Government of South Australia

STATE LIBRARY

STATE LIBRARY OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA

J. D. SOMERVILLE ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION

OH 692/62

Full transcript of an interview with

DICK HEATH

on 25 February 2002

by Rob Linn

Recording available on CD

OH 692/62 **DICK HEATH**

NOTES TO THE TRANSCRIPT

This transcript was donated to the State Library. It was not created by the J.D. Somerville Oral History Collection and does not necessarily conform to the Somerville Collection's policies for transcription.

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

This transcript had not been proofread prior to donation to the State Library and has not yet been proofread since. Researchers are cautioned not to accept the spelling of proper names and unusual words and can expect to find typographical errors as well.

TAPE 1 - SIDE A

NATIONAL WINE CENTRE, WOLF BLASS FOUNDATION ORAL HISTORY PROJECT.
Interview with Mr Dick Heath on 25th February, 2002, at Lockleys, South Australia.
Interviewer: Rob Linn.

Well, the first question's very simple, Dick. Where and when were you born?

DH: I was born in Adelaide 16/8/14.

Who were your parents, Dick?

DH: Well, my mother passed away when I was thirteen years of age. She was a nurse in the World War 1. And my father went back to England in 1914, and I don't know anything more about him at all.

So did he fight in the First World War?

DH: Yes. He was in the Light Horse in the First World War.

What were their Christian names, Dick?

DH: Adams and Maud Susan.

So you were orphaned at quite a young age then?

DH: That's right.

Where was your schooling, Dick?

DH: My schooling—well, first of all, in Lithgow in New South Wales. Then Port MacDonnell in South Australia, eighteen miles south of Mount Gambier. And then back at Adelaide in 1930.

So you left school—when?

DH: In 1931, and then I went to Roseworthy.

So what course did you take at Roseworthy?

DH: I took the winemaking course because I was sent there by Thomas Hardy & Sons. I was looking for a job. [I had been] walking the streets for twelve months in 1930 and '31 looking for a job, and finally I got the job at Mile End washing bottles. And I spent ten months washing bottles at Thomas Hardy & Sons before I was promoted into the laboratory.

Who were you working in the laboratory with?

DH: Roger Warren. He had progressed from the cellar to technical manager from Colin Haselgrove.

Now they would've been fairly hard times, Dick, in the community.

DH: Well, it was 1930 to just coming through the depression, and jobs were hard to find. That's why I found it very difficult to find a job.

So Hardys must've been very dear to you, that they gave you a job.

DH: Well, yes. And I stayed with them for forty-one and a half years.

So you both got a pretty good deal. ***(Laughs)***
Dick, to start with, tell me about Roger Warren.

DH: He started at Hardys in approximately 1925 from being a sheep shearer. Oh, what can I say?

Was he a big fellow?

DH: He was robust, medium size, but fairly robust type of chap. And he had a wonderful palate. And he was recognised throughout the wine industry as having a good palate. He was not a flamboyant chap, although at times flamboyancy would come out but it wasn't ever to his credit. In other words, why I say that, he was a person who would never be on time for any date.
And he was on the jury at one stage, and he was ten minutes late getting back from lunch to sit on the jury, and the Magistrate called him out in

front, and said, 'That juryman, I'd like him to come to the bench'. So Roger came to the bench and he said, 'I don't want any excuses, but you are ten minutes late. And this proceeding here costs the taxpayer a lot of money. I won't ask for an excuse'. And Roger was about to tell him that he was held up by traffic lights. And he didn't accept—'I won't accept your excuse. You are fined £5'. And he was fined on the spot, £5, for contempt of court, for being late back at jury duty.
And the rest at Thomas Hardy & Sons thought it was a heck of a joke because he was always late for all his appointments anyhow. And he was called up in front of the jury bench. *(Laughter)*

Dick, had you met Colin Haselgrove prior -

DH: Oh, yes.

And Ron, his brother, as well?

DH: Ron, yes.

But that was in latter years I suppose.

DH: No, it was about that time. Ron has been dead for a long time now. So has Colin, but Ron was at -

Mildara.

DH: Mildara. That's right.

So you started as a junior, if you like, in the bottle washing department.

DH: Yes.

This was at Mile End, was it?

DH: Mile End.

Could you describe what the place was like at Mile End at the time, Dick?

