If you can imagine all the shunting all took place basically between Hillsden Street and Silver Street.

How long would that be?

DP: Used to be shunters all round the – the East End shunter used to be twenty-four hours round the clock, and the West End shunter used to be afternoon shift, if I can remember properly.

And between eastern end and the west end crossing, what would that distance be, do you reckon?

DP: Oh, I can just about tell you. It would be (pause) round about eight hundred metres – about six-fifty to eight hundred metres.

So all that shunting – – –.

DP: Used to be done inside of there. But of course, further on, you used to have the stockyards, and that's near the old marshalling yard as it is now, and of course Loco used to be down where it is now, too.

And so you were firing at this stage on a shunt engine.

DP: On the shunt engine, yes.

Do you remember some of your early drivers?

DP: There used to be Kev Baker, used to be a shunt driver. There was also another old driver called Danny Dunn. They were the two shunt drivers. They were permanent shunt drivers.

And what did you call them? Did you call them by their first names, or – – –?

DP: I always called Danny Dunn 'Mr Dunn', because he was always a lot older than what I was. But with Kev Baker, he wasn't – that wasn't that age

difference, as such, I always used to call him 'Kev'. But old Danny was always 'Mr Dunn'.

And did you learn much off them?

DP: Kev Baker I did. Old Danny probably not so much. With his age I suppose he wasn't that interested in sort of telling me, but Kev Baker was a bit different, he would help you out a bit.

And what type of engines were you using at this stage?

DP: They were T Class locomotives. The East End shunter, that was always a coal burner, and the West End shunter, sometimes you had a coal burner, sometimes it was an oil burner. Down Loco, they used to have what they called the 'depot shunter', and that used to be an old Y Class loco. It was nicknamed 'The Rat', and of course that loco used to shunt just Loco, just remarshalling engines there or pulling trucks out of wagon maintainers or the roundhouse.

And what was it like down at the roundhouse? Was it noisy and busy?

DP: Oh yes, yes. In reference to how many men used to work down there, I can remember when I first joined as a cleaner there used to be at least six cleaners on every shift – that was afternoon, night shift and day shift. Plus there was a running shift foreman, then you had the blokes in the oil store, then there were lighters-up, turntable driver, then there were fitters, fitters' mates – yes, it was a real hive of activity.

Much different than it is now.

DP: A lot different, a lot different.

When you first started then, did you ever think that Peterborough would be like it is now?

DP: Oh, hell, no. You couldn't imagine, back in those days, that Peterborough now is – well, it's not even a whistlestop. The only time a train ever stops at Peterborough is to pick up your good self or pick up passengers on the IP[1] if they've already pre-booked. Otherwise the trains just go straight through.

[1] IP – ??

Yes, just considering the station's only a bit over thirty years old, the new one.

DP: The station, where it is now, that was built basically just for the standard gauge.

Yes. Well, go back to when you were firing, what did you do when you finished your shunting?

DP: I did a specific time on the shunter, and then you actually went on the main line, and the first job that you did on the main line was the job to Quorn, and you used to go with the Inspector. That was like a breeding ground for the blokes who just went out, and they used to run a steam engine, an oil burner, up to Quorn. And when you got there you did a bit of shunting, then you got relieved by the Commonwealth crew which took that engine to Hawker. And you went into barracks, had a rest, and by the time they got back from Hawker it was time to book on and you'd book on duty, do a bit more shunting, and then you'd depart for Peterborough.

And were you still a fireman at this stage?

DP: Yes, still a fireman, yes.

On an oil burner, what did the fireman do?

DP: He controlled the oil flow into the firebox. Instead of the coal it was oil burned.

It wasn't as hard as shovelling coal.

DP: Oh, nowhere near, no, no. It was just a matter of regulating the flow of oil, that's all it was.

And did that – like with a coal burner, when you –

DP: (to driver) [?Clean away?], yes.

With a coal burner, when your engine's really working you have to shovel lots of coal. Was that similar with oil?

DP: Yes, a similar sort of thing. Just had to open up, regulate the oil to how hard the engine was working. With the coal burners there was a real art to fire a coal burner. Some locos used to fire real well, others used to be poor. Depended a lot too on the quality of coal that you were using.

Yes, I was talking to Dave Lillywhite last week, and he said trying to burn Leigh Creek coal – it was wet, running water out the Leigh Creek coal.

DP: Yes, that was shocking coal.

Because it never had any – it wasn't pulverised or heated, it was just wet. So how long did you stay on the Quorn line?

DP: Oh, the Quorn line was – once you did a couple of trips then you went to the Inspector and if he passed you, if you passed, then you were allowed to go back out on the main line on other corridors such as this, the one to Cockburn, Terowie or to Pirie. (speaks to driver)

Well, just to interrupt the history lesson now, where are we now?

DP: Hillgrange.

Hillgrange, just out towards Oodla Wirra?

DG: Nackara's just over yonder.

This is where I come with the rail grinders, with John Holland, I come out here, yes. Stayed out with them all night. We started lots of fires out here. So these green signals you got, what do they indicate?

DG: ..... means clear.

And the little red one underneath, what's that?

DG: That tells whether it's an absolute or a permission? Absolute, the only way you get past with a train authority. Permissive is normally on the .... and you can pass that and stop. Permissive, red's on the other side there, ... form an angle with the light.

So Hillgrange is obviously a passing .....

(speech from intercom) Train Control to the driver of NR 51. (beep)

DG: Yes, Train Control, this is NR 51 receiving, over.

TC: .... What sort of ...., over?

DG: Well, he's come down there at a hundred and fifteen. (laughs)

DP: Yes, a hundred and fifteen kilometres now, and I can give you a Hillgrange time, was twenty-twenty, over.

TC: Thanks for that.

DP: Roger, five-one out.

Who were you talking to then, Doug?

DP: That was North Train Control. He actually operates the Train Control Board from Crystal Brook to Broken Hill.

And where's he situated?

DP: He's situated down at Mile End, in the Train Control office at Mile End.

And why was he interested in your speed?

DP: There's a train behind us, so he probably just wanted to check up and see what our running times are like to give that bloke an indication of how we're going.

DG: Plus this is a guaranteed train and it's supposed to went through Sunday. (laughs)

Oh, right. What's a guaranteed train?

DP: Oh, Pacific National guarantees the customer that their train will be at Sydney Freight Terminal, for instance, at a specific time. And of course there are penalties based on that. If the train gets there late, then they pay – well, the cost of the traffic is not as expensive. If the train's late leaving Sydney Freight Terminal because it's their fault, the customer's fault, then he pays a penalty.

These kilometre posts we're passing, what do they indicate?

DP: Exactly what they are, they're kilometre posts, and there's also half-kilometre posts, too.

And where are they registering from?

DG: .....

DP: .....

Which is Port Pirie.

DG: That's the half one, that upright one.

Right, back to the history lesson, Doug. Are you ready?

DP: Yes, I'm ready.

You went out on the main line, which would be from Cockburn to where, Pirie?

DP: Yes, Peterborough, Cockburn, Peterborough to Pirie, Peterborough to Terowie.

And what sort of trains were they, ore trains, mixture?

DP: Yes. In those days it was just about all ore trains. You had a limited mixed, which was the passenger train with a bit of freight on it. It was basically ore trains.

And what sort of engines?

DP: Well, when I first started on the main line going to Cockburn we had 830 Class locomotives.

They're diesel electric.

DP: Diesel electric, and then we upgraded to 600's, then the 700's came in, and the one after that was the EL's – DL's, then there was the EL's.

And you mentioned the other day you were talking to me, you actually drove Y Class on the narrow gauge from Cockburn.

DP: No, no. The Y Class was only on the depot shunter in Peterborough.

Oh, right. So you never drove steam on the – – –?

DP: Yes, we did drive one steam engine to Cockburn on a freight train, and that was with Mick Desecke[?] who is a driver in Peterborough; and also, every so often, we ran a Garrett out to Paratoo, and Paratoo is where, from Cockburn, they dropped off loading at Paratoo because they couldn't get up the hill, they had too much loading, so they dropped it off at Paratoo, and used to go out from Peterborough, light engine, or light train, and pick up the loading there and take it back in to Peterborough. And that was with a Garrett. Garretts were those 400 Class, and they were oil burners. (train whistle blows)

So compared to the Garretts, what were the 830's like?

DP: Oh, 830 was a diesel electric locomotive, yes, they were good. They were basically – nowadays they're nothing but shunt engines, but we used them as main line locos.

They were the first diesels on this –

DP: Diesel locomotives.

– in this area?

DP: Yes.

Now, this engine we're in now is very quiet.

DP: These are good locos.

Were the 830's as quiet as this?

DP: No, no, no. No, the 830's weren't as quiet as this, neither were the 600's, neither were the DL's, 700's.

I asked you yesterday, didn't I, how do you actually drive? Do you drive with the speedo to keep your time, or you mentioned that your track knowledge was also a useful indicator.

DP: The most important thing of driving a train is your track knowledge. If you've got a good knowledge of the track, then that's three-quarters of driving a train. And of course you've got the speedo there in front of you to actually tell you exactly how fast you're going, but using track knowledge you can set yourself up to be able to maintain your speed – knowing whether you're going uphill, downhill, where your undulations are, and it's all track knowledge.

And compared with the old narrow gauge line this would be much smoother, wouldn't it?

DP: Oh, much smoother, yes.

The gradients wouldn't be as steep.

DP: No. And of course with diesel locomotives, they come to a hill, these days they just go straight up it. But in the old narrow gauge they come to a hill, they'll tend to wind round it to be able to get up.

Oh yes, much like a zigzag.

DP: Yes. A prime example was coming up ..... You've going uphill but she was up and around a lot of curves, where now you just go straight up the hill.

That's why they did the cuttings.

DP: Yes.

