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Full transcript of an interview with

VIRGINIA KLAEBSCH

on 19 October 2005

By Pauline Fowles

Recording available on CD

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J.D. SOMERVILLE ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION, STATE
LIBRARY OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA: INTERVIEW NO. OH 732/2

Interview with Virginia Klaebisch recorded by Pauline Fowles on 19th October 2005 at Wistow in South Australia, for the Wistow Community Hall Oral History Project and The State Library of South Australia Oral History Collection.

TAPE 1 SIDE A

My name is Pauline Fowles. I'm Vice-President of the Wistow Community Hall and a resident of Vale Road, Wistow. Today is Wednesday, 19th October 2005 and I am about to interview Mrs Virginia Klaebisch, K-L-A-E-B-S-C-H, of Bugle Ranges.

To begin this interview, I would like to ask you some questions about you and your early life. What is your full name?

Virginia Margaret.

And when were you born?

Nineteen eighteen, 12th January.

Okay, 1918. And where were you born? At home or in a hospital?

No, I was born in Balhannah, I think, in a nursing home, a nurse used to have it, and my mother went over there. And then, when my other brothers and sisters were born, she came over here to our place at Western Flat.

How many are there in your family? Do you have brothers and sisters?

I had two of each but one has died.

And do you know the full names of your parents?

Eva Louisa and Johannes Benjamin.

Klaebisch?

No. I'm now ---.

Yes.

Yes, they're -

Johannes Benjamin Klaebisch was your father?

No, no. Frederick.

Oh, of course, sorry.

Frederick. And I don't know what – just forgetting what Mum's, Grandma's name was.

Your parents' surname was Paech, of course, you were telling me.

Yes. No, that's – – –.

P-A-E-C-H-

C-H, yes.

All right.

Grandfather's was Johannes Frederick Klaebisch.

Paech.

Klaebisch. (break in recording) Johannes Frederick was the old people's name here.

Okay, all right. Where did you live while you were growing up?

Mount Barker.

Oh, so your parents lived in Mount Barker?

They've still got property there.

So you were on land in Mount Barker, not just a house block?

No.

Did they have a farm?

Yes, big one. Three hundred and fifty acres, they had.

And cropping, or dairy?

Yes. They had dairy and they had crop, and they grew potatoes.

So did you have to help out with the dairying –

Yes, yes.

– with the milking?

Yes. And also with the pigs, I used to have to wash the little pigs when the babies were born, and when Dad took them into the market I used to have to wash them and put them in the straw on the truck.

And was this while you were at school?

No, no. When I left school.

When you left school.

Yes.

What school did you go to?

Mount Barker.

Mount Barker Primary?

Yes.

Did you go to high school as well?

Oh, we went to high school to learn cooking.

Good. And what else did you do after you left school, before you met your husband?

I did help at home, that's all.

Home help. Were you the oldest?

Yes.

Oldest girl?

Yes.

And so that's when you helped your father –

Yes.

– prepare the pigs – – –.

That's right, and milked the cows.

Did you have milking machines, or did you do them by hand?

We had the first milking machine in Mount Barker.

Is that right?

Yes.

So what year – – –?

Bought it from HB Chapman's.

What year would that be, roughly?

Oh, when I got married was 1940. I suppose about 1932 or '3.

That would have been a big help.

Yes, Mum and I had to help when Dad was crook or anything. And anyway, so we used to milk the cows and feed them with nosebags and they'd cut the chaff and the hay, the bales of hay. They used to bind the bales – there was no square or round bales; they were all binded with a binder.

Stooks.

Binder, yes.

Yes. And how did you meet your husband?

At a dance in Mount Barker.

Did you? Did you go to dances with your girlfriends?

Yes, yes, always with different friends.

At the Town Hall, were the dances held?

Yes. I used to go to Hospital, Catholic and – what was another one? – football.

They all had dances.

Yes.

And what was his full name?

My husband?

Yes.

John Henry.

John Henry Klaebisch.

And we used to go to Miller Pete's dances in Mount Barker on a Friday night.

Was that Miller Pete? What, he had a band?

He had a band, yes.