DH: Mile End was a fairly basic type of factory. Brandy and bottling was performed there. Used to bottle for Emu Wine Company as well. I cannot explain anything further.

It was quite a large building, wasn't it?

DH: Yes. Well, it hasn't altered today. It is a school at the present time.

So there was the lower level where the wine was kept. Is that correct?

DH: Yes. A champagne cellar was in the Currie Street premises, until finally it was moved down to Mile End. Bottling and blending of the wines. Wines would come from McLaren Vale, the Barossa Valley and Waikerie to Mile End and be blended. And bottled at Mile End.

When you first joined Thomas Hardy & Sons, would the bulk of the wine they sold have been fortified?

DH: 95% of the wines were fortified wines. And that lasted until the early 1970's—well, the bread and butter line of Thomas Hardy & Sons was a sweet dry red. Fortified sweet red.

That's a long time.
You said that Roger Warren had a very good palate. Was that in blending all styles of wine?

DH: Yes. Well, he was recognised throughout the industry as having a tremendously regular and good palate.

Now, Dick, could you describe to me what it was like for a young lad to go to Roseworthy when you did?

DH: Well, as far as I'm concerned, about going to Roseworthy: I was studying accountancy at the time. And I had no idea that I'd ever finish up in the wine industry. But at the time when I was looking for a job, any sort of a job would suit me. So that's how I finished up—I'd answer advertisements in papers, walk the streets for twelve months until finally I

got A job. I was looking for anything. And started the first ten months as a bottle washer.

And then you went to Roseworthy.

DH: No. I was promoted into the laboratory at Mile End.

Yes, you said that. Sorry.

DH: And evidently they thought that I had a certain amount of talent, and Thomas Hardy & Sons sent me to Roseworthy. And I was for the first six months I was there learning to sit for an entrance examination. And then I was there for two years doing the course.

Tell me about the place. Was it the big old building—the main building—still? At Roseworthy.

DH: Yes. The building is still there.

And the winemaking facilities. Were they quite primitive?

DH: They were as far as winemaking standards today are concerned. They didn't build a winery up until after I'd left.

Who was running the course there at that time?

DH: Ian Hickinbotham's father was the chief chemist.

That's AR.

DH: Yes.

Did everybody call him 'Hick'? Is that correct?

DH: Well, yes. And Jock Williams was the winemaker.

What did you learn in that course? I mean, I know you learnt how to make wine but to have AR Hickinbotham as a teacher must've been a pretty interesting experience.

DH: Well, it certainly was, seeing that I'd never studied any chemistry during my earlier days at school, and that's why I had to sit for an entrance

examination. And he said to me at various times, 'You don't know much about chemistry, Heath'. And he was quite right there. I didn't either. As far as laboratory work, I was well up with the other students because I'd had [the advantage of] learning from Roger Warren at Mile End.

So, Dick, tell me more about Alan Hickinbotham's methods of teaching. Do you think you did learn quite a bit about chemistry in the end?

DH: Basic chemistry, yes, I learnt from Hick. But it was never a pet subject of mine. That's for sure. *(Laughter)*

How about Jock Williams? Did you get on well with him?

DH: Oh, Jock Williams was different. Well, I was more practical. As far as Jock Williams' vineyard work, and studying about winemaking—it was more practical, and I was more interested in the practical side rather the book work of chemistry and benzene rings etc.

Etc, yes. *(Laughs)*
So was it an enjoyable time for you, Dick?

DH: Well, no, it wasn't because I found the chemistry side of it was very difficult. And two years without any money coming in, it wasn't that pleasant.

So did you live at the college?

DH: Lived at the college.

But you had no spare money at all?

DH: No money coming in at all. They sent me to Roseworthy and I was asked if I had any insurance policies. And I had one with a small amount of £500. And I had to sign over my insurance policy to Thomas Hardy & Sons in case I got gored by a bull or whatever out at Roseworthy College. They didn't take any chances on me.
After I left the college I came out less the 500, and I had to pay back £1 per week out of my wages.

This was for your education, is it?

DH: My education. I had two years at Roseworthy. No money coming in, and to pay back £1 [per week] towards what I owed. And I owed them roundabout £260 at that time, which in my opinion was quite a considerable amount of money.

Absolutely.