Do you have much trouble with wheel slip on these?

DP: No.

Not at all?

DP: No. Once we do have any wheel slip, straight away the locomotive will apply sand to the rail to rectify the problem.

If I wasn't here what would you two blokes be doing to keep yourselves awake? Do you talk?

DP: We talk to each other, calling out signals, observing the track, observing our following train, making sure that each of us are observing the track, yes. Keeping a sharp lookout.

And Dennis, this blue light that flashed up above you – – –?

DG: That's the safety .....

What does that actually do?

DG: If you don't push it every ninety seconds it puts the air off to stop the train. That's .... It gives you ..... seconds' warning.

What if you let it go over?

DG: If you let it go over the ..... whistle will come on, and if you don't twist the thing .... the train. ....

And is it too late then?

DG: That's too late, yes.

So what do you do then?

DG: Wait till it comes to a stop and then you've got to reset it, push in the .... this goes into emergency ..... hit it, and then you release .... and away we go again.

Are there any ramifications?

DG: If they read the computer roll ....

And has that ever happened to you?

DG: No, no, no.

Has it ever happened to you, Doug?

DP: No. No, I'm too observant for that to happen.

That's good. Has it ever happened to anybody?

DP: I dare say it has.

Apart from if they really had a problem?

DG: Yes.

DP: There's a ninety-second run-down. We're in cycle C at the moment, that's ARTC[2] territory, two men on the logo[?], we're in cycle C. In cycle C there's a ninety minute cycle, and after twenty seconds you'll get a warning on your IFC[3] screen and it'll start flashing, telling you that you've got twenty seconds before the warning light up here will start to flash, and then you'll get a high-pitched sound, and if you haven't acknowledged it by then, then you should make an emergency application. Years ago we had what they called the foot pedal, you actually had to sit there and the driver had to have his foot down on the foot pedal, and if he picked it up for any length of time same thing would happen. It was called the 'dead man's pedal'.

And could that be overridden on the older ones?

DP: No.

You couldn't put a block of wood in there.

DP: I don't want to hear that.

I know you can't override these.

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[2] ARTC – ??

[3] IFC – ??

DP: No.

You can't just hold your foot on [it].

DG: Well, if you hold it down it goes off the same.

That's right, yes. Because it's got to be reset.

DG: Yes.

Oh, that's very interesting. But I'll ask lots more questions as we go along. You were telling me these are four thousand, two hundred horsepower?

DP: Four thousand, two hundred horsepower, with a hundred and eighty horsepower that's used up in the auxiliaries. But if we talk about these locos being four thousand horsepower then – – –.

And what have you got behind us, what sort of load?

DP: We've got thirty-five wagons, we've got twelve hundred and thirty-two tonne, and we're six hundred and twenty-eight metres. This particular train is a .... train, with the front two-five pack wagons.

What are they?

DP: They're actually five wagons joined together by a –

DG: ....

DP: – yes, it's got a draw bar. So you've got five platforms making up – – –.

END OF TAPE 1 SIDE A: TAPE 1 SIDE B

– – – I asked you when you were driving narrow gauge if they were operated by kerosene, but you said they weren't. But you mentioned hand lamps operated by kerosene, can you tell us about that?

DP: Yes, we had the hand lamps were kerosene, and I remember at Cootna[?] once I was admitting a train and I was standing at the points and I had the kerosene hand lamp and I was waving it, and this train approaching, and he was sounding his whistle so I just kept on waving it, and he was sounding his whistle so I was keeping on waving it and he was sounding his whistle and I kept on waving it, and next minute he stops. And I was keeping on waving him, and I thought to myself, 'Now, why the hell isn't that bloke coming in?' And he kept

on sounding his whistle. And then I realised, I looked out and of course the kerosene lamp, the flame had gone out, and actually I was waving to no-one.

DG: In the narrow gauge a lot of these places would have been attended, wouldn't they?

DP: I can remember Oodla Wirra being attended, I can remember Yunta being attended, and at Olary there used to be a station agent, and that was old Teddy Mowton[?].

DG: Yes, well, Glen Carlton was there for ....

DP: Was he? Yes.

Who was the bloke you mentioned?

DP: Ted Mowton.

Was he related to Kev?

DP: Yes, his son, his son.

Oh, right.

DP: Who died recently –

Yes.

– up in Darwin.

Darwin, yes. So you talk about attended stations, they were like signalmen?

DG: Yes.

DP: Yes. At Yunta, Yunta was actually a reasonable size. Yunta I can remember there was a station master, there was a couple of porters, there was also a goods shed attendant, there was a gang there, four or five blokes.

You mentioned a goods shed. Now, what would you call this train, is this a freight train?

DP: Freight, yes, inter-modal.

Or a goods train?

DP: No, a freight train.

And years ago, what would they have called it? A goods train?

DP: Goods train.

So there's a bit of American terminology.

DP: American terminology, yes. (whistle sounds)

We've just passed the old cast iron water tank at Paratoo, is it?

DG: Yes, ...

You just dimmed the light there, Dennis, what's that for?

DG: So the truck driver can see where he's going.

That's very considerate of you. Does he do the same?

DG: Most of them do, but ....

So, Doug, did you always want to be a train driver?

DP: Probably not so much a train driver. I was always interested in the railways, only because I had a number of relatives that worked in the railways, so I suppose I had that background. But not specifically to be a train driver. When I went to Peterborough it just so happened at that particular time they were employing cleaners, so I had the opportunity to join that side of the job.

So you didn't aspire to be a cleaner for the rest of your life?

DP: No. No.

I notice the engine seems to be working a bit, is this uphill?

DP: Yes. Once we went over that level crossing, then we run down a bit to the Three Sisters bridge, and then from there she's all uphill until we get it up the top of Dead Man's Hill, so we go downhill ....

And we've just passed, what, one-seventy-six and a half.

DG: That's Dead Man's Hill.

So do you enjoy your job?

DP: Yes, I thoroughly enjoy my job. The job's been good to me.

Yes, I was going to ask you why do you enjoy being a train driver? Well, I guess the logical answer is you get paid, but do you get job satisfaction?

DP: I get job satisfaction, I'm my own boss to a certain degree, I've got a panoramic view of the countryside, you work with good mates such as Dennis here.

About back in the early days – we were talking the other day about on steam, what if you got stuck with a driver who was a pig of a man? I've heard there is quite a few around, there used to be. How did you get on?

DP: I suppose you knew the blokes and knew how to react to them, and if you had a bloke that had characteristics like that, well, you'd probably just put up with him. You know that you've only got to basically work with him for a shift. If you were stuck with him as a regular mate then there is a bit of a problem there, you may have had to try and move the roster to see if you can probably change mates and that. But there were blokes like that –

Oh, so you could apply – – –.

DP: – but then again, look, that's human nature, there's always going to be those kind of blokes. Even today you've probably got those kind of blokes.

So you could apply for a transfer.

DP: You could, you'd go to the rosterman, you could ask to maybe swap mates, yes. The only problem there is if he was a – if he wasn't a real good bloke to work with you found it very hard to swap with another bloke because why would the other bloke work with him too? So – – –.

Did the new blokes get put on with him?

DP: When I first went out firing, what happened there was it was a bit strange, because you'd have thought that with a new fireman you'd have a senior driver, but that wasn't the case. The junior fireman basically had a junior driver, and the senior fireman had the senior driver. It was actually a funny arrangement.

It's a bit like horses and riders, isn't it?

DP: Yes.

Can you remember some of the really old drivers who worked the main lines?

DP: Oh, there was – remember old Paddy Harding? He was probably the oldest driver I remember. Old Danny Dunn I've mentioned, but he was a shunt driver.

And then you got blokes like Greg Shell, Bob Hockley, Alan Wellesby, Charlie Waterman, yes, old Charlie. They were the older drivers. Dave Lillywhite, I used to ..... with Dave Lillwhite ....

I guess there'd be literally hundreds, would there?

DP: Yes. Peter .....

DG: Old Merv Yates –

DP: Merv Yates.

DG: – he was in charge at Cockburn –

DP: At Cockburn

DG: – for a lot of years, wasn't he?

DP: Yes, ... come down .... driver.

What's a chargeman?

DP: Oh, chargeman, he was actually in charge of places like Cockburn, Terowie, called a chargeman, and he was actually in charge of Loco.

I've spoken to Merv once, and about the only thing he mentions is the good times he had.

DP: Undoubtedly.

The work didn't seem to rate very highly.

DP: Undoubtedly.

It was the social life that got the mention.

DG: Still, they had to have the Loco ..... the tracks to go out.

He must have done his job, then.

DG: Yes.

And were those, those old drivers, Doug, were they respected men?

DP: Yes.

As you said earlier, they're the type of blokes you'd call 'Mr Brennan' or – – –.

DP: Yes. Especially at my age, too. I mean, old Paddy Harding, he was a man – well, when I first joined the job he was a man of – he was sixty years old then.

And what about Ray Schell, what did you call Ray?

DP: Oh, no, I've always called Ray 'Ray'. I think Ray is that kind of bloke that would expect you to call him 'Ray'.

Yes. He's a pretty amiable sort of bloke, isn't he?

DP: Yes.

Yes, you can sort of pick the characters who you'd revere, I guess.

DP: When I first joined the job, you know, as a sixteen year-old, well, the thought that Paddy Harding was fifty-five, fifty-six, fifty-seven years of age – well, it's really through respect too you'd call them 'Mr'. (pause) We've just gone over Dead Man's Hill and there's actually a cross on the top of the hill – you'll see it tomorrow coming home. Every year – I suppose they still do it – the gang used to go out there and they used to paint the cross and just maintain it.

Yes, there seems to be a few conflicting stories about why it's named Dead Man's Hill.

DP: Yes, I've heard a number of stories. All the stories are feasible, but I've never ever heard one you could actually say that is the true story, but I may have heard the true story without knowing it.

