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OH 829/5

Full transcript of an interview with

HENRY FRANK PORTLOCK

On 28 May 2008

by Sally Stephenson

for the

MEADOWS 150 ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

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J.D. SOMERVILLE ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION, STATE LIBRARY OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA: INTERVIEW NO. OH 829/5

Interview of Mr Henry Frank ('Harry') Portlock, conducted by Dr Sally Stephenson on 28th May 2008 at Meadows, South Australia, for the Meadows 150 Oral History Project.

FILE 1

I'm Sally Stephenson interviewing Mr Harry Portlock in Meadows on 28th May 2008 for the Meadows Oral History Project. This project is funded by a Positive Ageing Development Grant from the Department for Families and Communities and grants from the History Trust of South Australia and the District Council of Mount Barker.

Well, thank you, Harry, for coming. Can you tell me your full name, please?

My full name is Henry Frank Portlock, always known as 'Harry'. I was born on 4th September 1930 to my parents, Lillian and Earnest Portlock, in Seaton Park, South Australia.

[00:01:07]What was your mother's maiden name?

My mother's maiden name was Wright, Lillian Ellen Wright.

And you had a number of brothers and sisters: what were their names?

Well, my eldest brother was Leslie; my second brother, Edwin; my sisters, my four sisters in a row, were Gertrude, Edna, Ruby and Lillian; and then I have another brother, Sydney, and then myself.

I know your parents were originally from England. Where did they come from and when did they move to Australia?

They came, they lived in Gloucester in England, both my mother and father were from Gloucester, and they came in 1925. The family from Lillian up were born in England and my brother, Sydney, and I were born in South Australia.

What was your father's trade at the time that he moved out here?

My father was a blacksmith. He came here to find some work with blacksmiths, working for the South Australian Government, bridge-building in the original days, before the Depression.

So you mentioned you lived in Seaton Park before you moved to Meadows. What work did your father end up doing there, just before you moved to Meadows?

Well, when his blacksmithing work folded up he then worked with his brother in Richards, which then became General Motors Holden's, Richards body building firm; and then of course in the Depression days that all dried up. Father had just built a brand new house in Seaton Park and there was no more work for him to carry the building on or to pay the mortgage so he had to find something else to do. But from when Richards closed down, the body building firm of Richards closed down, then he took any work that he could get.

What type of work, do you remember?

Labouring mainly, he would labour on any jobs that he could find. He went to find some work on the wharf and then they had a big wharf strike and he lost his job there – well, he never, ever started. But he did any labouring job he could find in *anything* that he could find.

When was it, then, that the family moved to Meadows?

Well, in 1934 the [Unemployment] Relief Council I believe started up a scheme where farmers, they allowed people from underprivileged areas of South Australia to take up farming lots. Father applied and was granted the permission to go there; he went up with a lot of other men up into this area at Meadows – and of course there was one at Echunga and also at Yundi – they went into this area and they started to cut this vacant Crown land up into ten-acre blocks and he was then allotted one; and I believe they balloted for blocks, and he was allotted one of the blocks in the ballot.

So you said it was Crown land. What was the block like, though, before you moved up?

Well, when we moved there in 1934, it was just a virgin block. It had a very primitive tin house on it and some poultry sheds, as they thought that poultry would be the one thing that would sustain all of these families. And it was a virgin block, it was uncleared, just a cleared area for the house and for the poultry sheds, so a virgin scrub block.

So your father had built the shed, as you called the poultry sheds, and the house?

Those people that were allotted the blocks in the first instance were brought up by the [Unemployment] Relief Council to clear the blocks, to build the houses; and when we came to them and the poultry sheds they were already there – a very primitive house and some rather flash poultry sheds, rather grandiose poultry sheds; but the houses were very, very primitive and they had been built by the men who were then allocated a block.

How many people moved up, approximately, how many families and children?

From my recollection there was twenty-two families – I've been through them several times to name them – twenty-two families, each allotted a ten-acre block; and, as I understand, as I said before, they were balloted for and you drew a ballot and that was the block that you got. So in our particular Meadows settlement there were twenty-two families.

Do you remember roughly how many children there were?

Nine hundred and sixty-four, (laughter) I seem to think. I was trying to think back, and a family with less than five children, and I could not think of one of those families that had less than five children. I think probably Devlins were the best, and they probably had more than [that] – perhaps up to ten; but I could think of no family that had less than five children.

Did all of the families that moved up then, that was in May of 1934, how long did most of them stay?

Well, I think some of them went fairly soon. I think Mr Saunders and his family, they didn't last very long. I would be surprised if they stayed two years, and then there was a progression of people that left; and by 1939 a lot of the people – and say during wartime – a lot of the people had gone already. I would say that half of the people that lived there in the original settlement had already left.

What do you think the government was trying to achieve with the scheme?

I think they had a misguided idea that these people would have a better life if they left the areas of, well, civilisation, I would imagine, and that if they left the areas – and remembering that these people were coming from homes that they'd built there; perhaps they weren't living particularly well – but then they thought that they would

be able to sustain a better lifestyle on a small, ten-acre block. But when you'd come to these blocks it was a primitive house: it had three rooms, that's two bedrooms and a kitchen/dining room/living room and everything; it had no running water – actually when *we* arrived it had no water at all. There was an outside toilet that was way down the yard; there was only wood heating, they only had wood to light the fires; and there were kerosene lanterns. So they had some misguided idea that they would come to a better life. But actually they put all of those twenty-two families into abject poverty.