DH: And after twelve to eighteen months they wrote off the balance—what I owed them—£100-odd. And that was a gift.

So that must've been a relief for you.

DH: *(Laughs)* That's right.

So Dick, when you came out of Roseworthy, were you still working at Mile End?

DH: Oh, yes. I went back to Mile End.

And what were your tasks when you went back there?

DH: I don't think I had any different tasks than when I went into Roseworthy, although I'd qualified out at Roseworthy. I still went back to McLaren Vale and did the winemaking in conjunction with Robert Hagley. He was the manager down there. And I did winemaking for several years before I went to Waikerie and the Barossa Valley to do the winemaking—1947 and '48 in the Barossa Valley and then Waikerie. Because the managers had been sacked.

Really? So that would've been at Siegersdorf, was it? Was that at Dorrien or Siegersdorf? Where was that in the Barossa?

DH: Well, yes. It was Siegersdorf. It wasn't called Siegersdorf then.

No. And at Waikerie.

DH: Waikerie.

Now, McLaren Vale, how did you make the wine down there? Was it crushed then into open fermenters?

DH: Yes, crushed to open fermenters.

Were they a concrete wax-lined type, Dick?

DH: Yes. Concrete and waxed concrete.

And with the juice, when it was fermenting, was there any cooling done at those times? How did you keep it down?

DH: Cooling was water coolers. Water was run through these spiral pipes immersed into the wine.

So there was some attempt to control the temperature?

DH: Yes. But nowhere near as efficient as today, of course.

I'm just thinking, in 1938 Tom Hardy was killed, wasn't he, in the Kyeema.

DH: Yes.

Was that a big impact on the whole company?

DH: Oh, just tremendous, because Ken Hardy was in Sydney at the time, and he had to leave Sydney to come over to Adelaide and become general manager—managing director—of Thomas Hardy & Sons proper because he was virtually manager at Sydney at the time.

And Dick, you'd met Tom Hardy, of course?

DH: Oh, yes.

And how had you found him?

DH: Well, there's the late Tom Hardy's only passed away in 1978, or something like that. Or the early Tom Hardy.

The early one.

DH: Oh, the early one. Well, I knew him as far as he'd always bring his car to Mile End for servicing and that, but his office was up in Currie Street.

That's Tom Mayfield Hardy, isn't it?

DH: Tom Mayfield.

And he was the younger Tom, Barbara's husband's father.

DH: That's right.

So it was still very much a family firm then, Dick.

DH: Oh, very much so, yes. I have the book, *The Hardy tradition* -

Yes.

DH: Have you seen it?

I know that book. Yes, I have.
So that tells that story quite well, doesn't it? About the family.
So you progress through the winemaking ranks, and it was always with fortifieds on the whole, was it, Dick?

DH: 95% fortified, yes. Well, Australians weren't educated to drinking table wines, and anybody that started drinking wine will always need something sweet. I even did myself. And as we get older your palate dries off.

As you said earlier, Roger Warren must've had a wonderful palate.

DH: Yes, he did.

And I have been told, I've not tasted his reds, but I've been told he made very fine dry red wines.

DH: Yes, but particularly fortified sweet red vintage ports.

So that was his specialty?

DH: Yes, it was.

And what were the main grape varieties that you were using in those years up through the Second World War?

DH: The main grape variety was Shiraz, Cabernet Sauvignon—small patch was grown. And to purchase Cabernet Sauvignon was very difficult

because those people who grew Cabernet Sauvignon realised the benefit of that grape and made their own wine from it. But Shiraz was the main grape, and the cheaper variety Grenache—was used as the cheaper variety for red wines.

Was there much Doradillo grown down south in those days?

DH: Well, Thomas Hardy & Sons input of wines was about 15% their own grown and 75-85% was purchased grapes from the district.

So this is mainly from McLaren Vale area in the first instance.

DH: McLaren Vale, McLaren Flat and Willunga area.

How did you find that area down there in your first contact with it? You were a city fellow, weren't you?

DH: I was, Rob.

So was it quite a bit of bush up around there?

DH: Not particularly, it being only twenty-five miles away from Adelaide.

Dick, did you as a young winemaker have much to do with the vineyards in those days?

DH: No. No. There's always a vineyard manager. And he had sole control of the vineyards. Except vintage time. We'd converse as far as when the grapes would be picked.