I've heard it was a boy, I heard.

DP: Yes. I've heard it was a bloke in a gang, I heard it was an Afghan, I heard it was a fireman, that died on the loco, died on the train there once. Yes, I've heard a number of stories.

It's very warm in this cab, isn't it?

DP: Yes. We've got an air conditioner, if you'd like some air conditioning on.

Oh, no, just comparing how it would have been years ago in an open – on the footplate on a steam engine (laughs) with a westerly wind blowing up your backside.

DP: The Garretts were okay because the Garretts were all enclosed, they were good. The T Class used to have side curtains, there used to be a curtain at the back of you between the cab and the actual tender used to come down, and then where you actually got into the cab you had like – what would you call them? –

DG: Two bits of board with a bit of canvas on them.

DP: – yes, two boards with a canvas and the boards used to go between the handrails with a block of wood that used to hold it together, it used to be both sides of the – – –. So you can imagine the wind would just come in.

Probably comparable to farming in its day, isn't it?

DP: Yes.

They were both pretty basic.

DP: Yes, yes.

Like farming back in – – –.

DP: But of course you never earned as much money as what the farmers do.

Oh, that's probably debatable. My father always wanted to be a train driver, but his dad wouldn't let him. Because Dad used to see the drivers come in from Alice Springs into Quorn.

DP: Oh, yes.

But the conditions were probably much similar: tractors without cabs and pretty basic steam engines. As you travel through these old – well, they were settlements, do you think about that when you come up here?

DP: Yes, most certainly. Think back to what they were. We'd be talking about just remembering Peterborough, what Peterborough was compared to what it is now as far as the rail industry goes, but then you've got these little towns like Mannahill, for instance. I can remember when we worked with Mick Persecke[?]. I can't remember the guard, but Mick Persecke was the driver. Anyway, we're on a T Class, the T Class had no speedo. Anyway, we flew to Mannahill where we cleaned the fire –

DG: Pretty normal.

DP: – pretty normal – and we took water there, but when we got there we may have gone way ahead of our running time and Mick said to me, 'Oh, listen, Doug, you clean the fire and take water, I'll see you a bit later on.' And of course him and the guard went. Anyway, there used to be an outdoor drive-in at Mannahill; well, that's where *they* went to, and poor old me got stuck, without knowing what was going on, I got stuck with the engine. But I soon woke up to that.

You went with them. Yes, I've spoken to some old probably widows mainly of the blokes who worked on the gangs up here and they explained the conditions, and they had no idea what they were coming to. Like there were no lights, nothing. No shopping facilities. And they'd never been told any of this. They usually arrived at night and they said if it wasn't for the hospitality of the neighbours they don't know how they would have got through it.

DP: As I said to you, if you could ever try and get hold of Maria and –

DG: Eighty k[ilometres per hour].

DP: – eighty, yes – – –.

Maria Selpeniak[?]?

DP: Yes. She'd be able to tell you some – – –. I'll have a word with her and see if she'll – – –.

Yes, that'll be good. It always seems as if the gangs were the lowest of the – bottom of the ladder, weren't they?

DG: Bottom of the pecking order.

But if it wasn't for them there'd be no railways. (laughs)

DP: There'd be no ..... And some of the blokes – I mean, the amount of gangs there used to be, too, that went down – – –. I mean, now, I don't think there's not even a gang on this track any more. There's one gang in Pirie that does basically the whole lot. But years ago there used to be a gang at every siding and they used to have their own section of track, and of course there used to be always a competition between the gangers of who had the best track, and they used to take real pride in their section of track. But of course being a driver, or being on the locomotive, you always looked down at the gang and they always looked up to you.

I spoke to Ron Fitch last year, he was Commissioner in the 1970s, and he said on his inspection trips up to Peterborough he'd always make a determined effort to find out the names of the blokes on the gangs and actually speak to them. Because he said they deserved a lot of respect. So where are we now?

DG: Yunta!

DP: Yunta.

We've got an eighty k restriction.

DP: Restriction over those points. And we've got a clear normal speed on the ....

DG: Yes, sir!

And this line on the left, what is that?

DP: That's the crossing – – –. (whistle blows)

And that's a very long crossing .....

DP: Very long, yes. What they call an extended ..... You've got Gladstone's quite a big ....., then you've got Peterborough has a big ....., then you've got Yunta and then Mannahill. All the rest of them are all round about nine hundred and fifty to a thousand metres in length.

So you could fit this –

DP: We could fit, yes, any-sized train in the .....

Now, how do you get on with alcohol and driving? Zero tolerance?

DP: Yes, zero tolerance.

What about years ago? I've heard stories.

DP: Yes, years ago there was known to be some alcohol on the job, and I think probably six o'clock closing probably caused a bit of that, too, and the type of work the blokes used to do, too. You can imagine the steam days, especially in summertime. Not only do we regularly get tested on the breathalyser for alcohol, but also we get drug-tested too. Every so often they come up with the drug tester and – we get notified, and then we get drug-tested. Urine sample gets taken.

Oh, right. You don't feel that's an invasion of your privacy?

DP: No.

I guess you've got a very responsible job. (speech from intercom) Do we cross any trains on the way up?

DP: No, clear run.

DG: No, it's all behind us. Nothing in front.

What about tomorrow?

DP: Tomorrow we'll definitely cross one.

DG: Possibly two, more, because that stuff from the west will be starting to move too.

DP: Starting to move too, yes. See, they had a derailment the other side of Rawlinna –

Was it a very bad derailment?

DP: – on Saturday. Yes, they had to replace seven hundred metres of sleepers and rail. It was a long weekend in Western Australia last weekend, so Friday night all the gangs all went, of course then the derailment and – – –.

Is that Transfield that look after that?

DP: Transfield are mending it, yes. Yes, they had to get cranes out there and whatever, and all that takes time, especially where it was, too. Nothing out there.

So you mentioned before the T class, Doug, didn't have a speedo.

DP: No.

Well, looking at what you've got here today, it just looks like a television.

DP: Basically.

What does it tell you?

DP: There's a number of screens that we can get up here, but I like driving with this one here, the one that Dennis is on too, simple thing, it's the biggest speedo and I don't have to wear my glasses to see it. But it tells me the speedo, not only

has it got a digital readout but it's also got a line here that tells you how fast I'm going.

Yes, there's a green line.

DP: Yes. And you can see a little arrow at the top there.

Yes.

DP: That's my indicator. And if you watch when we start to go downhill, if Dennis leaves it in the throttle notch he is, then actually our speed's going to pick up but this arrow will also increase, too. And there's a speed sense on the locomotive and it speed senses how fast it's anticipated he's going to keep on going if he keeps it in notch. We've also got the amps that we're pulling.

She's pulling fairly well now.

DP: Yes, we've got – have to put my glasses on so I can see it now.

DG: Eight hundred and fifty-six, fifty-nine.

DP: You can see the green line here, you can see where it says zero? Well, right of that, where that green line is, that's amperage, that's power. If we go into dynamic brake the same thing happens, we'll get amps on our amp meter, also the green line will be on the left hand side of that zero. So you've got basically power on the right, dynamic brake on the left. It also shows you things such as your amp load. At the moment she's fully charged so it's zero. If there was a leak in the train somewhere then we would get a readout on that airflow. Equalising pressure and brake line pressure should be five hundred. So you've got five hundred and three, four hundred and ninety-six, but that's only a computing glitch. We're allowed five hundred max. Our brake cylinders, our bogeys, number one, number two bogeys, their brake cylinders. Of course, running along here our loco brakes are off so we've got zero pressure in there. The last wagon, at the moment she's not working, we've got an SBU[4] unit but it's showing those stars. If it was working properly then you'd have a pressure, a brake line pressure, in the last wagon. These trains these days are pretty well

[4] SBU – ??

airtight, so it would have probably about four hundred and ninety-six at the back. Just down here on our function screen you've got distance in metres, so for instance we come up to a speed restriction, once we hit that speed restriction we can just stick on our metre reader and it actually tells us how far we're actually going, so we know when the rear of the train is actually clear of the restriction. This one here tells us our power notches, whether we're in one, or whether we're in eight, and also tells dynamic brake, too. Our alerter[?] cycle, and that's the twenty-second warning for our BC[5]. And then you've got things like, for instance, if you have a fault on the locomotive and the fault light comes on, PKS[6], if we drop any more, go below three hundred and fifty in our brake line, that PKS opens up and it cuts all power to the traction motors. Then sand, if you start sanding the track, that will come on. If our loco brakes come on, that will light up. If she starts to wheel slip that will come on. And our fuel miser, with these locos, which we have two engines, we can do a bit of fuel saving where we can actually work this loco but we can actually put the back loco, offline it, so she's just idling, and *vice versa*: we can work the back loco and sit here with this one just idling.

Oh, right, if you didn't need the –

DP: If you didn't need it, yes.

– the power.

DP: Yes. We can also derate these locomotives too, and you can either derate it on here or derate it on our ..... panel just out in the vestibule there. Depending on the horsepower we got and our load, we can actually put this into notch six and that's as far as we'll go, we'll just get the horsepower and put it on notch six or notch seven. We've got this one in notch eight because we're late running, of course, we've got to get there as quickly as possible. But we can do that – we can either do that through the front loco or – we've got two locos, we can have this one in notch seven, the back one in notch six, or *vice versa*.

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[5] BC – ??

[6] PKS – ??

What about your engine monitors, what have you got here?

DP: The whole thing is computerised. If something happens to the engine, you get a fault, you get a warning sound, and you see the screen up there?

Yes.

DP: It will come up what fault it is, and in front of that fault there'll be a number. If it happens then we need to ring up Goninan's on the radio system, tell him the fault number, and then he'll tell us what to do, what the problem is, and then he'll fill us in. If we can fix it we'll fix it, if not then we've got a problem.