How did you feel about the government scheme at the time? I mean, you said they may have had a misguided idea of making your lives better.

To a child of four years of age, to me it was all a new adventure. I'd not really had the comforts of electric light and hot water and a bath to bath in, because we didn't have a bath to bath in, I'd not had that, so to me it was all a great new adventure. So it was fairly easy for me. I had hundreds of children to play with, I had hundreds of friends, because we were all in the same boat, we were all in it together. Each of us had nothing more than the other, we all had nothing so it didn't really matter to us. So to me it didn't worry me so much, except that I can now think back on how our mother fed us. We lived on rabbits, much to the thanks to Mr Rowley because everyone went over his paddock. We ate rabbits and we ate eggs and anything that we could scrounge around. In living, I can remember my father used to go into the fields and when the potatoes are dug and all those that were spiked with a fork or second grade he was able to buy them at a much lower price. We always had potatoes. Quinces were another thing, we had a lot, we ate lots of quinces because they were free. Windfall apples, we were allowed to have those too, so they were the delights of the things that we had; when we could get a bag of windfall apples that was wonderful. Of course, it was a virgin block and we weren't able to grow anything at that stage, at all.

So coming back to the cottage, you've told me a little bit about it. [It] started off there were just the three rooms. But your father modified it, I think, over the years: how did he modify the cottage?

Sir Douglas Mawson had a sawmill at Wickham's Hill. Whether he gave these people the offcuts or whether Dad had to buy them I can't remember, but the pine

offcuts, we were given the pine offcuts. Father managed to build a room on the end of the house: it was sort of a veranda-type thing, and he was able to enclose it by using wheat bags cut in half, which were soaked in a cement solution, which gave the wall a bit of stability, and then he tacked these over the end of the room; offcuts from the sawmill at Sir Douglas Mawson's mill for floorboards; and a window I don't know where he got from but we did have a window in our room – that was the boys' room – on the end. Our three girls, three girls that were home at that time, slept in one room, Dad and Mum in the other and then us three boys, the three boys that were home, slept in this sleepout-type thing. So he actually did extend the house by using the scrap from Sir Douglas Mawson's mill or perhaps it was the cheaper-type timber that he was able to buy.

So you and your brothers shared that veranda area. What were the sleeping arrangements there for you?

Well, my brother and I had a bed, we shared a bed; and my elder brother, who was working, he was entitled to a bit more privacy, (laughs) he had a bed on his own. But the three of us were in a very small room. The girls, the three of them shared a room that was equally as small. But there was just enough room for the beds – a double bed that I shared with my brother, or a wider bed, and my elder brother's single bed – that was all that was in it, just the three of us slept in that room.

How old were you when you eventually had your own bed?

Oh, my goodness me! Ah, dear. (pauses) My elder brother joined up into the services very early, as soon as the [Second World] War started he joined the services, that (laughs) gave us a little bit more room; my elder brother would have been fourteen or fifteen when he left school and went to the city to work; so yes, I would have been twelve, perhaps thirteen, before I had a room of my own and a bed of my own.

So just some of the other aspects of the cottage: you said initially there was no water, so where did you get the water from?

We had a creek that runs through Mr Rowley's property – good old Mr Rowley – we had a creek that runs through his property and we used to carry the water from his creek. Being in the early starts of winter there was no water in our rainwater tank;

there was a rainwater tank on the building but it had no water in it when we came, then as soon as the rain fell of course we had a bit of water in the tank. But we were carrying water from the creek, Mr Rowley's creek, to support the household until the rain came and then we had that one rainwater tank. No running water in the house, of course; that came many, many years later.

Well, how did your mother cook and how did you bathe?

Bathing was a delight. We had one of those tubs – a little, round tub – that we used on the back veranda and the water was boiled inside. Then again, thanks to Sir Douglas Mawson, Dad was able to build a house, a little what we called a washhouse, what we'd call these days a laundry, he built that. It had a copper, a copper in it, and that's a heating device that you put wood underneath it and a cast-iron thing and it boiled the copper. Now, this laundry had no windows in it but we did manage to have a bath, so very early on we had this offcut pine slabs around the house, the door was a hessian bag that hung down over the doorway, but the windows were wide open but with the copper going it used to be reasonably warm in there and everyone would bath in that. But might I say we were the unlucky ones because everybody had to bath in the same water because there wasn't enough water to go round so the early children who got in it first had a very low, little bath and by the time it got round to Mum and Dad of course theirs could have been hip deep because (laughs) by the time they got to use the water there'd been quite a bit of people through it. It would have been pretty muddy when they got to it, but at least it would have been a deeper bath than we got.

And what was the heating like in the cottage?

There was no heating. There was no heating, there was no cooling. It was only lit by hurricane lamps, by kerosene-operated lamps. The stove, the kitchen stove, was always lit because that was the only heating we had. Wood, of course, the block was a scrub block so we had plenty of wood. So the only heating in the house was the kitchen stove that Mum cooked on and we used it for heating, and if you were lucky you were allowed to take a tray out of the oven where Mum cooked wrapped in a piece of newspaper if you had it and popped into your bed, and that'd warm your bed

up like a hot-water bottle before you got in it. That was some of the delights of winter.