So who would the vineyard manager have been in those days? Was Nottage still involved?

DH: Tom Nottage was the manager, but he retired soon after I joined Thomas Hardy & Sons. Well, as I graduated from Roseworthy he retired, and Bob Hagley took over.

So Bob would've managed all the day to day stuff.

DH: That's right.

Was Whiskers Blake still on the payroll down there?

DH: I never ever met Whiskers Blake.

I was hoping that you might've, Dick. ***(Laughs)***

DH: I believe, only what I've read, that he was there to shoot the birds, or shoot at the birds to frighten them away from the vineyards. No, that was before my time—Whiskers Blake.

He was given that job, wasn't he, because he was stone deaf? ***(Laughter)***
So was Bob Hagley good to work with?

DH: Oh, yes. He'd completed the agricultural course.

Yes, I believe that to be so. I'd heard that. So he had a knowledge of farming and soil science.

DH: Yes. And winemaking came into it but only in a small area.

Was your task to oversee from the crush through to the fermentation through to the storage? Was that your main task in winemaking?

DH: My main task was blending and getting the wines ready for bottling.

So would Hagley have overseen the earlier part, would he?

DH: Yes.

Did you find the skill of blending was something you became more and more attuned to as you got older?

DH: Well, yes. Naturally, yes.

What were you after? Say you were making a port—not a vintage port but a tawny—what were you after in the palate? The taste that you were trying to get.

DH: Tried to make the best wine that I possibly could.

And that would be dependent on what you had to play with I suppose.

DH: That's right.

Did Hardys have pretty good quality juice to start with, Dick?

DH: Yes. Good quality. Slightly above average.

In other words they must've had a good source of supply.

DH: Yes.

Their own vineyards were really down south mainly, weren't they?

DH: Yes.

Were you involved with the development of the Waikerie end at all?

DH: Not particularly. Waikerie manager was Jack Neilson. 1948, he joined the company. And he developed the vineyards from 1948.

Were there many changes in the technology of winemaking through the 50's and 60's as you went on in the company?

DH: Not until pearl wines came into it. And Gramps were the first to start on the pearl wine industry. The wine industry started off with cheap dry and sweet reds. Sweet whites, or what Australians called sherries, muscled in onto the sweet reds, although sweet reds still predominated. And then in the 1960's—early 1960's—pearl wines came in, and they dominated until the 1970's when dry red and dry white started to muscle in on the sparkling wines.

TAPE 1 - SIDE B

DH: Hardys went into the cocktail business. Sweet and dry cocktail. Sweet and dry Vermouth. Italian Vermouth is sweet. French is a dry Vermouth. Creme de menthe. Cherry brandy. Curacao. And, Bernardo which was a Benedictine type of liqueur. A lot of wineries went into those cocktails but they never became that very popular.

In Australia, anyway, they didn't. I know that the Vermouths in Europe and America were quite popular. Ver-mooth, they called it, didn't they? Ver-mooth.
So, Dick, were the dry sherries very—hard to make a good dry sherry?

DH: A good dry sherry is the most difficult wine to make, and it was the flor finos that were the most difficult wines that I've ever had to make. The simple reason the flor, which is the base of the wine, is a yeast and that will only grow at a certain alcoholic strength and had about 1% tolerance. So the flor, to produce aldehyde—flor sherries are loaded with aldehyde. And you had a 1% margin of error to grow this yeast on the surface of the wine. Otherwise the yeast would die.
And temperature played an important part. If the days got too warm, well, that would affect the growth of the yeast. So you had to control the temperature as much as possible with primitive conditions.

Now, John Fornachon had produced a book on the yeasts of the flor fino, hadn't he?

DH: Yes.

That was very important for the industry.

DH: That's right.

But you're saying that it was the hardest wine to make. What sort of juice would go into a flor fino to start with?

DH: Well, naturally a white grape. The Pedro ximenez. Palomino. There was no Chardonnay grown in those days. Marsanne, which was purchased from interstate. They're the types of varieties that went into flor fino.

Was flor fino a much more expensive sherry, Dick?

DH: It was. It was too dry for the average Australian. It had no more than about seven grams per litre of sugar in the wine, and it was for the connoisseur. And consequently it was [very dry]. The more aldehyde that was showing, the better the wine. It was not for the general public. The general public wanted something sweeter.