Oh, okay. And when did you get married?

Nineteen forty, 27th January 1940.

And where was that?

Hahndorf, in St Michael's Church.

And then did you move to this house?

Yes. Had a honeymoon in Victor Harbor.

How long was that?

A week.

Oh, good! And then you moved here?

Yes.

And did you have to share the house with anyone?

Yes, with Grandma. And his sister, Nip's sister – I never ever called him 'Henry' or 'John', he was always 'Nip'. He was nicknamed to 'Nip' when he started school by Gordon Blight, and Gordon used to – when he came into the school up there his mother was a tailor and she made him a suit, a little suit to go on, and anyway so he said, 'Who's this nipper coming in here?' And from that day on he was called 'Nipper'.

Well, it's a lovely friendly nickname, isn't it?

Yes. Well, Gordon Blight and him were very good friends. They played cricket together and Brian played cricket when he was only a boy about ten years old.

So when you moved into this house your husband's mother was still living here?

Yes, yes.

And did that work out okay?

Yes, with me it did. With the two sisters it didn't.

Your two sisters?

No, his.

His two sisters, okay.

Mrs Fry and Mrs Martin. Mrs Martin went over where Dr Mitton was, now is the vet. She had that place and he bought it off her. And Mrs Fry lived here because they were working for Dr Shirley Barker's father and the old chap, and anyway when they got the sack because they didn't have no more cattle and stuff for two or three men and so they had to go, so they had a place built over the road by our Johnny Mullins.

So let me get this straight: your husband's sister is Mrs Fry, who lives across the road, and that's Peter Fry's mother?

Yes.

Really?

Yes.

So you're all related.

Yes. And their house, the place next to it, what that footballer's got – Russell Ebert – my husband's – renting that place off of him – that was his sister's.

Okay. It's all very interesting. When was this house built?

This one here?

Yes.

Eighteen fifty-four.

Eighteen fifty-four. And we're sitting in the living room of this house –

Yes. They used to have –

– in front of the fire.

– a kitchen out there.

And the kitchen was –

Out the back.

– Mrs Klaebisch is pointing out the back where the lean-to is, and that's where the kitchen used to be.

Was, yes. It had a wood stove and everything was out there in the back. Then we got a kerosene stove – not a kerosene stove, a kerosene fridge I should say – but we had a wood stove and we used to have to cook out there and bring it all in. And

then, when my husband got here, he said, ‘This is no good, I’m not going to have this going in and out here,’ he said, ‘my dinner gets cold before I get it.’ (laughs) So we brought the fridge in here – kerosene fridge is still out there – and the stove was just about worn out when I got here, anyway, so we got an electric stove and Nip put that in there so that I didn’t have to go out there and cook.

So the house was already about ninety years old when you moved here.

Yes, yes.

So how many bedrooms does it have?

Two: one there and one in there.

So it would have been fairly crowded when you first moved in here, with Grandma as well?

Grandma was in there, that was her room, and that was our room up in there.

Up in front.

Yes. And Grandma gave us fifty pounds when we got married and we bought a cabinet and – – –.

Is this the cabinet here, that – – –?

No, that was Lois’s Grandma. She was selling out down there the big house, and she went into the little cottages down here by the hospital. And then the other one is out the back. We had a bedspread – no, bed; I made all the bedspreads – we had a bed and we had two wardrobes and a – what do you call it, with the mirror in it?

A dressing table?

Dressing table, yes. And then when I got married I was given one you push along –

You said you were given a traymobile for a wedding present.

– yes, but that was from a lady in Mount Barker.

And you’ve still got it.

Yes, in there alongside of my bed. I’ve got the phone on it and any little odds and ends that I get I put on it.

Now, the road that runs past the front of your house that goes to Strathalbyn is called Long Gully Road –

Long Valley.

– Long Valley: what was the road like when you moved here?

Terrible.

Did it have bitumen or was it dirt?

No, no, only just dirt and then it used to rain and they used to plough it up and people would get stuck. Oh, no, she was worse than what it's ever been since you've been here. It was thirteen feet lower than what it is now.

And did you have a car when you were married?