What was summer like in the cottage?

Summer was extremely hot. We used to sleep outside as often as we could because the house was so hot; but being a little tin house it would cool down very quickly. There would be a breeze come down through one of the gullies that cooled the house off a bit; but there was no heating, no cooling and no insulation in the house, of course, and it was dreadfully hot, *dreadfully* hot, during the summer and dreadfully cold during the winter.

If we move on and talk about some of the other aspects of living there, how did you manage with shoes and clothing?

Being the youngest I did all right because I got all of the hand-me-downs. When it was finished, when my elder brother finished with it, his clothes of course it was passed on to my brother one older than me and then, of course, when he'd finished with them I got them. They were a bit patched and tattered by the time I got them but it was usually – we managed to keep warm. (break in recording)

If we go back, you were telling me about the clothes that you wore.

Okay. I had all the hand-me-downs from my elder brothers, of course. They were a bit patched and tattered when I got them, but we always managed to keep warm somehow or other. Shoes, I had a pair of shoes to go to school in, Mum was very strict about the fact that we should go reasonably-dressed to school and reasonably tidy, so I had a pair of school shoes to go to school, but of course nothing to wear around other than that. On the weekends you didn't have shoes and when you came home from school there was no shoes, but we were able to keep in a reasonable condition – well, especially me because I got everything that was left over. But there was no new clothes. I remember having a suit perhaps when I was thirteen or fourteen to go to Sunday school in but, other than that, I can't remember ever having *new* clothes of any type until later times.

Did your mother make clothes?

She had a sewing machine and made what she could, but I can't ever remember her making clothes for me. But most certainly for the girls, she made clothes for the girls, and a variety of things for herself. But she did have a sewing machine, an old Singer treadle sewing machine.

I know when you first came to Meadows I think you brought a milking goat with you.

Our trip to Meadows was quite delightful. We came on the back of an open truck with our furniture that we had, which was very limited furniture; all our goods and chattels – which included a milking goat. We held the goat on the back of the truck and we travelled up there. We again had a delight then: Father stopped at one of the roadside stalls at Clarendon and got a case of apples and we were each allowed to have an apple, and the goat got the cores, the cores I think. But we did have a milking goat until later years – where Dad got the money I don't know; he saved it up – but he walked out to Blackfellows Creek and bought a cow and then we had a milking cow, our very first cow, called 'Topsy'. And of course then that was moved up, we were able to have milk and then that added a bit more to our diet. I can remember having bread-and-milk and added to our diet were bread-and-milk, that added to the eggs that we used to eat (laughs) and the rabbits.

Did you – later, I think you mentioned you had a horse, too?

Dad saved up some money from somewhere and went to Adelaide and bought a horse. He rode the horse home from Adelaide and we had that horse. We didn't have any means of ploughing up the ground until that particular time. There was a plough around that we borrowed to do some ploughing when he got the horse. He rode the horse home from Adelaide, very different sort, it took him the whole day to get it home and he arrived home very late in the night. So then we had a horse and a cow so we were moving along quite nicely. And I should have mentioned, in clearing this block, that it was all done by hand. There was covered by wattles, the acacia – I forget the name; you may even know the name, Sally – the acacia[1], the wattle we used, but it did have a value in that it could be used for tanning leather, and there was

[1] *Acacia pycnantha*

a mill between Echunga and Meadows that took in the wattle bark and changed it over. It was quite good. It was of value. And I can remember at Christmastime Dad would load up the horse and the dray, that he got a dray from somewhere, and would go away with this wattle bark over to Echunga and sell the wattle bark and then we'd have a few bob for Christmas, a few shillings that could be spent at Christmastime. But the wattle bark, Mother used to have a large hammer that she knocked the bark from the wattle and stacked it and then it was bundled up. The wood we used in the stove and then the wattle bark was taken over.

The other means of clearing the block, it was all done by hand. There was a winch-type machine that Father used to operate by hand or anyone else he could get on the handles, and it would be winched back and forth tied onto the trees or the stumps and you would be able to pull the stumps out and clear them. Can remember many, many years of clearing scrub by this means.

Had he ever had any farming experience before moving to Meadows?

Definitely none at all, not any at all, and I think this was – by what I can remember, that this was to all of the people there: they had no experience with poultry, they had all lived in cities and no experience in the land or the farming. The boys, the younger men of the settlement, certainly learnt quickly because they were employed as a cheap form of labour all around the district to the local farmers and they learnt, picked up the idea quickly. You learnt to milk cows by hand very quickly, you learnt to feed the chickens quite easily; but as farming experience they had no ideas.

Mr Saunders, who lived down there, was the most progressive one that I can think. He tried raising – or an incubator to raise his own chickens and the most progressive one, but he didn't last long. He saw that there were more opportunities out in the bigger world than on these little, ten-acre blocks, so he left very early.

So was there any formal education or help for the men to learn farming?

There was no education or help at all. I can't remember anybody ever coming to offer any assistance in any way at all. As I understand it – I don't know how the leases worked out and what rent they paid; I know that Dad had a ninety-nine-year lease on his ten-acre block; what rental he paid I cannot remember, but I do remember we belonged to a company that really owned us. All of the eggs that we

raised from our poultry farm went to this one company. They supplied us with the day-old chickens and all of the feed, for which they took the money, and I can quite clearly remember my dad's income for one year was delivered to him in postage stamps. I can remember quite clearly him holding it up to show us all and sundry: 'There's our payment for the year', and it was postage stamps stuck to the thing. And so, really and truly, we just lived in abject poverty, as I see now, in abject poverty, and just from hand to mouth the whole time.