What was your taste?

DH: Mine was not the flor fino but the next grade up. The Amontillado of the sherries. I preferred the Amontillado to the bone dry flor fino.

And did the Amontillado have slightly more colour to it, too?

DH: Slightly more colour. Slightly more age in the wood. In other words, Amontillado is what we'd call a finished flor. Flor sherry becomes a little bit aggressive, a bit old, with wood maturation and it turns into an Amontillado with storage.

So that was part of your job?

DH: Yes.

With the storage. Were you always storing in oak, or did you have jarrah vats?

DH: Had jarrah vats. They were only containers. Weren't for maturation at all.

So maturation was always oak?

DH: Always oak.

And did you buy French or American? Or was it Australian?

DH: Mainly American oak, because it was cheaper at the time. Easier to get. And it was mainly American oak. We did buy some French oak.

Who were the coopers that you used locally?

DH: Schahinger and Babidge.

They were the two main ones.

DH: Yes, two main ones.

They've been around for a while, too, Dick.

DH: Yes. Babidges are not in the game now though.

You see Jack regularly, don't you?

DH: Every Friday.

I've heard about this. *(Laughs)*
So Amontillado was your favourite.

DH: My favourite.

And that had that slightly oaky character to it.

DH: Yes.

And the colour, as we said. Whereas the flor fino was very pale.

DH: Pale.

And very dry.

DH: Very dry. And loaded with aldehyde.

So as you progressed up the scale to the mediums, to the sweet sherries, there was much more sugar. Is that correct?

DH: Yes.

And would you have used different types of grapes for the sweeter varieties as well?

DH: No. For the sherries, and red wines, no, the same type of grapes.

And you said that this love affair with the sherries and the ports goes right on until the 1960's—early 1960's—when the pearl wines come in.

DH: Early 60's.

Through Barossa Pearl and sparkling Rinegolde and all those.
Did Hardys make any pearl wines?

DH: Yes. Two or three years after Gramps came into the market with their pearl wine, Hardys put out a pearl wine. We had quite a bit of difficulty with the bottles. We had a special bottle made for our pearl wine, and they kept exploding—the bottles. They weren't made strong enough. The depth of glass in their bottle was insufficient, and we had exploding bottles all over the cellar. And we had to change the recipe—the Australian

bottle company changed the recipe of the mixture of ingredients to make their glass until we had a bottle that would stand the pressure.

Was it an unusually shaped bottle, Dick?

DH: Not that unusual but slightly smaller than Gramps. Not particularly different at all.

Did you make up the juice for that wine as well?

DH: Yes.

So you were after a slightly sweeter taste in that?

DH: No, no.

Fruitier perhaps. Is that the word?

DH: No, no. Well, we based our pearl wine on Gramps pearl wine, which was very popular at the time. We didn't shape our bottle similar to the pearl wine. But the quality of the wine itself was on a par with Barossa Pearl.

Now with pearl wine there's carbonation put into it, isn't it? Is that correct?

DH: Well, carbonated is adding gas to it, whereas pearl wines were fermented in the Charmat process.

Pressure fermented?

DH: Yes.

My terminology wasn't correct, Dick. It's pressure and cold fermented, isn't that right?

DH: Well, the Charmat process is bulk fermented. As the pressure built up to about six atmospheres of pressure it was then centrifuged and then bottled.

Straight away.

DH: Yes.

With screw caps?

DH: Screw cap.

And did that wine sell quite well for Hardys?

DH: No, I don't think they market a pearl wine now. They market a bulk fermented sparkling wine.

Sorry, I meant in your day, did that sell well. When it was released.

DH: Oh, reasonable, but not that well because Hardys came late on the market. Gramps had set their place, and a lot of other companies were muscling in, and Hardys came in too late in the picture to get the benefits of it.

So was the next move then into the dry red table wines after the pearl wines?

DH: Yes. In the mid 1970's, red wine muscled in on the dry whites. Dry whites were more popular than reds, and then the reds started to muscle in.

The dry whites that you would've been making, Dick, were they Rieslings?

DH: Riesling.

Other varieties as well?

DH: There was no Chardonnay. Just varieties such as Tokay, Chenin Blanc. It was mainly Riesling that was the most popular.

So what brands did Hardys put out at that point? Was that Old Castle?