My husband had a ute¹, he had a little ute when I met him first and that's why I liked him because I didn't have to walk! (laughter)

And did you learn to drive in that?

Not in the little one; I learnt to drive in the green one and I took people around in the green one for the doctor, anybody was sick – 'Oh, Virg'll take you,' Dr Pridmore used to say.

There weren't too many cars around then.

No, no. Jock Thring and my husband. No, there was very few.

Did you have the phone on?

No. We used to go up to Mrs Thring to use the phone.

How much land did you have here when you came?

Seventy-eight acres. He was given seventy-eight acres by his father, Mrs Fry fifty-four and Eileen forty-seven.

And did you buy any more once you were – – –?

We bought the next bullock paddock.

And how much did that bring it up to?

About a hundred and fifty-six.

¹ Ute = utility vehicle, *ie* small truck.

Altogether?

Yes.

And did you run a dairy here, you and your husband?

Yes. Yes, we had fourteen cows when I got married.

And did you have crops as well?

Just a few for the cattle, never big crops because we didn't have the land to have the big crops.

And did you build your herd up when you bought the adjoining ---?

My grandmother gave me two cows and my father gave me two cows. (laughs) And so that was ---.

Very practical presents.

Yes, yes.

And they had calves and you built your herd up?

Yes, and then we had to sell them again because it became dry and you couldn't keep them, there wasn't the land here to keep them.

Is that right?

And we grew a few potatoes to sort of get a little bit extra. But when my grandfather was here, he used to grow watermelons over there in that little paddock down this side – not this side of the little creek – and people from down here at Bonython's, they used to come and buy them. Oh, I don't know whether they bought them, I think he gave them to them. And they used to put them on two bags, each one holding the two bags, and when they got down the road it would start to get a wriggle up and go and then they'd have to come back and get another one. And they were big fellas like that, so Grandma said.

How many children did you have, Mrs Klaebisch?

Only one.

And what was his name, or what is his name?

William John, John William. JH is Dad and his is JW.

But he's always known as 'Bill'.

'Bill', yes.

And when did your husband die? You've been a widow as long as I've known you.

Twenty-two years.

Twenty-two years ago.

It will be twenty-three this year. [Nineteen eighty-five], two years after the fire, that was [1983].

Nineteen eighty-three, after the big fire, so two years after that.

After that, he had two strokes when they had this fire.

Is that right? So you think the fire –

Killed him.

– helped – – –.

Yes.

Really?

Yes, he was – – –.

Was he out fighting it?

No, he wasn't. Well, according to two Thrings children, they came over to see whether they could help and he said, 'No, we're all right,' he said, 'the boys are helping.' And I thought that was funny for him to say that.

Who were 'the boys'?

Jock Thring's two children.

Oh, okay.

Jimmy and Johnny, I think. And anyway, from then on he didn't – he could talk to you, some people he used to talk to real good and they used to think I was telling lies because he couldn't do things, but it wasn't. And I took him to a brain specialist and he said, 'No,' he said, 'if I operate on him now he will be just a vegetable.' So he

said, 'He's too good a man to leave as a vegetable.' And so you couldn't leave him anywhere, you had to leave him here, otherwise he'd get all muddled up.

It must have been hard for you to manage on your own.

I did it for nine months, nine months day and night.

Is that right?

Yes, you can ask Dr Cameron that. He used to come out every Saturday and see.

And then, when your husband died, did Bill take over the running of the farm and the dairy?

Yes, yes. Well, he was helping with the dairy when Dad was sick, because I couldn't do it and look after him too.

Of course not.

So I never slept, day or night.

Really?

Just had to look after him. And I used to lock the back door and the front door and he'd walk around, and if he saw that chair there and he didn't like it there, 'Oh, I'll put that somewhere else,' he'd say, 'I don't like that there.' So he'd take it in another room. He'd do all sorts of funny little things. And I never worried about what he did, and daytime I used to open the doors and let him walk out if he wanted to.

So you think the strokes were caused by the shock of the fire?

Well, that was what this ---.

Did the fire go through your property?

Yes, we only had about ten acres left, all the rest ---.

Ten acres that weren't burnt out.