We talk of things, luxury. I can remember luxury at seven years old. As a seven-year-old I once went to the city with my mother and tasted my first ice cream. I'd never – I'd heard of ice creams but I'd never, ever seen one or ever tasted one until I was seven years old, and apart from – – –. Sweets, I can't remember: probably at Christmastime we did have sweets or something like that, but I can't remember them.

Occasionally if there was a little bit of money you were able to get some provisions from local shops. What shops were they?

Well, the baker, Mr Lucas, came round; the butcher, Mr Giles, came round; and the greengrocer, Mr Smith, came round. Again, I don't remember, Sally, how we paid for these. I would imagine we were paid on some sort of government assistance. In those days you were given what they called ration tickets, which would entitle you to your food and food only, nothing more than food, and they came round and how Mum found the money to pay for them I don't know; but the baker, yes, the baker did call and threepence a loaf for bread or three cents a loaf for bread; the butcher came round, but most of our meat came from rabbits or the occasional chicken when it got too old to lay. And of course there was no means of ploughing up the garden and water, there was no water on the place to grow vegetables so we bought what vegetables we could get from there and potatoes that we could get at the cheaper price. But yes, the grocer, the greengrocer and those called. I'm not certain, I can't remember, where the money came from to buy these things.

So your father's income was obviously not a lot from the poultry farming, so how did he supplement that income for you to be able to pay for things like the council rates, for example?

Council rates, Dad and every other man in the area went out and worked for the Council. They would be given a shovel and they would clean drains and culverts and

repair the roads for the rates for your thing. He would spend probably two to three weeks each year with the road gang, out cleaning drains to payment of the rates. He never, ever got any money for it; it was just an exchange of work for the rate money. There was very little work for someone of his age about.

The boys and later on the girls, they all helped with the family. Any money they got they gave to Mum. My brother worked on farms, my elder brother worked on farms, and as soon as my sisters left school they all took up work as domestics for the farmers around the town and that supplemented our income, although it was very meagre income. If you got five shillings per week or say fifty cents per week and were fed for that price, then you were doing extremely well. But the boys were the same, they worked at a variety of places. My two elder brothers once walked from Adelaide to Orroroo because they heard that they could get a job up there, and they walked there and were each employed for five shillings a week – that's seven days, seven days a week, not five, seven days a week – and their feed, their keep.

I know you later expanded your block to twenty acres, you bought the next-door block. When was that, approximately?

About wartime, in most cases, most of these men gave up. They decided they'd go back, they could do better in the cities and they virtually walked off the property. An arrangement became between Dad and our neighbour, Mr Underdown, and he walked off the property and Dad took it over, took over the lease of his property. That gave us twenty acres. We then moved more into dairying. There was certainly no chance of making anything out of the chickens so we went into dairying. Dad did try something new in chickens: he decided that he would raise his own chickens, so he made some special pens made out of tar drums – that's where they used to cart the tar onto the road in drums. He got all these drums, flattened them out and made pens with these flattened tar drums, bred his own things and then built a special room in which they had an incubator in it, which he put his own fertilised eggs into the incubator and grew his own chickens. And that failed, that still didn't do any good, so he went into dairying. We, the whole family, used to milk by hand and take the milk to the dairy [factory]. When we were able to clear more land and have the twenty acres, then we expanded into cows, gradually went out of the chickens and

went into cows, and then there was a bit of spare money about. We were getting a cheque from the milk every month, and then that made a little bit of money.

There is one interesting story on that particular horse that Dad got, a rather fat and rotund thing it was, just a draft mare: my brother and I were on this horse and I fell from this horse and broke my arm. Now, the doctor – this was on the weekend; the doctor only came from Clarendon up there. My mother took me to the doctor on the Tuesday, he said, 'Oh, I think that arm is broken', so we had a wait again for the next day. When we finally got down to the Adelaide Children's Hospital to have the arm X-rayed, yes, it was broken. It was five days before I had treatment on that arm, because that was just normal. The things that you did. And I can remember walking – quite plainly – to the service car, you had to walk and pick up the car from the bus, driving into Adelaide Hospital and having the plaster fitted to my arm. So very primitive days.

And one other thing: I had an accident with a cow. A cow fell on me and broke my leg. They loaded me on the back of a buckboard, drove me to the doctor which was twelve miles away, he said, 'Yeah, I can't do anything about that', so they loaded me back in the buckboard again, drove me to the Adelaide Hospital where my leg was set. No ambulance, no nothing, and went all the way on – – –. Oh, I should have explained: a buckboard is a utility, an old car cut down, and they loaded me in the back of this old utility and they drove me to the Adelaide Hospital in that.

What were the roads like at that time?

Open, rough gravel. I remember the road between Meadows and Kangarilla was an open thing and *very* corrugated, (laughs) I remember that quite plainly – I think I felt every bump going down there. My mother did her best to hold my leg so it would stop the pain a bit. But they were all open surface. Meadows main street, I think in 1938 they put a seal on Meadows street. Does that sound right to you? About 1938. But it was all open-surface, all of the roads were gravel up until that time.