So he can diagnose that over the radio?

DG: Yes.

Where is he based?

DP: Melbourne.

And who is it? Goninan?

DP: Yes, Goninan. G-O-N-[I-N-]A-N-S.

They're the manufacturers?

DP: Yes. The ..... system radio, as you can see, on the top here you've got the train control that you're on – well, we're North Control at the moment. The local time and the date. GSR[7] – that's a channel if we've got a passenger train. And then we've got two 'phones so we can ring out or somebody can ring in, they're satellite 'phones. Out here, for instance, where there's no GSM[8], we can talk to anybody in the world using the sat-phone. Three speaker mode is just a matter of where they come out through the speakers. If, for instance, somebody rings us and they ring on number one 'phone here, Dennis can answer it and the person that's talking might want to say, 'Listen, I want to speak to you both,' it's just a matter of me hitting the 'conference' and then the person's talking to both of us. If we're going along, someone rings us up, and while we're talking to him somebody else rings us, then you can just put the first person on hold, then we

[7] GSR – ??

can talk to the second person. It's just like a 'phone. We've got a repeater where, if we have to get off this locomotive for some reason and walk back, then we get our portable radio, we hit 'control', hit 'repeater' and then put the 'phone, the radio, into repeater mode, (speech over intercom, continues for several minutes) we can walk back from our train and talk through that and use this loco as a transmitter.

So you're not isolated at all.

DP: And there's an emergency back-up 'phone in here that we plug in, and that is different from here, that's another output. So if this buggers up you've still got an emergency back-up. It's a lot different today from the kerosene hand lamp.

Yes, I was talking to Dave Lillywhite, and you know, he's talking about taking a connecting rod off an engine on the job and throwing it up on the tender and off you go with one driving wheel. So you wouldn't do that these days.

DP: No.

What do these engines rev at?

DP: I've got it in my book there, the idling speeds.

Oh, so you don't get it on a readout, doesn't tell you any of that?

DP: No.

What sort of fuel capacity have you got?

DP: These have actually got fourteen thousand litre tanks, but not actually a fuel tank. The fuel tank's got ..... in the frame which is actually incorporated in the frame, but they only fill them up about twelve thousand, otherwise the loco's too heavy, too much weight in it. So twelve thousand litres.

And between – where do you refuel?

DP: We put nine thousand litres in this in Port Augusta, about nine thousand, and this will go all the way to Sydney.

It's still a lot of fuel, isn't it?

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[8] GSM – Global System for Mobile Communications.

DP: Yes.

Oh, that's good. We might have a bit of a break now, I'll give you a rest. Thanks, Doug.

DP: No, thank you.

END OF TAPE 1 SIDE A: TAPE 1 SIDE B

Okay, Doug, can you tell us about the water column incident that you were telling us a while ago? You can mention the name of Peter Davies.

DP: Yes. Well, Peter, he went up, they took a T Class up to take water. Anyway, he was on the back of the tender. You had to get a hook to actually hook onto the water column to pull it across, and then you had to pull it down and actually stand on it while you were taking water, so your weight was actually holding it down. Anyway, to get off the thing you had to take care because it was spring-loaded, and of course it would come up and then shoot across to its normal position. Well, this particular day it was freezing cold and of course he misjudged and he finished up actually going with the water column. And of course the driver, instead of staying there and helping him, couldn't wait to tell the other blokes at work. So he'd rushed back to the office and immediately got us all out there, and there was poor old Pete hanging from the water column.

So he actually took the engine away?

DP: Yes, yes, it was quite comical.

Except for the bloke who was hanging.

DP: Except for the bloke that was hanging on the water column.

This driver, he was one of a pair of drivers, wasn't he?

DP: He was one of a pair of drivers, yes.

Dennis, can you tell us about these drivers? They were brothers, were they?

DG: Yes, they were brothers. (laughs) Two of the top enginemen in Peterborough. But they were pretty rough on their train handling. Being so mechanically-minded you'd think they would have been better.

They also had a reputation of being very loud, didn't they?

DG: Yes, they liked to hear their voice! (laughs)

And they had sons who went into the job, didn't they?

DG: Yes, they had a couple that were fitters, ended up leading hand fitters. There's a driver in Adelaide depot at the moment, Leroy.

And they were also very big on motorbikes.

DG: Yes, motorbikes. Years ago they were into the Rowley Park Speedway.

DP: Yes, they used to come to Broken Hill too, I think they used to come to Broken Hill and race.

DG: Yes, there used to be little races all round the place. Peterborough used to have one up by the high school, up in the Coff's[?] paddock they used to have a circuit up there.

Yes, as in speedway, wasn't it?

DG: Speedway, yes.

They had lots of contacts up here to do with motorbike parts, they got some for me.

DG: Yes, they used to be in the clubs up here, for years and years they were still members of the clubs. Bob used to live in Cockburn for quite a long while, he was up there relieving, like he got his rate up there as an engineman.

Are there any other stories you can remember? I've heard one about being measured up for your shovels. Did that happen to you?

DP: No, that never happened to me. But you had different-sized shovels, but that never happened to me.

Is that true?

DP: Oh, I have heard it, yes.

There were different-sized shovels?

DP: There were, yes, different-sized shovels.

I think it was Dave Lillywhite was telling me. .... was a storeman?

DP: Yes, yes.

If you got a new fireman he'd strip them off and make them lie on the floor in the nude while all the other drivers and firemen were hiding behind the bales of cotton waste (laughs) and measure him up for the shovel.

DP: Yes, I heard. But there were different-sized shovels.

I guess if you were a big, tall bloke – – –. And, Dennis, you were telling us about the brass ..... under the bearings.

DG: Yes, there was a heap of old narrow-gauge wagons stored on the .....-Yunta line, and a couple of chaps apparently thought there was brass in the axle boxes which was there for the taking and I think they stripped the whole lot of the wagons, which would have been quite a few hundred brasses and they're pretty hefty. When the police were notified and the raid was imminent, there was that much stuff come back to the railways they didn't know they had it! (laughs)

It would just appear back on-site.

DG: It just appeared back on-site and no-one knew where it come from, but they had a lot more gear than they thought they had!

And these brasses that went missing, you were saying that the blokes who actually took them were off – – –.

DG: Were the fellows that used to put them *in* the trucks. (laughs)

And did they do this in broad daylight?

DG: Well, we don't know when they actually done it, they could have been doing it in night-time, daylight.

I guess if they were seen during daylight it would have just seemed as though they were doing their job.

DG: Yes, well, that's correct too, because they would have been in overalls probably the same as if they were at work. Because I think they used to go down and oil them every now and then to stop them rusting and that.

Too bad there was nothing there

DG: No.

– for the rust to wear on. Have you got any stories you can relate? When did you start – well, tell us about your growing up in Peterborough. You were one of the classic 'baby boomers', I guess, were you?

DG: Born in ’47.

So what was it like growing up in Peterborough?

DG: Well – – –.

How many kids in the family?

DG: Three brothers, three brothers. We were very calm and cool, (laughs) done everything everybody else used to do. Fair bit of rabbiting and bush sort of stuff.

And where did you go to do that?

DG: Oh, out towards Dawson, Parnaroo[?].

Did you go on foot, or – – –?

DG: No. We used to have about two hundred and sixty rabbit traps and Mum used to load us up in the ute and dump us out there and come back and pick us up again.

And what did you do with the rabbits?

DG: There used to be a chiller, Tom McLoughlin used to have a chiller.

What was his name?

DG: Tom McLoughlin.

And where was that?

DG: Chap that works in the cabinetmakers, got the red Valiant – not Valiant, Ford – curly-haired fellow, in Moscow Street.

John Schofield?

DG: That’s the fellow. Yes, that’s where the freezer was. I think it’s still up the back garden.

DP: I think it is, too.

.... pull cart, insulated van.

DG: Yes, yes, just up there. It’s up on forty-four gallon drums or something.

And what did you use to do with the rabbits? Did you use to skin them or just gut them?

DG: No, just gut them. Pare them, pare them to the legs, hang them over a board in the back of the ute and bring them back. We could make ten or eleven quid for the weekend. We were rich kids. (laughs)

So how old were you when you first started this?

DG: Oh, from eight, ten.

So this was on weekends.

DG: Yes, on weekends.

And did you have much to do with your mum and dad with their business?

DG: Oh, well, I think I was nearly born in the shed with the banging and clanging on the tanks. From the day I come out of hospital I used to be put in the cradle in the shed because Mum and Dad used to do all the tankmaking and that together.

And where was the shed?

DG: Oh, it was only up the backyard of the house.

On –

DG: On Victoria Street.

–Victoria Street.

DG: Yes.

Right on the end.

DG: Yes, the last shed up there.

Not far from the drain.

DG: Straight up from the McHughes', Peter Street, corner of Edith and Victoria Street.

So that's where they did the whole business in tankmaking?

DG: Yes.

Do you remember how your dad used to get his iron for rolling the tanks?

DG: The firm was 'Shit and Feathers'. (laughs) What was the proper name? (pause) No, I just can't think of the proper name. They'd get it in straight lengths and hand roll it, they'd have a machine there, there used to the firm down the back – the Scout Hall, used to be a hardware store. Ernie Travers I think the name was. And he'd take it down there and roll it in the – – –.

So your dad didn't have a roller?

DG: Not at that stage. In the latter years he did, yes.

And so he used to take it – – –. And how did the iron used to come up, on the train?

DG: Yes, on the train. Delivered by the carrier, Reg Howard or whoever had it then.

So once it was rolled what did you do with it then?

DG: Well, it depends on what size tank. See, sometimes you'd have three sheets of iron to a rail[?], two. They'd be riveted together and soldered and built up.

Did you help doing that?

DG: Oh, I helped on numerous tanks as I grew up, yes.