My brother brought me over spuds, he used to get them from the Potato Board and he used to bring them over and we used to feed the cows on raw spuds.

And I think that's what they do to the deer farm down the road, I've seen them delivering potatoes there.

Have you, yes.

Now, do you feel that we've covered your family enough for the moment and we'll talk about the Wistow Hall and Wistow, the Wistow community?

Yes.

Where did you – the community here – gather for social events before the Hall was built?

In the Church.

Which church was that?

Methodist Church, there's only one church here.

The Methodist church that's – – –.

And then we did do it at the school for a little bit, too, only we had to carry lights up there to be able to see.

Oh, there wasn't power on at the school? So in the Church Hall you used to meet.

Yes.

And the Church Hall is on the – I'm just saying this for the tape –

Wistow Road.

– on the Mount Barker side of Wistow, just on the outskirts of Wistow.

Yes. Then we went to different places: Edwardses and Blights' and the school. And who else did we go to? I didn't have any here – I had some here; otherwise, if they wanted to know something or wanted to do something, they'd come down here to me and say, 'What'll we do about this?'

Yes. So who thought of – if it was one person, or did you all just think, 'We need a hall'?

No, the *men* thought that, there was the six men.

Yes, I think we've got them in the minutes book of the Hall.

Yes, I've got the little book, where have I got that? I think that's somewhere. (break in recording)

Now, Mrs Klaebisch, you said that six men were involved with the setting up of the Hall, on land that was donated by –

Mr Gordon Blight.

– Mr Gordon Blight. He was a friend of your husband's –

Yes, yes, yes.

– a close friend.

They played cricket together and played football together.

Now, did you have to – you and the other women of the district – have to fundraise to raise money to buy – – –?

Yes, my oath we did!

Tell me what you did.

Well, in the morning we'd get up and milk and then we'd head off to Verdun or to Hahndorf and pick blackberries. There was no strawberries around here. Anyway, so we'd head off down there and pick up a couple of buckets of blackberries, and then come back and milk and get up there and have a stall.

Where?

In the Hall. First of all we did it in the Church.

All right, so you did some fundraising in the Church – what, did you have blackberry fêtes, or – – –?

No, we didn't have any blackberry fêtes, we more or less had an apple and – – –.

A trading table?

We had cake, then I went to Adelaide and got – down in Adelaide you could buy things for two-and-six, half a crown shop, and then I'd go down and buy a lot of things for the kids and I'd run a stall, like a little stall, and they could put so much, give me a dollar or whatever it was, and then I'd – – –.

But what would this day be, would it be a fête or a school day, an ordinary school [day]?

No, a fête.

A fête.

Yes, most of the fêtes were the ones that we would have looked at and got the money for.

Yes, and that gave you enough money to get the Hall started?

Yes, to pay the men off.

Because the six men put in a loan.

Father took – I looked in the book there: Father put in twenty-six dollars. I think you had to pay two dollars to –

Pounds?

– it'd be pounds then, yes – and I think we had to put that in to pay the two men that got the –

Shed.

– yes, down at Strath.

Yes. And so once the Hall was built, did your husband help build it?

Yes, yes. Mr Bilney, Mr Daniels – – –. Mr Shillabeer was very good at building things and he got to work and they helped him, and it didn't take long and they had it up.

And once it was up, you did more fund-raising then to pay it off?

Yes, for the floor, had to get the floor done then. Got the floor done, and then we wanted a piano to make some more money by dancing, so then I had to go around and see if I could get some money from people, so I did.

Is that the piano that's currently in the Hall?

In the Hall now, yes, yes.

It looks a bit worn, the black keys look very worn.

Yes, yes. Well, it was I suppose about 1956 I suppose I got it. Then I had to get one for the school, there was nothing at the school, the school teacher had nothing, and so – – –.

It sounds like you're very good at getting money out of people, Mrs Klaebisch.