Earlier, you were talking about the poultry sheds and they were relatively luxurious, I think. What were they like and how did they work?

Well, they were galvanised iron, they were galvanised iron, and they were built – I always thought they were a lot better than the house, really, and they were larger than

our house – much, much larger than our house, the poultry pens. They were built by the men when they first came up there of galvanised iron. They had nest boxes in them better than any of the furniture we had in the house, nest boxes in them for the fowls to lay their eggs in; special perches, oregon perches for them to perch on at night; long runs where they could run out into the open air; and doors and trapdoors and all sorts of things. And I always thought the fowls slept a lot warmer than we did. (brief interruption)

But with the poultry sheds themselves, there was something in the middle as well, wasn't there? What was the middle section of it? You described to me at one stage about moving something in.

In the middle. Yes, could have been where we kept all the feed, is that what it would have been? I don't know. In the middle of them – – –.

Well, where did – the chooks sat, were their sort of nesting boxes around the outside?

Oh, no. They were inside, they were inside the thing. Perhaps did you want to go a bit more on that?

Yes, please.

Right. The poultry sheds were built for the – well, for the luxury of the fowls, really. They perched at night on one side; in the middle they had the area where they were fed, and this was always covered with straw; and the nest boxes were along one wall. The nest boxes were divided, say twenty nest boxes, each of them with their own shell grit in the bottom so the fowls could eat it and lay on it and it would keep the – and all divided all twenty of them. The runs, they were locked up at night and they had a trapdoor that you opened so the fowls could run out into the run, so they had plenty of exercise to run down amongst the trees in the yard, and they had to be religiously cleaned out. Where they slept at night on their perches, that had to be religiously cleaned out and they had to be kept clean and tidy. The eggs, when you collected the eggs they had to be perfectly clean and those that got a bit dirty Mother had to wash them and pack them away. So, as I said, the fowls were treated a lot better than we were. We had to do the best that we could, but they were always given

the best of food and the best of housing and we just (laughs) [went] along as best that we could.

Whose job was it to clean out the chooks' nesting areas?

Ah, that's the children's job. Right from the very first, even though I was a very young child, I always had a job and that was to make certain that there was wood to start the fire; and as I grew older it was cleaning up the chickenyard. That was the boys' job, they had to do that. The boys had to do it. Of course, the girls helped Mum in the house as best they could with washing and cooking and ironing, and there wasn't much cleaning to do because we had nothing much to clean; but the boys had to clean out all of the chickens. The feeding, Dad actually did the feeding, Dad and my mother did the feeding of the chickens, that wasn't left to us; but most certainly all the menial task of cleaning and looking after them was for the boys to do.

Who collected the eggs?

Mother usually collected the eggs. That was a task that (laughs) wasn't given to the children until they got bigger. When we got bigger, of course, we had to do that. Mother did the collecting, she did the washing and she did the packing. The packing, once a week a truck used to come from the company that really owned us and Mother would pack them, they would be taken to the front yard, carried into the front yard, and they would pick them up, take them away and then if there ever was any return, well, then that came back at the end of the month, but that was something that never happened very often.

Your property bordered onto Mr Rowley's property. What was he like?

We always thought that Mr Rowley was – well, higher-class than us; you didn't really speak to Mr Rowley and his family. But we find now that, when you look back on it, poor old Mr Rowley – and he became a very dear friend in later years to me – he must have put up with a lot to have all of those family of vagabonds from the dregs of Adelaide suddenly set on his doorstep. But, even though he didn't fraternise with us, he didn't have any dealings, very little, with us, we roamed across his property, we hunted rabbits, we picked blackberries, we disturbed his sheep as we

went across the property; but never did he say, 'Out! You're banned'. Oh, yes, he did once: when he found us out there cutting feed for our chickens from the middle of his paddock, he thought that wasn't quite fair; but he just reprimanded us. There was no chance of him calling the police or anything like that; he just reprimanded us, allowed us to take the feed that (laughs) we had already cut for our chickens, but – he didn't growl much, but just said, 'Well, out you go'. But we did roam all over his property and it must have been a source of annoyance to him. Our favourite playground was Rowley's hill, right up on top of his hill – he had a very high hill which was a great playground for all of the many kids from around the place. I can clearly remember once he built a stack of hay and that became our playground during the twilight hours, and when he come back the next morning most of the stack was knocked down. But no, he never, ever growled, he never said much and he was really an excellent neighbour when you think back to these days. Even though he had very little to do with us, now, he must have put up with a terrible time in those first few years.

I'd just like to ask you a few questions now about your mother. What do you think it was like for her living on the settlement?

Mother, it must have been – it must have been terrible for her. She came to this place with no – she was of English birth and came out to Australia, which was enough of a shock for her, and then to have to move from the city to this – you couldn't really call it a house; we'll call it a 'shed', really – three rooms, which she – – –. She really was the backbone of our family. She kept our family together. Very strict, *very* strict, very tight, quite religious even though she didn't attend church because she didn't really have the dress that she would be accepted in the church except for special occasions when she would put her best dress on and her shoes and go to church. She worked so terribly hard. I can't remember – I can remember being hungry but I can never remember being starving, and how she fed us I've got no idea. But she did, she did. She would go, as I said, picking blackberries to make jam, picking the quinces from the creek to make quince jam, making up anything that she possibly could for us to eat, cooking the rabbits for us when we had them and making potatoes, making the best of anything that she'd got. But that's all she had was that one room where we

ate and she cooked on a little wood stove. I remember during the heat of the summer to see the sweat pouring from my mother as she slaved over a very hot stove in this terribly, terribly hot house. She was a marvellous woman and in later years, and certainly during the War years, she did a lot for the war effort, worked very hard. She had a very dear friend in Mrs Meissner and they worked together on a variety of committees and did a number of things.