And where were the tanks sold?

DG: Farms, all around the town. You can probably still find tanks around with 'SRG' on, some sheet of iron or something.

That was your dad's name, was it?

DG: Yes.

What was that?

DG: Old Sammy, Sam.

What was the 'R' for?

DG: Samuel Rye, R-Y-E, I don't know what that meant. (laughs) Yes, they used to put in septic tanks and everything around the place, and one stage they never had a vehicle, he'd take the crowbar and a shovel tied to the bar of the bike and away he'd go and dig the pits. (laughs)

This was a pushbike?

DG: Yes, a pushbike, yes.

So looking back now, was that a hard way to be brought up as a kid, or do you think it was all right?

DG: No, we enjoyed ourselves. Yes. Best time of my life.

So I guess you got to know your father, working with him.

DG: Yes, mucked around the shed and that, yes.

And your brothers.

DG: Yes, ... Yes, Pete done his apprenticeship, entered the trade through him.

And I've heard that your mum used to do a fair bit of work, too.

DG: My mother was a better solderer than any of them. Even when she had her hips replaced she used to make small tanks to make a few extra bob, and we'd have to go up and lift them up on the table because she couldn't bend down to solder the girths and the bowls[?]. So in your lunch hour you'd slip up there and lift them up and put them on this old table she had so that she could solder them standing up.

What sort of soldering iron did she use?

DG: Just a normal soldering iron that you'd put in the wood fire. They used to have stumps and cut them up in a little drum and heat them with the stumps.

Yes, just like the Pyramid copper –

DG: Yes.

– on the handle. What, did she have various sets of them?

DG: Yes. Mainly use the one set for a tank. Fairly big things because they held the heat longer. You'd only use the small ones, you know, when you make the downpipes and bends and things like that.

And was that the main job, just the tank making?

DG: Yes, mostly tank making.

So I suppose there were lots of sticks of solder around.

DG: Oh yes, yes. (laughs) They used to get them – they used to be like Army boxes, they used to get in, they used that much. And in the hard times where you'd get a splatter on the floor, they were all collected up and when you got a couple of big tubs full you'd melt them down and make sticks yourself.

And did you have the truck, did your dad have a truck?

DG: No, never had a truck. The latter years he ended up getting an old Chev[rolet] ute – Holden ute, I think it was.

I was just wondering on a big job, did you use to deliver them or did people come and pick them up?

DG: People come and got them, yes. Or locally in the town the carrier used to – we had a carrier used to cart all the stuff round the town from the shops and everything, and he'd deliver them around the town.

Peter showed me .... – that's your brother – of a job from Orroroo, he found amongst your dad's stuff. So he made it for the surrounding areas as well.

DG: Oh yes, yes.

Did you remember him actually making the brass labels for the cream cans?

DG: Oh yes, I've seen him make a lot of them. I think there's still a heap of the stuff up in the – well, it would have been in the old shed. It's probably in Peter's shed now.

And tucker boxes, did he use to make them?

DG: Yes, he made the old tucker box for some of the drivers and fireman around the town. Peter can make them now, but there's too much time involved, he reckons.

And so where did you go to school?

DG: Primary school and high school, yes.

Both in Peterborough?

DG: Yes. Born and bred and probably get carted out in a box! (laughs)

Now, Peter was telling me that he actually got involved in making the zinc coffins. Did you ever do that?

DG: No. He got a couple of bad ones that he had to line a couple of coffins, and I reckon they found one out in the bush and I think the other one might have been old Wilmont[?] or something.

Yes, he was the one in the tank.

DP: In the tank.

That was when he was working for Ernie Bales, is that right?

DG: No, he always worked for the old man.

Oh, so they made the lining.

DG: I think he brought the coffin up and got them to line the thing.

So what were schooldays like, did you enjoy being at school?

DG: Well, some of the teachers didn't like me, but – – –. (laughs)

That's not what I asked.

DG: I was a bit of a sports freak when I got going. (laughs) An old teacher we used to call Fanny Moore, when I was in Intermediate English I had to spend the first three months of the year out on the step. (laughs) I don't know what I done wrong! And I'm amazed that I still passed it! (laughs)

You must have been a good learner. Do you remember some of your schoolmates you went to school with? Are any of them still around Peterborough?

DG: No. No, no-one's still there. Some of them who were older and younger, but not in the actual classes that I went to.

So they mainly just shifted on.

DG: Yes, gone. Different jobs. The work wasn't here.

And so what made you join the railways?

DG: Well, that was the 'in' thing, back in '64.

Was it the 'in' thing, or the only thing?

DG: It was the 'in' thing, because you had a job for life, that's what they – you'd sign up and that was it, 'You've got a job for life now, boy. Look after it.'

So how did you actually get a job, do you remember?

DG: I think playing sport with the head clerk and so forth helped me.

So what did the process involve? Where did you go to get the actual job?

DG: Just went over the superintendent's office, the head clerk's office, and he'd just ask you a few details, what schooling you had. Because most of them knew you, sort of thing. They'd been there for years and they'd seen you come up from the babies, sort of thing.

And so what did you apply for a job as?

DG: On the clerical, clerk. Went down to Rolling Stock, done every office in Loco, ended up relieving the boss down there, then I come up the freight shed, then .... the engines.

I think I asked you earlier, you called it the 'freight shed': what did you call it back then?

DG: Well, some called it 'goods shed', some called it 'freight shed', but – well, it's a freight shed because you had a freight truck.

So it wasn't actually called a goods shed back in '60?

DG: No, it was freight. You had your freight clerk so it would have to be the freight shed.

We're talking the old .... stone building back then?

DG: No, I never worked in that one. It's only the new one on the standard gauge that I was in. I know the one you mean, yes.

It was demolished with standardisation.

DG: Yes, I used to work with John Baker at the greengrocer shop, like after school and on Saturday mornings delivering stuff. And first job Saturday morning was to go over – well, we did call it the 'goods shed' then – and pick up the produce to bring it back to the shop.

Oh, so possibly after standardisation when they built the new shed that it became the 'freight shed'.

DG: Yes, quite possibly.

All the old stone ones were referred to as 'goods sheds', weren't they?

DG: Yes.

So you did the whole rounds of clerical.

DG: Yes, I was in Loco, up to the station, freight, and then onto the trains.

What made you go onto the trains?

DG: Well, money was a little bit better. (laughs)

Well, you tell me the story, tell me while you're walking around.

DG: Yes, the first payday as a cleaner, I paid more tax than I was earning as a clerk!

So there's the answer to the question: why would you go on the road. So who was your first – do you remember your first experience – I guess you started as a cleaner.

DG: As a cleaner or trainee locomotive engineman then.

It would have been different than Doug's time as a trainee because there was no steam.

DG: Oh yes, we never used any tallow, we didn't have to burn our ..... (laughs)

So you were mainly on diesel?

DG: Yes, mainly diesel locos and GM's and CL's, 600's, and just had to wipe the blocks down and that sort of thing.

What about the inside of the cab, who did all that?

DG: We did that, we had to mop the floors and clean the toilets and so forth. But I think the cleaning the box and that was to get familiar with where the different parts of the engine were.

Where did you do your actual training, when you were a cleaner, like to become a – to get the knowledge of the operation of an engine, how did you learn that? Did you just pick it up or did you do schooling?

DG: We did about two months in school doing all the air brake and general knowledge on the engines, the rest was just picked up working with a regular mate, sort of thing, and trial and error.

Where was your school? I'll stop that. (feedback, volume increases) So you picked up most of your knowledge from hands-on experience.

DG: Yes, well, you just had your schooling and your safe working, we done our air brake in the classroom, they had a carriage fitted out with the whole system in it and you could trace all the air brake through the system, they had it all set up, and then the rest was more or less hands-on knowledge out on the track. Something went wrong your mate normally knew what to do and you'd be there observing it, next time you could do it.

So where did you actually do the theory work, was there a building in Peterborough?

DG: Upstairs in the station building there.

Oh, the new station building.

DG: Yes, the new station building.

There was classrooms?

DG: Yes, they had conference rooms and that sort of thing, yes.

So how many would you [have] in a class?

DG: I think we had about six in the class that I went through with.

And who were they, do you remember?

DG: Oh, Leroy Kennedy, John Reynolds, Tony Faulkner, Ricky Graham – I can't think of the other. I think it was six of us in the school, anyhow.

And so what was your first job out on the road?

DG: Used to have to do I think it was about three hundred hours on the shunter before you could go out on the main line.

Well, that's actually within Peterborough.

DG: In the shunt yard in Peterborough. You had like the bogeys change and all that sort of thing. I think my first job was going up to Broken Hill on the

produce. Stopping everywhere, unloading produce, going back and helping the guard put it in the goods sheds and – – –.

Oh, so you helped the guard.

DG: Oh, yes. If there was a fair quantity of stuff you'd always go back and help him unload it.

Doug, we were talking with Doug a while ago, and he mentioned that when you're coming from the produce train your tuckerbox was usually empty. Can you tell me about that?

DG: I wasn't involved about that, must have happened before I got on the trains, but they reckoned they never brought much food with them on that train because they could get their vegetables and so forth out of some bags or something. (laughs)

That was quite a common occurrence?

DG: Yes, well, apparently, I've heard it from quite a few, yes.

That was just accepted, (laughs) or did they actually – was it recorded?

DG: I think they must have put it down to loss. (laughs)

Spoilage.

DG: Spoilage or something, yes.

And what about wheat trains, did you work any wheat trains?

DG: Yes, we used to work going down towards Pirie way, do the shunting and put the empties in and pick up the loaded and move on to the next station and do the same. Just about all the stations all the way to Pirie you'd be picking up load and dropping empties off.

The bag wheat days were gone when you started.

DG: No, there was no bag wheat, it was all bulk.

Livestock?