DH: Old Castle, yes. Old Castle comprised of Crouchen, which was called at the time Clare Riesling. Rhine Riesling. Clare Riesling (or Crouchen).

Tokay, which was used as a stretcher. And Marsanne from Chateau Tahbilk.

Oh, so that's where you got your Marsanne from?

DH: Yes. Chateau Tahbilk.

Chateau Tahbilk. That's in Victoria. I didn't know that you got it from there.

DH: Yes.

So that would've been from Eric Purbrick.

DH: Eric Purbrick.

Was that a nice wine?

DH: Not particularly on its own. It was, of course, slightly on the coarse side. I didn't like it. It was a wine that was marketed, but I didn't like a straight Marsanne. As a blending wine, it was quite okay.

What blend were you trying to achieve for the Old Castle style?

DH: Well, to get as close as possible to the Rhine Riesling. There was not enough Rhine Riesling so we used Clare Riesling, or Crouchen. To stretch the small amount of Rhine Riesling we had, we used a lot of Clare Riesling.

Were you using any stainless steel at this point, Dick?

DH: No, wood at this point. Stainless steel was too dear. And used to use wooden vessels.

That's for the storage side before bottling?

DH: Yes.

So all your blends would be in and out of wooden vats basically?

DH: Yes.

Wooden barrels, sorry.

DH: Stainless steel came into vogue, as far as Hardys was concerned, in a big way, in the 1970's.

Now who introduced that into Hardys before I come back to some other things?

DH: Oh, well, there was enough cash in the kitty to buy extra storage. It'd be stainless steel if we had enough money in the kitty. Or otherwise it would have to be wood or concrete.

Did you notice a change in the wine once you went to stainless?

DH: Oh, well, naturally. Stainless is easier to keep clean. The wine stands up well in stainless steel. There's no metallic flavours or anything.

And, Dick, by that time—no, Siegersdorf still wasn't in then, was it? You weren't making a Siegersdorf Riesling at that point, were you?

DH: Well, yes.

I'm trying to remember the dates.

DH: Oh, 1965.

It was that early, was it?

DH: Siegersdorf.

So that was all Barossa fruit, would that have been?

DH: Not all, no. There was a little bit came from the South East. We opened up a vineyard at Keppoch and the first grapes planted were a little Rhine Riesling, and then mainly Shiraz. And the Rhine Riesling from there went up to the Barossa Valley and was blended with the Barossa Valley fruit in the Siegersdorf Rhine Riesling.

So would Hardys have been one of the first into Keppoch?

DH: One of the first. Wynns were before Hardys.

Seppelts maybe.

DH: Yes, Seppelts. But Hardys—our first vintage was 1973.

So who created that label? The Siegersdorf idea. Who was that -

DH: Jim Irvine, he was manager at Barossa Valley at the time, and he found out that Siegersdorf was a name meaning Victory Village. And Siegersdorf was really the name of where Dorrien cellars were.

And they were your main cellars, weren't they?

DH: The cellars in Dorrien. And so Jim suggested putting out a Siegersdorf. Well, a lot of German names were coming back into fashion at the time. During World War 1 they went out of fashion because of being German. Well, there's Hahndorf.

Blumburg for Birdwood. All the names were changed. Is that what you're saying, Dick?

DH: Yes. I can't think of that other name.

So a lot of names were changed, anyway, weren't they?

DH: Yes.

This was approved by the Board obviously.

DH: Oh, yes.

And away you went.
And you were saying that, alright, there was popularity with these table whites, and then the reds came after that. Is that right?

DH: Yes. I was only reading in the paper the other day, reds have taken over from the whites. The whites held predominance for many years, but now I believe the reds have taken over from the whites.

So were you making all these styles of wine, Dick?

DH: Well, there were roundabout fifteen to twenty different types of wines I was making, with cocktails, Vermouths, white wines, sparkling wines, red wines, ports, sherries.

So you had your hand in a few pies really. *(Laughs)*
Did you ever get sick of it, Dick, or was it always interesting?

DH: Well, if anybody's working anywhere, it's much greener over the fence than what it is in your own paddock. Yes, I would say that I got sick of it. But then again, I found it very interesting, too.

Dick, when we were talking earlier, we were talking about people you worked with and you mentioned Dick Clark. He was secretary of Hardys. Is that right?