I remember, talking of my mother and Mrs Meissner, they were to join the croquet club. They got hall of their clothes and that together – Mum scraped together some money from somewhere – and they bought all their clothes but then suddenly found that they weren't to be accepted in the croquet club. I don't know why, I don't know what happened, but suddenly it all faded out the window; but both she and Mrs Meissner were ready to join the croquet club and I never, ever found out why and she never, ever said why, but I guess that her nomination was never accepted.

What was the social life like for her, then, and other mothers on the settlement?

Now, as I said earlier in the interview, they were all together. They had nothing, so they used to gather together once a week, just to sit around at someone's place. The ladies would bring perhaps some bread-and-butter and if they had a bit of something they would cook some cakes and bring them along, they would all sit around for an hour on one afternoon and just chat, just sit around and chat. It was the social life. As I said, it wasn't much, it was just – I don't know who brought the tea, but there was just these little ladies, they sat around and they talked together and discussed what they had. When there was sickness, if someone was sick, then the whole women would rally round that person and assist them as best they could, looking after the kids; and in talking to one of our neighbours getting some background for this interview, he remembers the fact that my mother used to feed him when his mother was so ill that she wasn't able to. He said, 'Your mum used to come over and feed me'. And that's the type of people they were.

And the other social life, of course there was hundreds of children and clearing the blocks it was possible to have a very large fire, and the word would get around that Mr Somebody-or-other was going to have a fire on a particular night, everyone would come along and bring along – if you could have a bag of potatoes or a small bag we'd

throw them into the embers, cook the potatoes around the campfire and drag them out and eat them and the kids would play around in the firelight, get very dirty, and we didn't have to go home and have a bath because we could never – no water for a bath. So the kids would play around, the women would take the gathering to sit around and have a bit of a chat together, the men would gather there; and if someone was able to afford a cheap bottle of wine that would be passed around, but it wasn't enough for anybody to get drunk on, if you got one sip that's about all there would be. As I said, the children ate these roast potatoes and generally met in fellowship. But that was about the only social life there was. Someone perhaps would sing a song. I think someone in the village had an accordion and he would come and play around these campfires, but that was the only social life we could afford, because it cost nothing.

So was there any socialising with the people in the main part of Meadows?

I didn't know of any until later years, when it was required during the war effort, then everybody got together. We were perhaps more acceptable because actually we weren't, perhaps, the best people in the world. We came from an environment that was perhaps a bit rough. The men weren't accepted. But of course the boys were the best fighters, the best footballers and the best cricketers, so they were accepted within the community. The girls had a bit of a problem. I think the girls weren't accepted extremely well in the community, so we didn't socialise with them very much at all. We would go when the money was available and it cost something like sixpence to go to the pictures. The Town Hall – of course, we had no electric power in those days, so they would start up the hall generator which ran the projector at the movies, and he only had one camera so that ran one reel at a time, and when the lights went out – the whole lights went out while he changed the reels of the film. What the bigger boys and the girls got up to I've got no idea, but as younger children up the front we used to yell and shout. There would be a pause in the picture show until such times as he loaded the second reel, and providing that he was watching what he was doing the second reel followed on from the first reel; but occasionally he got the reels mixed up and you'd have to try and pick up what the film ..... later. And most of the films were three to four reels of film and you'd have the three to four breaks between each show. So, yes, it was quite different. But we did manage to get along

occasionally when the money could be found for us to go, the sixpence could be found for us to go, to the picture show in the Meadows Hall.

I think to the dances the boys and the girls were accepted in the society at the dances in the Hall, they seemed to always go along to those. Again, my sister dancing in a dancing competition which required her to go to Echunga for the final night. She was in the final. Because she couldn't wear her shoes because she needed them to compete in the final, two of my sisters walked from Meadows to Echunga in bare feet and then she competed in the dancing competition and won, and won the dancing competition. And for that one of the local men gave them a ride back home again. I can still quite clearly remember the prize that she got – how she got it home I don't know, but it stayed in our house for many years, the prize that she won for this competition. But they were just the things that you accepted, you would have done, and we just accepted.

I remember my sister working for one of the local farmers as a domestic and saved up two shillings as a deposit on a bike, for which she then paid sixpence per week for this bike. And I think about every kid in our street learned to ride a bike on my sister's bike, it was a community thing. But you shared. If you had something you shared it, because we all had nothing so we shared it between us.

Well, which school did you go to?

I went to Meadows School for the whole of my academic career. It wasn't very great, I was not a very good student, but I left school to go straight to work so my whole career was in the Meadows School. In early days, of course, bolstered by all the kids in the settlement, it was a big school and I can remember in wartime we were down to two rooms of sixty-two children, they had a headmaster and one junior teacher and that's all they had; so my entire life was at the Meadows School.

And how were you treated at school?