DG: Yes, there used to be – well, Peterborough used to be a big market town. Some sales you could end up with a hundred and fifty vans of stock leaving Peterborough.

And what about the smaller stations like Quorn, Orroroo?

DG: Yes, you'd occasionally get the vans come down from them. They'd be transhipped in Peterborough onto the standard gauge or broad gauge, whichever way they were going, and move on, yes.

And any other experiences?

DG: No, not really. Had a very quiet time.

That's not what you told me a while ago.

DG: (laughs)

We went for a walk early this morning and we were near the station building, weren't we, and you mentioned that back in the good old days, when there was no control on blood alcohol content, the wall seemed very steep.

DG: Yes, it was very hard for some of us to get up. Quite a few, in fact. Yes, I've known people to be lying on their back at the bottom of it. (laughs) I've known a person getting back to the barracks and going for a shower and forgot to take his clothes off, and things like that. (laughs)

Who was that?

DG: I'm not mentioning any names.

Is he here today?

DG: He's alive and well in Peterborough, still. (laughs)

Oh, he's in Peterborough, not in Broken Hill.

DG: No!

And not in this room?

DG: No, no. Another old chap, he gave the women a bit of cheek in the barracks, and when he come back after having a few sherbets he went to bed pretty tired, and when he woke up his back was all scraped and scratch marks all over it. When he had a look under the sheets they'd put all the bottle tops under the sheets. (laughs) He had a very comfortable sleep!

You were showing me the Broken Hill barracks, can you – how big is that?

DG: There was forty rooms, bedrooms, two amenities blocks with I think it was four showers in each and toilets, two kitchens with I think it was four cooking places in each, big stainless steel 'fridges. Real big dining-lounge area with TV, *et cetera* in it.

And when did that operate till?

DG: Oh – – –.

DP: Round about '90 – – –.

DG: Was still going when I was in. I was in until '95.

DP: I'd say about 1996.

DG: Probably '96, yes.

And was that run by private contractors?

DG: State Rail Authority.

New South Wales?

DG: New South Wales State Rail Authority, yes.

DP: They owned, I think, I think they owned it, and then AN[9] paid *x* amount of dollars –

DG: For the upkeep of it –

DP: – yes.

DG: – and wages and *cetera*.

DP: Yes. But the employees, like the cleaners and all that, the women and whatever, they were employed by SRA, State Rail Authority.

You sort of terminated your employment with the railways, didn't you, AN?

DG: I think it was November '95.

Was there any reason for that?

[9] AN – Australian National.

DG: Well, I had uncertainty whether it was going to continue on, like as a depot – not a depot, but whether you'd have permanent employment or not. I had a chance to go out privately and I took it.

And was there any incentive to get out, or you didn't have a choice, or – – –?

DG: I had the option to, like transfer, like Doug and others, to Port Augusta or whatever, apply for them. Whether you were accepted or not, another matter.

What did you do then?

DG: I went painting. I got a restricted licence through old Johnny Baker, bit of house painting around the town. Only the one big job, which was the Railway Hotel.

You had an offsider at times, didn't you?

DG: Yes, I employed Geoffrey Wood.

And so when did you rejoin?

DG: February 11th 2002. After nearly six years out.

And did they approach you?

DG: No, I saw the ad[vertisement] in the paper, or the wife saw the ad in the paper, local paper, she brought it to my attention and I told her she was stupid. (laughs) Why would they employ somebody fifty-three, fifty-four years of age? She said, 'Well, I'm still going to put it in,' so she filled it out and I signed it and two weeks later they said, 'When can you start?' (laughs)

And were they looking for experienced drivers or trainee drivers, or – – –?

DG: Well, at this stage they hadn't got any training facilities to bring a person off the street, so they were looking for somebody that was an experienced driver which they only had to use for, say, two or three weeks to upgrade their safe working rules and new engines and that sort of thing.

So they're really relying on semi-retired people to come back into the job?

DG: Well, that's right. But sooner or later they're going to have to start training people because they're running out of ones that's willing to come back.

DP: They're putting the motion in now that they're going to start to take on some trainees, they'll have to take on trainees soon. Let's hope that happens in the very near future. It'll have to happen in the near future.

DG: Yes.

DP: That pool of ex-drivers out there is just slowly drying up.

When you joined, Dennis, it was National Rail, was it?

DG: Yes, National Rail.

Which was a privatised Australian National?

DG: Yes.

Is there any age limit on how long you can drive for?

DG: Long as you pass the medical, apparently, you can keep going.

So it's a bit like driving, motor vehicle driving test –

DG: Yes.

– as long as you pass you're all right. What if they caught you using binoculars?

DG: No, they wouldn't do that! (laughs) No, once you're, I think it's fifty-five and over, you do a medical every year then, I think.

DP: Yes.

DG: As long as you pass the medicals and that they'll keep you on.

I guess that's where things have really changed in the rail industry now, with Pacific National, it's just so professional, isn't it.

DG: Yes, it's completely different to what it used to be. Anything could go before, but now once you book on you're in charge of that engine. Before, there was – you were just driving it, there was other people in charge of everything.

So they took the flak.

DG: Yes.

But now you take the flak if there's any – – –.

DG: Yes, any discrepancy or anything we've got to take it because we're the actual boss of that train. Make the decisions and – – –.

You were saying earlier you've heard stories of drivers being tied into their seats because they were so drunk.

DG: Oh, years ago, yes, there was stories going around. They'd have a few too many before they booked on in the outstation or something and they were tied to the seat to get them home, or halfway home until they sobered up a bit.

And so the fireman was quite as capable as the driver – – –?

DG: Well, normally you've both done half of it. Well, in my term, probably years ago, the top engineman, he wouldn't get – – –.

END OF TAPE 2 SIDE A: TAPE 2 SIDE B

And we've been delayed.

DP: Delayed until about half past two this afternoon.

And do you know the reason for that?

DP: No, but I would say it was crossing the trains, other side of Broken Hill, is probably delayed a little bit.

And what's the train we're taking back?

DP: NY 3. It's an empty steel train coming back from Newcastle, Port Kembla.

And where would that be heading?

DP: That will go to Port Augusta, and then in the early hours of tomorrow morning we'll head off to Whyalla.

We were just talking a while ago, out on the balcony here, you and Dennis were just reminiscing about SAR days. You mentioned a few stories. Can you just relate some of them? There was one in particular about when you were a young bloke and the cotton waste.

DP: Oh, it was just when we cleaned the boilers we'd clean it with tallow and we'd use cotton waste, and of course the cotton waste used to get very oily and it would become highly inflammable. That particular time we always used to wear overalls and we always put this cotton waste in the back of our pockets, which naturally overhang. Anyway, what blokes would do is they'd walk up to you and they'd actually start talking to you, and then, unbeknownst to yourself, they would actually light the cotton waste and then say goodbye to you and walk

away. And of course, naturally, after a little while, this cotton waste would start to burn. The next minute you could actually smell it and you'd be looking around to see who was on fire or what was on fire, until you actually felt the heat. And of course (laughs) by then the waste was fully inflamed and probably burn the overalls.

What about the overalls, they got burnt?

DP: And they got burnt too sometimes, too, yes.

And this was when you were living with your uncle and auntie, was it?

DP: This was when I first started cleaning in 1967.

Where did they live, actually, their address?

DP: It was in Queen Street and there weren't too many houses. There was one house next to them where Danny Vedinindi[?] now lives, and there was no house on the other side. Reddaways[?] used to own the shop out the west, and Mr and Mrs Carmody used to live back alongside, I think it's Sidenight[?] Street. All the rest were just empty paddocks. Of course, you had Reddaways shop and then you had another shop, too, a bit further up, and that used to be Paley's[?], I think it was, Dennis, wasn't it? It was Paley's there?

DG: Paley's, yes, Paley's, then Slattery's took over.

DP: Then Slattery's took over.

Where was that shop?

DP: That shop was at the actual, the back, that was at the back – now there's – – –.

DG: Next door to Merv Yates.

DP: Yes.

Oh, that besser block – – –.

DP: The besser block place.

DG: The area of Hill Street and Cyanide Street.

DP: And the police houses used to be just across the road there, they built some police houses. But all that land there was just empty paddock, we used to play football and cricket with cousins, I remember a whole heap of us used to play football in that paddock at the back there.

How did you use to get to work? Walk?

DP: Walked, yes.

Didn't have a motor car or bike?

DP: No, no, just used to walk there.

And you also mentioned the other day you lived at the hostel for a while?

DP: Yes, yes. After I left my uncle and auntie's place I went and lived at the hostel. I used to live in Wallace Hut 1. And that was certainly an experience.

What can you tell me about the hostel?

DP: There was a lot of people used to stay there. And of course there was a lot of nationalities used to stay there too, there was Polish, Russians, Germans, Greeks, you name it. And of course there was never any love lost between nationalities for obvious reasons during the War and that. And yes, some good times were had there.

Was there much fun and frivolity went on?

DP: Yes, yes, there was a lot of parties used to go on. There was a lot of people used to stay at that hostel. They used to use the – there was the Wallace Hut that I was in, they were single room with just single bed. Some rooms had double beds in them, and they had rooms back-to-back to each other with about ten rooms on one side, ten on the other.

And what were the conditions like in the huts?

DP: They weren't too – they were very, very basic. But they were okay. They were just for single men. The ones that I was in, they were the old ones, and then you had the newer type. You had, where the kitchen area was, they actually had sort of an amenities room, then you had the kitchen area, then there was the dining area, then there was another lot of huts further on that used to sort of

follow the roadway, and you'd actually walk into those and you'd walk up an aisle and there were rooms on both sides of that aisle.

Were these mainly single men who lived there?

DP: Yes, single men, they were all single men, yes. After a while, when the standard gauge got built, some of the standard gauge workers that used to work on building the standard gauge, they used to stay there too. In fact one of the old huts is still there. I think Apex use it as a storage area or meeting room.