(laughter) And I've done for the cemetery too, because the fence was falling down, and so I wrote to everybody, I went around – my husband was doing the – after Mr Bunnett[?] died down here, I went around, he was gone and my husband took over, he was a trustee to the cemetery, and Gordon Blight was. That was the only two that

was left, I think. And anyway, so I went – I thought, ‘Well, I’ll get some money,’ so I went around to everybody and asked would they give some money. And I thought, ‘I’ll go to Eric Bonython over here,’ he gave me twenty dollars, and then I went to different ones around and got their money from them, and I had enough to buy the piano from Miss Adey. That’s where I got it from.

And you told me once before that you had a stall at your front gate here.

Yes.

What was that for?

That was for Susie for Cream Bowl.

Now, what is the Cream Bowl, tell me about the Cream Bowl?

Well, we had a Princess in all the different districts. And anyway that was Mount Barker, that was in the *Courier* office, then there was Wistow, then there was Meadows and then there was Macclesfield and Echunga, I think that was the other one.

And Susie’s your – – –.

And one that’s the nurse in that – always makes me cross – the one in the hospital, and the Sister in there had a daughter and she put her in just when they remodelled the hospital, and of course they won it because they were selling all the hospital things. And ooh, if I could – – –. (break in recording)

Now, Susie’s your granddaughter –

Yes.

– and she was the Wistow –

Cream Bowl.

– Cream Bowl, and what did you sell at the gate?

Jam and chutney, cake, biscuits.

On a roadside stall?

Stall, and everybody used to pull up and say, ‘Oh, are you going so bad?’ ‘Yes,’ I’d say. ‘Well, we’re going to Victor Harbor. When we come back you be here still and

keep some of that stuff for us.’ So I did; I made a thousand dollars out there on that road.

And this was, the Cream Bowl was a fundraising thing.

Yes, yes.

So Sus – but did she win it one time, or did she – – –?

She won the cow competition.

What was that?

You had to dress a cow up. And it had a nice coat, and led, and Kym Bonython judged it and anyway she won that, she’s got a trophy up there in the house that she won with the cow.

So the people going past on the road thought you were having difficulties –

With our farm.

– and they took pity on you and bought your things.

Yes, yes. And they used to always say to me, ‘Are you going bad?’ ‘Yes, I’m going bad.’ Well, we were going bad up here at the Hall, we weren’t getting very [much] money, so I just had to get going. If I wasn’t going, nobody else would go. And when Lois was playing golf and she won – not the first prize, third prize in the golf, anyway, so I said, ‘Right, we’re going to have a golf club out there.’

END OF TAPE 1 SIDE A: TAPE 1 SIDE B

Is that right?

Yes, and I used to make little tickets like that and then I had a clipper –

A punch?

– a punch, yes – and then if you made five, well, you got a five clip; and then the one with the most when it came to the end, say six weeks or something like that, we’d clip it and the one that got the most got a nice prize.

And so you would put a small amount of money in each game you played and that went into a kitty?

Yes, that went into a kitty. It was only about five shillings or something like that.

But it all mounted up.

Yes, yes, it did. I think it was ninety-eight dollars we paid for the piano. We got it all done.

Good on you.

We used to have to milk first and then go up there and then get everything going, and then you'd have the supper afterwards and different ones would say – old Mr Wise, that's right. And anyway, he used to always say to me – I didn't used to fill the cup up, it would be about that far from the top – and he always used to say, 'Oh! Oh,' he said, 'tide's out', and I had to fill it right up to the very brim then. Right to the top.

To make him happy.

And he used to say, 'Now you've got it *too* full.'

So who used to play the piano when you had your dances?

Herbie Possingham played it and – oh, there wasn't many around here that could play the piano.

Did you have any other instruments? Like drums or trumpet or anything?

No, no, no, no, no, no.

Just the piano.

Just the piano. I don't know who else played, I don't think many others played. I didn't go to many dances because Bill was only little then and I stopped home with him.

Now, this side of the road is called Bugle Ranges: where did that name come from, do you know?

Yes, from a man up here on the hill. And there used to be a bull up there and he used to bellow, and I've got an idea the old man that owned him put a bell around his neck and that's how he got the name of 'Bugle', he used to have the name of 'Bugle'.

And what about the Bugle Ranges Fire Unit, what do you know about that?