I was in a later generation and, as I said, most of our kids within the school – because they had to be – were the best fighters, so we were treated with – weren't accepted, we weren't accepted. We played with kids of our own ilk and weren't accepted until later life, but that's reasonable, that's the way – – –. It was a small, country town, so we weren't accepted; but we were better accepted when *I* went to school than we

were [when the settlement first started]; and in of course later years we were just accepted straight into the community. Certainly during wartime we were accepted as part of the community from then on. But them *versus* us was always in the schoolyard until later years, and some of the people that are now my best friends in Meadows were dreaded enemies in the school days. But they were only children; we didn't know any better.

I believe my sister was treated a bit rougher. She wasn't accepted at all until later years. But school years were good to me, enjoyable time. Always had to walk to school, rain or shine, until I saved enough money to buy a bike. Oh, I think I had my brother's second-hand bike when he left to go to the army. But we always walked to school, to and from school, every day and – well, as most of the children did, anyway.

So at that time, then, did you think of yourself as a Meadows person?

I was so young, Sally, that I never considered myself anything else but a Meadows person. To be accepted as part of the community and to make a worthwhile contribution to Meadows was of course in later years. I hadn't really thought about it. I was just a settlement kid and that's all there was. You accepted your place in society, you were a settlement kid and that's what you were, a settlement kid. And it was just something that you accepted. You knew that you were of a lower rank, of a lower ilk, and that's what you accepted, and we all did, we all did. Some of the older boys didn't; they were willing to fight for their – and had to quite often – fight for their rights; but there was enough of them and we were, as I said, the best fighters, the best cricketers and the best footballers and so we were able to hold our place – or the older boys were. The girls had it, as I said, a bit rougher. But it wasn't until later years that I found a place under Mr Rowley's wing and we sort of were more accepted into the football teams.

After the War there was a definite change. Wartime and after the War we were sort of accepted as part of the Meadows community.

Just coming back a little bit more to your time at school, and you've also mentioned that there was illness, so do you remember outbreaks of illness during your school years?

Yes, most certainly. The school was closed because of a diphtheria outbreak, poliomyelitis at that time was very rife, but I remember the outbreak of diphtheria and of course we got blamed for that: 'Those settlement kids brought that diphtheria here'. The school had to be closed and fumigated, sealed up – the whole thing was sealed and fumigated and the school was closed down for about a week while they did all of this. And poliomyelitis, I can't remember, one of our neighbours, one of the Underdown children, had poliomyelitis and of course we were castigated for that, we were segregated a bit because we thought we might bring the germs to school, and we were considered if there was any germs about that we brought them – (laughs) and possibly we may have, too – but that's the way that it was, and it was just part of life, you just accepted that. That's the way that it was. But, as I said, diphtheria closed the school and that was, as I said, one of the settlement kids had had that; and poliomyelitis, I can't remember the school being closed for that, but then we were possibly there. But the school, the whole of the school had injections. You marched up and down and the old doctor came up from Clarendon and he injected the whole school for a variety of ills: whether we had them or whether we didn't you were all injected, we were all given an injection against a variety of things. I still bear some of the scars on my arm from some of the vaccinations that we had – but again, we were all in it together; and this was the whole school, everybody was in it together as a protection against a variety of ills that went around.

You mentioned earlier about [the] different jobs that your brothers did. What was your first job after you left school?

I worked in the local shop. I didn't know that I was particularly good at it; I don't think I was. I used to get ten shillings a week for forty-four hours – forty-five hours, actually, I was working, forty-five hours – and I worked in this local shop. I don't think I was a particularly good shop assistant, not particularly good academically. My father had a heart attack and I had to leave that and go back and run the farm. There was no-one to run the farm so I was there. Then I went on to a number of farming jobs. But very first job was a shop assistant. Mr Wally Wilson had a sawmill: I went there as a sawmill labourer and stayed with him for many, many years working in the sawmill.

What was that like?

To me it was a great raise in pay. I got twenty shillings for that and I only had to work forty hours a week. For twenty shillings it was *extremely* good. I thought I was made. As I say, I'd had enough money to buy a bike. And, just to go back quickly to the shop assistant's one, I got my ten shillings: my mother used to take eight shillings to keep for my board and my keep and I was keeping two shillings a week. Then, because I was growing up a bit, it cost me two shillings to go to the pictures so there wasn't much to spend on a girl or anything. But then I went to Wally Wilson's mill for twenty shillings a week as a labourer there, and I thought that was a wonderful job, I did, and I stayed there for many, many years with Mr Wally Wilson.

What did your work involve?

Things that would be totally unacceptable now. I had to use the saws and cut up the firewood, but I also had to clean out the sawdust from under a saw and I was working within inches of a circular saw, an open-bladed circular saw, working underneath this pit, and I would dig the sawdust out from underneath the sawpit while they worked up above, because they wouldn't stop while you were doing that, and one mistake – – –. I can remember once going a bit far with a shovel and it cut the handle clean off my shovel on this open saw. Mr Wilson didn't dock it from my pay – I thought he may, but he didn't; he just handed me another shovel and we went on with it. But that was things acceptable, that's things that you did, extremely dangerous and would *not* be allowed now, but that was my job and I rather enjoyed it. As I said, it gave me the freedom to do what I did.

We worked at falling trees, we went out and felled the trees and cut them up and brought them into the sawmill, we cut the timber, we stacked the timber out, and of course it was sold to the various people. But I had a variety of jobs and worked from the boy until I left when I was the chief sawyer, when I left that job.