And what was that used for?

DP: There was rooms in there. And they're still there. All the rest has all been pulled down.

And what did you do for meals when you were at the hostel?

DP: There was a cook there and they used to provide the meals. It all used to come out of our rent and meals came out of our pay, so there was never really a money transaction, it was all just out of our pay. And they used to, for our crib and everything, they used to cut a crib for us to take to work.

Oh, so you were looked after.

DP: Yes, it was pretty good.

And what about laundry and – – –?

DP: No, you had to do your own. That was all done. There used to be – where the cookhouse was, there used to be a laundry there with washing machines and whatever, but you had to do your own.

Oh, so there was facilities.

DP: Facilities there.

So it was like home away from home.

DP: Yes.

Virtually.

DP: Virtually.

And I've heard stories of prostitution going on – – –.

DP: No, that was back before my time.

Was it?

DP: That was back before my time.

And parties.

DP: And parties, a lot of parties there.

The prostitution, yes, it may be before your time – – –. Eric Brand's time I think, in particular, it was a driver from what I can make out.

DP: Oh, back in the '50s, late '50s, maybe early '60s.

Maybe.

DP: Maybe.

Talking to Dave Lillywhite he said, 'When you've got two hundred men, well, they've got to have some – – –.'

DP: They had to have some release, didn't they?

That's right.

DP: Yes.

So what did they use to do for entertainment in the hostel? Did they stay there, or did they go out?

DP: Oh, when I was there naturally there was a lot of other young ones there, other young cleaners, there were some porters, there was a fair few young ones there. And there was a fair few of the older ones, too. We used to make our own fun.

So there wasn't many motor cars.

DP: Oh, yes, there was a lot of blokes in the hostel, young ones that probably never had motor cars. I never had a car at that particular time, there was a fair few others. But there was one fireman there, Iszio Grugevic[?], he had a motor car. Another bloke, he had one of those Mark II Zephyrs. But yes, most of us probably never had cars – not the younger ones, anyway.

Did you play much sport, was sport a big thing amongst – – –?

DP: Yes, football, cricket. Basketball was pretty big in Peterborough at that time, too. They're the three sports that were – – –. And of course there was tennis.

Where was the basketball played?

DP: That was actually outside, down at the – near the football oval, there was tennis courts and the basketball were actually combined. And then they built the sporting complex, but before that the basketball was actually played outside on the courts.

DG: And there used to be soccer was pretty strong in Peterborough.

DP: Soccer, soccer was strong too, yes.

DG: When all the New Australians were in the camp – – –.

DP: Yes. They used to, actually they used to play in the Pirie competition, I reckon there was Pirie –

DG: They used to travel – – –.

DP: – I've got a feeling even Whyalla might have been involved, I'm not too sure about that, but – – –.

DG: Yes. I'm pretty sure, I remember Alan Briggs –

DP: Used to be the goalie.

DG: – yes.

DP: Yes. And a number of people from the hostel used to play soccer.

DG: Yes.

DP: There were some English, Scottish blokes. They used to play, they played soccer.

What about the gym? Did you ever play sport inside the old gymnasium?

DG: I've played basketball in the gym over the years.

DP: Yes. Basketball was the only one I ever played.

So how long did you stay in the hostel for?

DP: I was in the hostel probably for three years, and then I shifted from there, I went into the Peterborough Hotel, and that was when Nan and Tom Johnson used to own it. And I was there right up until I got married.

So you actually boarded at the hotel?

DP: Yes.

And did you get a reduced rate?

DP: Yes.

And they provided all your meals.

DP: They provided all the meals, once again cut a crib for me and everything. They looked after me really well.

And laundry?

DP: Yes, and laundry, yes. Throw all my gear in with the laundry they used to do, and – yes, it was good.

I was talking to Nan the other day.

DP: Were you? She's still at McGinty Island[?]?

No, she's in Adelaide.

DP: Back in Adelaide, is she?

Yes, Heather, her daughter, brought her up.

DP: She'd be a fair age now, too, she'd be getting on.

She said she was feeling pretty frail, she might not come up again. Her husband died.

DP: Tom died. Yes, Tom died not that long after they shifted.

She said it was the hardest job she's ever had in her life, running the Peterborough Hotel.

DP: And they used to run it well, too.

DG: Tom wouldn't have been much help, though. (laughter)

DP: That was when the Peterborough Hotel *was* a hotel, in my opinion. It was real well[?]. In fact, Dennis, you worked –

DG: Yes, I worked –

DP: – you worked there for – – –.

DG: – for Tom and Nan, three or four years, I suppose.

What, as a barman?

DG: Yes, after the railways ....., came in at half past four, quarter to five and do a couple of hours' shift for the six o'clock closing.

DP: And I'm trying to think of another barman that used to be there, too. I think he's dead now.

DG: Snow Baker?

DP: Old Snow Baker.

DG: Yes, he was there for years.

DP: Years, yes.

DG: They even had the bar, the extension bar, named after him, 'Snow Baker bar'.

Yes, it's a different era than now, isn't it? You wouldn't get people living in the hotel, all the facilities aren't there.

DP: No.

DG: Most of the hotels can't have guests upstairs now with the fire escapes and that now.

DP: Yes, we used to have people staying in – there used to be a bloke that worked in the power house, he used to stay there. There was a couple of other firemen and cleaners that used to stay there.

DG: Peter McNamara out at the Post Office.

DP: Yes, used to stay there.

DG: John ....., I think, used to work at Dennis Graham[?].

DP: Yes, there was a heap there. There was actually, where we stayed, there's a room, an extension to the back of the hotel where there must be eight rooms, I suppose, as you walk down, that they built.

So did you treat the hotel as your home?

DP: Yes, because that's what it was.

And where did you eat your meals?

DP: In the dining room. All the meals were eaten in the dining room. And we were dressed accordingly. Old Nan made sure that there was no – that when you went in the dining room, that you were dressed for the occasion.

Yes, she said she ran a pretty good hotel. I think she said they inherited the reputation from Caseys and they upheld it and probably improved it.

DP: Yes.

DG: I can remember old Tom having a go at my brother, Peter. Went in the bar one day and his tie wasn't real flash and jokingly he said to go down to Craven's a book up a set of gear to him and come back looking decent. Of course, my brother being a happy-go-lucky fellow, he went down and booked the set of clothes up. (laughter) When the bill arrived Tom wasn't going to pay it, but Mrs Johnson said, 'You've got to pay it, you told him to go and do it!'

DP: Yes. Old Tom was – – –. (break in recording, resumes at higher volume)

And so, Dennis, you worked as a barman. Nan Johnson said she used to call and see her bar boys when they used to come back, she caught up with one of them the other day, she said.

DG: Oh, I haven't seen her for years and years. Probably seen her once since they left here.

She mentioned that Sid Ayloff[?] was a regular.

DG: Oh, ... the cleaner. No, that would have been the most popular pub in the town. Six o'clock swill, I think we used to have about three, if not four, barmen just trying to handle the swill.

So the pub was full up.

DG: Yes, every night.

And did it get to the stage where there was a lot of drunkenness, or was it just – – –?

DG: No, no, very seldom you had any trouble with anyone.

So it was mainly just a social – – –.

DG: Yes, fellows knocking off at half past four and coming in to have their hour's drink before they went home.

DP: Yes, Tom was the kind of bloke that he wouldn't stand for any of that.

DG: No, he'd evict you if you were being outrageous. Actually, he showed me the persuader when I first started there. It was a Stillson [wrench] about three foot long! (laughs) He said, 'If you have any trouble, boy, use it.'

And did you have to use it?

DG: No, never.

So what did you use to do for entertainment on the weekends, or did you work shift work?

DP: Oh, we worked shift work, but the old picture theatre, that was still going, those days, so we always used to go down there. Mrs Hockley, she used to be at the – selling the tickets, and she used to take control of the –

DG: Throw us out if we were a bit rowdy, throwing Jaffas[10]!

DP: – yes, take control of us, yes.

And did that have to happen very often?

DP: No. Like I said, we were a pretty orderly mob. There might have been a Coke[11] bottle that might rattle down the aisle every now and again, or some Jaffas thrown. But no, she used to control us with a little lamp, torch, she used to carry round with her.

And she was like the usher.

DP: Usher, yes.

And was there a canteen at the theatre?

DG: Yes, there used to be two, one each side of the main door.

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[10] Spherical sweets, made of orange candy-covered chocolate, traditionally rolled down the aisles by children at the cinema.

[11] Coke – Coca-cola.

DP: There was, too, yes.

DG: Then you had the café down the other side, which would have been about eighty metres away, and baker's up where the haidresser is, by the Peterborough pub, they used to stay open all intervals.

DP: And you always used to know what movies were being shown because there was a big –

DG: Board of coming attractions.

DP: – board near the subway there.

That's right, it was on the right hand side, wasn't it?

DP: Right hand side.

I just remember that as a kid, going to Peterborough, it was there.

DP: Capital Theatre.

And what about girls? How did you get to meet girls as a young, single bloke?

DP: Oh, there used to be cabarets on, and you'd meet them just through sport, just a natural way. There was no particular way you'd meet them.

DG: No, there used to be a lot of dances around the place and an occasional cabaret and that at the Town Hall.

DP: I remember there used to be a lot of different places, too. I mean, we always used to go to Stone Hut at times, there used to be a dance there. Then there used to –

DG: Laura.

DP: – yes, Laura. Out at – oh, where was it? Paratoo? Not Paratoo –

DG: Parnaroo.

DP: – Parnaroo.

DG: Dawson.

DP: Dawson.

DG: They all had dances.

Probably back in that time it was easier to meet members of the opposite sex than it would be now.

DP: Probably, yes.

Because there was functions to go to.