I've got a photo of that, you can see that. That was Bert Hedges and my husband, he used to, if there was a fire on, he used to ring up and –we'd got the phone on then – and anyway he used to ring up and say, 'Fire!' and he'd come down the road here going like the wind. And my husband would be waiting out here on the gate and he'd run to the bridge up there and on he'd hop and away they'd go.

And did they have a tank on the back?

Yes, tank and a pump and everything.

And were fires fairly common?

Yes, yes, quite a lot of fires we had. Thrings always went down the paddock there with the people from Adelaide and they'd light up a fire for their lunch.

Ah.

And away it'd go. They didn't put it out properly.

So are there less fires now than there used to be?

Bigger ones now. When we had this one here it was burning up at Bonython's, you know where Eric Bonython's is –

On Bonython Road?

– on the other side of the road –

This is the 1983 Ash Wednesday fire? Yes.

– yes – well, that was burning on that side of the road, it was burnt out up there, to burn Eric Bonython's, whoever lit it, and it came down, it was burning at our hayshed up there, burnt the hayshed down, all the fences, and it was still burning back up there, and by the time it burnt the hayshed down it'd burnt all our square bales and they were on the ground the length of the square bales for nearly two years after. We never got a mushroom after that – we used to get a lovely lot – never got a mushroom. And they went up on the road and thought they'd stop it on the road and it just went – foof! – like that over the top of them and it was down at Callington before night-time.

Really?

Yes.

It must have been very frightening.

Windy.

Were you here when it was ---?

Yes, yes. I went up to bring the cows down from the paddock up the top, I took the two – Susie’s little dog and our big dog – and I went up there with the car, the same car as I’ve got now, I went over gutters this high. And I went plompety-plom, plompety-plom, and Brian Blight and Brian Nettle were down here looking for me and they felt I wasn’t coming back, and I came back around the top way and home I come. Anyway, (laughs) Brian Blight said, ‘Ah! I’m glad to see you.’ He said, ‘I thought you must have been burnt up.’ ‘Oh,’ I said, ‘I wouldn’t get – only the good die young.’

So you managed to save your cows?

Yes, I brought them all down here to where there was no grass, and that was the paddock over there by Lois’s house that was left, that was all that was left. It was very, very sad. See all the grass and the hay gone and the ruddy – you did lots of things that you would never do, and the fire started up out here: Bill had ploughed out there on the other side of there, and if it hadn’t have been for him Fry’s and Thring’s would have been burnt out, it was coming that way.

I thought I heard that it came from the railway line. Was that the one that was –

No.

– two years later?

No.

There was another fire, wasn’t there, after that?

Yes, that was down at the bottom there by Martin Purcell’s, went across there and it went into Strathalbyn or Woodchester, I think, it went that way.

That was two years later, I think.

Yes, yes. Yes. They came here when ---.

Mrs Klaebisch, I don’t think we covered the fact that your husband’s family was a pioneering family in this district.

Yes, they came here when Betty Rick's place was – that little hut, you know?

Yes.

What's his name, have I got it down here on my book? (break in recording)

Now, you were talking about the pioneering, the Klaebchs being a pioneering family of the district, so your husband's father, he built this house, did he?

Yes. Quarried the stone up in the hill, all the stones here came from up the hill out of a quarry.

And was it *his* father that came from Germany originally?

No, no; grandfather.

Your husband's grandfather came from Germany?

No, I don't know whether that's right. I think his dad came from Germany, and a brother.

And they built this house.

Yes, yes, that's right.

Out of stone quarried from the property?

Yes.

And when you first came here, how did your milk from the dairy go to market, and where did it go?

Into Jacobses.

Where were they?

In Mount Barker, Jacobses' factory.

And did it go in milk cans?

Yes, Herb Paech brought around the cans. We had two cans to start with and then we probably got up to about five, that's as far as we got. And then we put a milking machine in up there when Bill was coming and they put the thing in the wrong way and the milk would come down this end instead of going up that end, they didn't put it up high enough.

And can you remember how much you were paid for a pint of milk in those days, or a can of milk?

Can of milk?

Yes, how were you paid?

By cheque every fortnight.