DH: That's right.

Now you were also telling me that—or Mavis was—that in 1963 Hardys sent you around the world. Would you tell me about that trip please, Dick.

DH: Yes.

They wanted you to go and see the major winemaking areas. Is that right?

DH: Yes. I was given letters of introduction to various companies in France and Italy. And at the time we were thinking of putting in a Charmat process to make sparkling wines.

So did you go to Italy first, Dick?

DH: Well, boarded the Galileo, the Italian ship, at Outer Harbor. We sailed and embarked at Naples—after visiting Sicily embarked at Naples—and from there we travelled overland by train to Rome, Venice and then into Switzerland. Stayed at Interlaken in Switzerland for five days. Then while we were at Interlaken we visited Jungfrau—the mountain—and I was amazed at the structure of the mountain. You could drive a car up one side of the mountain, whereas the other side was sheer cliffs. And climbers—why they had to do it, they always took the hard way—they always climbed up the side that was overhanging cliffs and everything.
We cruised down the Rhine. I'm trying to think of a place -

So you cruised down the Rhine. That's alright.

DH: Yes.

Did you visit many vineyards along the way there?

DH: Not along the Rhine, until we got into France.

Mavis Heath in background: Yes, it had lots of wineries.

So you went to a cork making place. Was that in Sicily?

No, Demtoss is in France, is it?

DH: Yes, in Bordeaux.

In Bordeaux. Demtoss.
And you went to Champagne, Dick, to see the cellars?

DH: Champagne.

Mavis Heath: We actually had introductions to lots of different wine companies, and they treated us wonderfully well.
What about where we got the brandy? Who was the Englishman?

DH: That was in Bordeaux.

Mavis Heath: And, you know, we went to all these Champagne cellars. One of them had, I think, seven miles of underground cellars. And they had a train. They put us on this train and the poor tourists were in the front. Mr and Mrs Heath were in the back. And they supplied me with a beautiful shawl because it was so cold. *(Laughs)* And at the end we were taken into the VIP room. And we were given a bottle of brandy like this, and the poor tourists got a little bottle like this. *(Laughs)*
But, no, we went to quite a lot of those places, didn't we?

DH: Yes.

Mavis Heath: Just with introductions from the company.

And from France, did you go to England? Is that right, Dick?

DH: From France we visited Mavis' brother's cemetery.

Mavis Heath: Oh, yes, I had a brother who was killed in the war.

DH: On the border of Holland and Germany. There's an Airforce cemetery there and Mavis' brother was killed in the war. And we visited the cemetery.

Mavis Heath: Which was rather funny. We actually had booked through Cooks, and they had arranged for us to have a car to take us to the cemetery. So, okay, the car arrived at our motel/hotel, or wherever we were staying, but the chauffeur couldn't speak English. *(Laughs)* So we said to the receptionist, 'Tell him I want to go to a florist to buy some flowers'. So she conveyed that message. So that was alright. And then he couldn't find the cemetery. *(Laughs)*
Any rate, we were supposed to have had him all day but we got to the cemetery and we saw what we wanted—my brother's grave and so forth—beautiful cemeteries over there—and put the flowers on.
And we said to him at lunch time, 'Well, you know, take us back to the hotel'. He was saying to us, 'Look over there'. But he couldn't tell us what it was. He could tell us but we didn't know what he meant. So we dismissed him at lunch time.

So in England you visited the Hardy offices, Dick, did you, and the Emu Wine Company?

DH: In England, yes.

Mavis Heath: And Yates Bros.

DH: Yates Bros, yes.

Mavis Heath: They took us in hand. We were staying in Manchester at one stage and Richard Martin Bird—or Sir Richard Martin Bird—came and said to us, 'You can't stay here. You've got to come with us'. And took us to their home to stay, wasn't it? And took us to see Blackpool by night and things like this. They really looked after us. So this was all in the trip, you know, that we had.

OH 692/62 TAPE 2 - SIDE A

NATIONAL WINE CENTRE ORAL HISTORY PROGRAMME.
Interview with Dick Heath on 25th February, 2002.
Interviewer: Rob Linn.

Dick, you visited all these places in Italy and France and England, and that was all business connections, and you saw the winemaking. Did you go to the USA as well?