DP: Go to.

Now, there's – – –.

DG: Nothing.

DP: Yes.

Did Peterborough have a nurses' home?

DG: Yes. (laughs)

DP: Yes, there was.

Was that a regular haunt for the blokes?

DG: Oh, I don't know about regular. Occasionally, perhaps.

Occasional.

DP: Occasionally.

And was that tolerated by the Matron or the staff?

DG: I don't think you had to broadcast it to her! (laughs)

So it was like most country towns, it was tolerated.

DG: Tolerated, but – – –. (laughs)

DP: It's one of those places where you'd have to walk up the top of Hillston Street, jump the fence and come in the back way. It wouldn't be a good idea to walk past them.

DG: The front door wouldn't open. (laughs)

DP: No, you'd have to go to the back. Yes, talking about the Peterborough Hotel, that's actually where I met my wife, Jenny. Her mother used to cook at the Peterborough Hotel back in those days, and my wife used to go in there and do some cleaning every now and again after school and the weekends and

whatever, and that's how I first met her. And I finished up taking her out Saturday night to the Capital Theatre. That's how it started.

Couldn't do that now, could you?

DP: No.

Now, some of the other yarns you mentioned, in particular down at the railways, can you just mention some of them?

DP: Oh, there was one there, there was another cleaner and myself, we were informed that we had to clean the West End shunter because, by cleaning it, we had to make sure the boiler was clean and everything and using the tallow and whatever, which we did. And of course when the West End shunter went out the boiler was always, the front of the loco was always facing east, so we sort of thought to ourselves, 'Well, bugger doing the whole lot. What we'll do is we'll just do one side of the boiler, the side that'll go past Frank Brackenbridge's – Loco foreman's – office. If he walks out, we won't have a problem.' But of course what happened, without us knowing about it, the Commissioner was up there that particular time, the Commissioner's train, and they actually swapped locos without telling anybody. And of course we did the one side of the boiler and of course when it went out, actually it was going to go to Pirie, so they turned it round and she went out backwards, and of course Frank was standing outside the Loco foreman's office, and this locomotive goes past, and of course on the other side, that we never did, it was all white because when it primes you've got a lot of white boiler. So that didn't go down too well, naturally, and we immediately got called in to the Loco foreman's office to explain the reason why.

And the Loco foreman, that was Frank Brackenbridge?

DP: That was Frank at the time, yes.

Did you get reprimanded over that?

DP: Yes.

And what would happen during a reprimand?

DP: Oh, we were told that if it happened again that our services might not be continued and all that kind of thing. But Frank was a good bloke. But I think the cleaners were probably Frank's worst nightmare.

The other bloke you mentioned was Bennington.

DP: Old Chris Bennington? He was a running shift foreman at that particular time.

What does that job entail?

DP: He used to be in charge of that particular shift and he used to make sure that all the locos went out on time. He was in charge of the fitters, the fitters' mates, he was in charge of the cleaners. So he had the job to make sure that everything went okay.

DG: He'd have probably had, what, twenty-two, twenty-three on each shift –

DP: Yes.

DG: – round the clock.

DP: There was a chargeman, there was a turntable –

DG: A couple of ....., a couple of assistants, a lighter-up –

DP: – turntable driver.

DG: – turntable attendant, gantry attendant –

DP: Yes.

DG: – storeman, plus your cleaners.

DP: So each shift you had quite a number of blokes, you know, working each shift when you started to add them up.

And what was his story?

DP: Oh, Chris one day, it was night-time, it was pitch black, and Chris had to take one locomotive, an 830 Class loco, and put it from one load to another. And he went out and put it on the turntable, he dropped down, turned the locomotive, and then stuck the locomotive onto another road. That particular time there was a couple of cleaners and myself were walking round the

roundhouse, and the next minute the sky lit up blue and all the lights went out, it went black. Because what happened, when Chris got back on the locomotive, he left the reverser in reverse, released the brakes, off he went, and instead of going forwards into the roundhouse, he went backwards onto a holding road, kept on going, hit an electric pole which then bent and came in contact with other poles, and it caused a short-circuit of the whole of Loco and probably half of Peterborough out, too. And of course all the wires crossed, which made the sky turn blue, and it was quite funny at the time. It wasn't funny to Chris.

There was a main power distribution board there, wasn't there?

DP: Yes.

In the roundhouse.

DP: Yes, in the roundhouse.

To transform the high voltage.

DP: And short-circuited all that and – – –.

So what happened then?

DP: Well, I don't know what happened. Chris then had to get in contact with electricians to come in and, yes, they had to come in and fix the whole show up.

I guess it would have taken a while to fix.

DP: Yes.

It wouldn't be a small job.

DG: Well, we'd have had our own power house in Peterborough at that stage, too.

DP: Yes, that was going, yes.

Also you mentioned another story about a couple of particular, or a loco crew, who used binoculars quite often.

DP: Yes, there were a crew that were a little bit – their eyesight wasn't the greatest and of course going along when they had to call out signals, well, the signals were – they couldn't quite see the signals as clear as what maybe they should have, and they had a pair of binoculars that they had to look through to check these signals and make sure that they had the correct signal indication.

Just on that, was there a regular medical check?

DP: Yes, every so often we had to go and do a medical, and of course our eyesight was checked at that particular time, too.

So there was regular eyesight checks?

DP: Yes. We all had to do a medical every so often.

Dennis, you were just saying ....

DG: I'm led to believe that one of these chaps memorised the eye chart and so he passed it perfectly every time.

Now, these two blokes are still alive and well in Peterborough, aren't they?

DG: Yes, that's correct. One doesn't drive a car very well, you keep out of his way.

Very nice bloke, though, isn't he?

DG: He is ....

DP: I remember when I did my medical, we had to actually go to Adelaide to do it and it was in the old Adelaide Railway Station, and they had a railway doctor, and I can't think of his name, but he was there for years and years and years. Anyway, they had a curtain where you went inside, got changed behind this curtain, and of course, you'd come out and he'd tell you, can you do some pull-ups for him. And what I did, I grabbed hold of the iron rung and all I did was stood on my toes three or four times, and that was good enough for him.

DG: .... appreciated .... (laughs)

DP: Yes. You also had to do a hearing test, and of course these days if you did your hearing test you'd go into a special room with earphones and – – –. But in those days all he did is he made you stand next to the window, and of course he would stand back the other side of the room, and he would yell out, 'Eight-thirty, Port Adelaide, Outer Harbour,' and of course you had to repeat it. But his voice used to get softer and softer, but you had all the cars and the pedestrians and all the noise from outside, and honestly you never had a clue what he was saying.

So it wasn't very high-tech.

DP: It wasn't very high-tech, no.

Nothing like today. Any other stories you can relate? We were talking about pilfering – was pilfering quite common?

DP: Yes. There were occasions when there were a number of things that went missing, especially I know that there's – I collected a number of shovels over the years, and of course they were all marked with either SAR or whatever, and you just tried to rub that out or – – –.

DG: My father-in-law was selling them in Arthur Richard's[?], that worked in pretty well.

That was his name, was it?

DG: No. (laughs) That'll do!

I know the ...., just buying things in clearing sales ..... stuff with SAR on.

DP: Yes.

It's amazing. Then there were some of the shovels were actually –

DP: They were actually stamped –

– stamped –

DP: – they were actually stamped.

– it was punched through, wasn't it, with a broad arrow.

DP: Sometimes they were marked on the handle and, as you said, sometimes they were actually stamped with an arrow –

DG: Pressed.

DP: – pressed into the shovel itself.

You also mentioned the Coke machine, Doug?

DP: Yes. There was an old-style Coke machine – – –.

Just describe the machine for those who probably wouldn't remember it.

DP: It was one of those old Coke machines where the lid actually came up from both ends into the middle, that when you put your money in you actually pulled

the Coke out of two roller type of an apparatus, and it was placed just outside the amenities block where the blokes in the roundhouse used to have their crib, their lunch. And next to that was the shed foreman's office. And this particular day – the distance between the end of the track and the Coke machine wasn't a great distance, and the driver brought in two 830 Class locomotives and slightly misjudged the stop, and put the ..... of the loco (laughs) through the Coke machine. And of course you can imagine the reaction of the blokes that were inside the crib room. The door wasn't very big and there was about five or six blokes trying to get out at the same time.

Just talking about 'crib room', did people actually play crib[bage] in their – – –?

DP: Crib was probably one of the biggest games in the railway, yes. In the pilot room, for instance.

DG: Every barracks in the pilot room would have two or three crib boards in there.

I guess it goes without saying they were made in – – –.

DG: The workshop, they were hand-made.

DP: But you'd walk into the – they had pilot crews on, every four hours there was a pilot crew on.

What's the pilot crew?

DP: Pilot crew, they used to book on, midnight, four o'clock in the morning, eight in the morning – every four hours there was a brand new crew, and they stayed there for eight hours on duty.

What was their job?

DP: Their job was to go relieve any crews that needed relief, do any shunting around the place. They were standby crew in case of any incident or – – –.

DG: If somebody went sick –

DP: Sick.

DG: – in the first four hours of that shift, one of that crew had to go .... up to the first four hours ....

....

DP: Yes, they were a standby crew for anything that happened.

Do you remember some of those pilot crews?

DP: Oh, anybody used to do it. It was in the roster and you used to get booked up to do it.

DG: Oh, it was the main job in your weekly roster. Instead of being away all the time you had a shunter or a pilot job to have a bit of time home.

What's the other story, you were telling me about the water column.

DP: Yes. Down at the gantry, of course there was the water column was down there, and there was a T Class down there with these two drivers, two crew members. And the water column was a bit of a bugger of a thing to actually get across, you had to stand on the back of the loco, back of the tender, with a hook. You had to lean over, hook it onto the water column and then pull it towards you – – –.

END OF INTERVIEW.