Okay, and it went to the factory to be separated, you didn't do any of that here?

No, no, they separated in there, made cheese and cream and butter.

All right. (break in recording) While we're still talking about history but more recent history, were you involved with the Hall Committee in the early days? The Wistow Hall, were you on the Committee?

Not really, no; my husband was.

Yes, but was there a Ladies' ---?

We had a Ladies' Committee.

Yes, and you were involved with that?

Yes, yes. I was President there and Mrs Bilney was Secretary.

So there were two separate groups: there was the men that ran the Hall and there was a Ladies' Auxiliary group?

Yes.

And what, your role was the fund-raising?

That's right, yes, that's right.

And that went on until fairly recently.

Oh, it always went on because there was nobody else to do it, the ladies *had* to do it.

Yes. And you kept the Hall going for fifty years until it was extended again and re-opened in 2002.

Yes.

And the Ladies' Auxiliary is still going, virtually, but now it's called the Wistow Catering Group, and they still cater. Your daughter-in-law –

Yes, does it.

– organises all of that –

That's right.

– for the fund-raising.

Yes, good job she does.

She does a very good job, and it brings a lot of income into the Hall funds.

Yes, it has done, hasn't it? Yes, that's right, yes. (break in recording)

Mrs Klaebisch, when you first came here, was your land all cleared, or did you have to clear some of it?

No, a lot of it had to be cleared.

And who did that?

My husband.

How did he used to do it? He wouldn't have had a chainsaw.

No, no, (laughs) just had an axe and tomahawk and a piece of wood like that on two sticks and then he used to tap the wattle bark and then strip it off and take it into the tannery.

Oh! So he didn't actually kill the trees, he didn't cut the wattle trees down?

Yes, yes.

He stripped the bark off them first –

Yes.

– and took the wattle bark into the tannery –

Tannery, yes.

– and then cut the tree down.

Yes. Or else he cut it down first. He could do it either way. It was up to where Lois's house is now, that was all – – –.

It's just another extra way of earning some money.

Yes, that was right, he had to do that. He used to get eight pounds a week for the milk and fourteen pounds a week, so we had to live on that and pay what we wanted and do what we wanted.

Did you grow a lot of what you needed here on the land, like vegetables? And did you have chooks and geese?

Oh yes, I had chooks and geese and ducks, I used to have to pluck them if I wanted something, so I used to pluck them to get some money to buy what I wanted.

And sell the eggs?

Yes, take them into Bell's in Mount Barker and sell them, get my groceries for them.

So you'd take in eggs and buy what you needed.

Yes, and there were the groceries.

Did many people have to do that?

Oh, I think most of us had to. I really think. Blights and Thrings – well, they didn't because they had sheep, they had to make the wool money. I don't think they sold very much in cattle or lambs.

Did you eat your own poultry?

Yes, mostly I used to kill our duck or a goose or pigeon or whatever was around, and I bought one leg of lamb from the butcher – he used to come around, Yates from Macclesfield, he used to come around and he had a little cart and horse – and anyway, he'd have a little bit of a switch of the gum tree: never get a blowfly on it, it was beautiful meat. And anyway, so that's how we used our meat. We used to make a leg do for quite a while, and then perhaps we got a pound of sausages and that was our pound finished.

So the butcher used to come round in a cart.

Yes. And the greengrocer. And yes, we had a greengrocer come around, and we also had our shop man over in Macclesfield come around, the Macclesfield shop.

With a truck, or on horse and cart?

No, they come with a bit of a bus. And the greengrocer came around in an old truck.

And they'd call at each farm?

Yes, yes. And he'd often bring the meat, if there was no meat coming he'd bring the meat.

And what year would this be, roughly? Would this be in the '40s or the '50s?

In the '50s.

Even as late as that?