DH: Yes. We landed in USA after leaving England. We sailed across to New York, and then we did a twenty-six day trip across America, of which I had two dozen of wine in my luggage that had been given to me in Europe, which I off-loaded to the courier on our bus across America, which he appreciated very much.

So, Dick, did you not try the European wine?

Mavis Heath: Oh, yes.

So you went to California, did you? Is that where you ended up?

DH: Yes. Went to California. Visited wineries in California. Gallo, which is the biggest winery I've ever seen, which processed as much grapes in one day as Thomas Hardy & Sons processed in the whole of vintage.

This was in the Napa Valley, was it?

DH: Went into the Napa Valley.

Was it Mondavi's at the time?

DH: No. Run by the Christian Bros. Can't think of their name.

What style of wine were they making in California in those days?

DH: We arrived in California on the last day of vintage. And they'd had a record vintage.

So you were well looked after, Dick, along the way?

DH: Very well looked after.

And you were away for four months. Is that correct?

Mavis Heath: Four months.

DH: I remember in a winery in USA, in California, where they were shaking down bottles of champagne to get the deposit settled onto the cork. It's fermentation in the bottle, and then they shake the bottles until the sediment has settled on the cork.
And I picked up a bottle of disgorged champagne and found a pine tree of yeast growing in the bottle. And the manager said to me, 'What have you there?' 'Well', I said, 'I have a reject bottle here'. And he picked up the bottle, and picked up several other bottles, and the whole stack was the same, of which he had to decant the whole lot of the stack of bottles because of the secondary fermentation that had started in the bottle.
And I did the same thing in France, in Bordeaux. I visited a winery, I picked a bottle out of a stack and I found secondary fermentation in the same bottle there. And the manager called over, then called his bottling manager across, and there was an argument in French. *(Laughter)* They didn't know that it'd happened in the bottle. And they had hundreds of dozens of wine that had to be treated to get rid of the deposit.
Every time I went out of my way I put my foot in it. I'd pick up a bottle, look at it and there was something wrong with it. And I'd start a commotion. And I thought, 'Well, keep your hands to yourself'. *(Laughs)*
But I understand—I mean, it's happened in our own industry—in our own business. These mistakes are made.

So did you find that a very informative time, Dick?

DH: Not really. I had a smattering of knowledge of how things were made and what was going on. It didn't come as a surprise to me. But I don't

think I learnt anything from it. My trip was to look at plant suitable for the Charmat process of making sparkling wines.

Did you find that machinery?

DH: Yes. Mainly in West Germany. Can't think of the chap's name.

Was it Munck & Schmidt or one of those firms? That doesn't matter, Dick.
So you came back to Australia. This is 1963. Is that right?

Mavis Heath: Yes, that's right.

And you were thrown back into the job again, I guess.

DH: That's right.

And we won't go into your expense account, Dick.

Mavis Heath: No, that's in the Pacific somewhere.

That got thrown overboard.

DH: That's right. *(Laughter)*

But you did say that you met Eileen Hardy in London. Is that correct?

Mavis Heath: Yes.

And she entertained Mavis, or vice versa. *(Laughs)*

Mavis Heath: She did. She did. She took me in hand.

So at the time Hardys was very much a family company, as we've said before.
Well, in the next ten years before your retirement, Dick, were there major changes in the wine industry? In the technology you used in the winery?

DH: Well, the changes were that they opened up Padthaway/Keppoch. And Keppoch produced more grapes than were ever produced prior to 1973.

Is that the year in which you retired, Dick—'73?

DH: '74.

And I suppose even since that time you've seen bigger changes in the industry?

DH: Well, I've seen more refrigeration installed into wineries. More stainless steel.

Mavis Heath: It's computerised now.

DH: And naturally more vineyards planted.

And do you still feel that Australia makes the best wine, Dick?

DH: I'm more convinced now that I've tried more French wines. I'm certain that Australia makes better wines than the French. I do believe we are up with the French but we are still lacking against the Germans in their white wine. Their white winemaking has improved. Far superior to Australian white wines. And I can understand why Australian wines have become so popular, because the French do not have enough warmth during their summer ripening period.

Well, Dick, I think we might leave it there today. You've told a lot of your story and I could ask you a lot more questions, but it might go on a bit long I think tonight. So thank you very much for talking with me, Dick.