Yes, yes. Tonkin used to be one and Yates used to be – Tonkin used to be the greengrocer – oh, Mr Wyatt used to be the greengrocer first, and then they must have got quite a lot of vegies over in Macclesfield from people that were growing them and trying to sell them and they were very good; and then Tonkin took over and he was bringing all round those that were all screwed up and horrible, and he came in here and if you wasn't home he'd put them out here by the door. And so one day I was waiting for him. He'd left me some old, screwed-up parsnips and carrots and everything that he had left in the shop that he was bringing around, and I thought, 'My word, you're not going to last here long.' So I waited for him and I said, 'What are you leaving that for?' And he said, 'Oh! I thought you'd like some vegetables today.' 'No, thank you,' I said, 'you pick them up and you take them off back to Macclesfield. Don't you leave them here again,' and I said, 'and don't bother to call in.' 'Ooh, ooh, ooh,' he said. And my husband was over the road doing the baling – we used to bale with wire then – and he was coming in the gate and he said, 'Ooh, I got blown out in there!' And Father said, 'You wouldn't get blown out unless you needed it.' And he walked off and left him. Never called in again. And I left, then Wilcoxes up there, they left, and Hoskins left, and different other ones that were around – Hedges and what's-the-names, they left, Shepleys, and Hedges, Thrings, they left one after the other. As soon as I left – they weren't game to say anything and I thought, 'Well, *I'm* not frightened to say anything.' Anyway, now he's got racehorses, he's running racehorses – – –.

Did you have bread delivered as well?

Yes, yes, a man from over there, Peter MacNamara – I don't know whether you know him – but anyway, he used to come around for the shop man over there, and the daughter over there married – what was his name? He used to be a great cricketer.

I don't know. How long did it take you to get down to Adelaide from here when you first – – –?

Twenty-two miles, it was from here before it was altered. And I used to take the people that were sick – – –.

Were you the only one with a car around here?

Yes, and I was the only one that Pretty knew, I think. I wished I'd have married him. (laughter) I nearly did!

This is the doctor.

Yes.

He was a good man.

A lovely man, yes, lovely man. (laughs) He always used to get me to do all his jobs for him, because we had no – well, we had an old ambulance but that's all we had and it wasn't fit to go to Adelaide.

Really?

So I used to say, 'Yes, all right. How long?' 'Oh, I'll give them an injection and give them an hour and if they grizzle don't worry, keep going, don't take any notice of them.' And Jim Bunnett, I took him up and down to town for about six months: he had cancer.

Was that Monty's father?

Father, yes, yes. And the old people, they were cuckoo.

So everyone in the district helped each other?

Yes – mostly did. And I took Shepleys down here, one had a broken ankle, another one had pneumonia, and I took them down to town. And then old Mr Dunn over there, I took him to town. He slipped in the cow yard and hit his back of his neck and he sort of went down like that and he was going, 'Kaak, kaak,' and I didn't think I'd get him to Adelaide.

It must have been pretty scary.

It was, it was. And I picked up his wife and his sister-in-law and then I – –. (break in recording)

Mrs Klaebisch, when you were running the neighbours down to Adelaide, to the Royal Adelaide Hospital, what age were you then roughly? Was this before you had Bill or after?

No, sometimes after. I had to go down and lay out Beeb Traeger. Dr Downing rang up and said, 'Will you come down?' And Kerry said, 'She's gone.' And I said, 'Where to?' And he said, 'She is dead.' Oh, God.

So did you have any nursing training?

(laughs) Oh, I had plenty of nursing training from Pretty. He'd say, 'Take this one, take that one, take Mrs Fry.' She was drug [dragged] along the road with her two knees off. And I used to do all that. And Hoskins over there, they were sick, they'd come over here – one of them would – and say, 'Will you take So-and-so in to the doctor? Will you do this?'

And was that because they didn't have cars of their own?

Well, they had cars but they weren't good enough to go down and they didn't want to know, so *I* used to go.

So it sounds like you were a bit of a goer.

Well, (laughs) I don't know about a 'goer'. They used to make go *of* me.

Now, Mrs Klaebisch, looking back on your time here and your involvement with the Wistow Hall, is there anything that you would like to add that I haven't asked you about?

Not really. (laughs) There's a lot of things I did, but I didn't mind doing it.

Well, if you think of something more that you would like to tell me you will have to let me know and I'll come back and see you again.

See again, yes.

All right, I'm going to end the interview now.

END OF INTERVIEW.