You said you went and cut the timber down: where did you get the trees?

From anywhere. We would travel anywhere: as far as Willunga in the west, Echunga, Hahndorf; Prospect Hill, a lot of timber cut at Prospect Hill and Blackfellows Creek. They had a wonderful stand of stringybark timber in the

Prospect Hill area and the Blackfellows Creek area, we would get it from there. The pine, of course, came from the forest[2], we'd cut the pines from the forest. But yes, as far as Clarendon, as far as Clarendon, we would cut a lot of timber from Clarendon and carted it all back to the mill and cut it up there – and, of course, local timber when we could get it, but that didn't take long before all of the local timber was cut out and we had to travel further afield.

So that was on private properties, mainly?

All on private property except for the pine, the pine forest was of course government land. We were cutting the pine forest whenever they would allow trees to be cut from there.

How many people were working at the mill, approximately?

It varied a little bit up and down. Would only be eight. Eight was the maximum. Most of them the Harvey family from Prospect Hill, they were the mainstay of the mill. And then I think we got two fellows that were fallers so that made it up to ten, and the faller was a gentleman named Sid Easton from Clarendon and he used to drag the logs out to be picked up by truck with his bullocks. He had a team of eight bullocks and he never swore, he *never*, ever swore. He would wave his whip around the head. It was marvellous to see him work his bullocks, and they seemed to have an understanding, he with them and them with him, and just by the wave of his whip, without a word of command, he would turn these bullocks.

We might just have to stop for a moment to change the tape.

END OF FILE 1: FILE 2

You were telling me about working at Wilson's sawmill. At what stage did you leave the sawmill?

I can't remember the year, exactly. There was a position, I was very interested in the Emergency Fire Service or Country Fire Service, as it is called now. I'd been a volunteer for many, many years. Mr Wally Wilson had made an attempt to get a fire-fighting organisation going after the big fires in 1939 and he was very supportive and

[2] Kuitpo Forest

allowed me time off work to fight fires. There was a position within the Council that was to raise, train and organise the fire-fighting group within Meadows and further areas. There was a fire engine stationed at Meadows and a position became available for someone on a full-time basis to look after this fire station, on retirement of the early captain, one Darcy James Cox. Darcy retired and I applied and got the position to work for the Meadows Council. So I left the Wilsons' mill to take up the position with the Council.

I know that now Meadows has a CFS truck named 'Harry' after you. Can you tell about how that happened?

Well, I spent many, many years in the service of the Council organising the fire-fighting within the district, the whole of the Council district, and I was appointed as the district officer and it sort of grew from there. I did a lot of work around with fire-fighting and they felt that they perhaps should name – there was an earlier one called 'Young Harry', and then the bigger one. And it's very interesting to find that the price of the turnout uniform which they have now was (laughs) about the same price as we paid for our first fire engine. We raised some money and bought a fire engine, and it was about the same price as now. But I spent many years, many fruitful years, in doing that job for the Council.

You would have been only a child, I know, but do you remember the bushfires in 1939?

I do remember the bushfires in 1939, when it swept through. I remember quite clearly, my father had a patch of potatoes and it was the only green patch around. He'd managed to plough .... and dry-grown some potatoes there and it was the only green patch around. The people from around the district came to sit – or the *children* from around the district came to sit under a table out in there and were covered with wet bags; and in talking to one of the Underdown children, our neighbours, he said, 'I clearly remember going over to that thing' – and he must have been only two or three at that particular time and he told me the other day when I was doing some research on this interview that he remembers quite clearly. And I can remember every dog, cat and kid from around the district came over to hide under the

bags, under the wet bags that Mother had placed over this little tent that she'd built out in the middle of the thing and we all sheltered under there in the '39 fire.

My dad and my elder sister fought the fire to within a hundred metres of our fowl sheds, it came to within a hundred metres of the fowl sheds, and of course every able-bodied man around the settlement was out to protect the area, and because there were so many of us we managed to save the settlement houses. There was no settlement houses burnt in that time. Wally Wilson's sawmill was burnt: that was burnt and his son, Bert – Bert Wilson was burnt in that fire in attempting to save the sawmill, he sustained some burns. But, as I said, the settlement was saved because there were so many kids tramping round, we'd trampled down all the grass anyway, and there was so much manpower that we were able to save every house and I think every shed within the area.

Well, you've referred a few times to sport and the fact that all of the settlement boys in particular were very good at sport. What sports did you play?

I played football and cricket – not very good at either one of them, but at least I played. And, incidentally, just the first match after the War we played at Callington, that was the first football match that I was actually involved in, after the War we went to Callington. They had no dressing rooms so they pointed us into a neighbouring creek and said, 'You get changed down in the creek'. So we ducked down into the creek. When it came time to start the match – umpired by our local butcher, Eric Ellis; we went over, climbed into one of the service cars and went all the way over to Callington – the timekeeper picked up a hammer and banged it on a ploughshare and that was the start of the match. Eric was said to be favouring us. We won the match because Callington, who played in army boots and army jumpers and had a flagon of wine at half-time to help their spirits, they thought that Eric was favouring us and I'm sure that he didn't. But to get him home we had to sneak him into the back seat of the bus and all the footballers stand round the bus until we could get loaded up and drive out the gate with the Callington team and their spectators following us out, shouting (laughs) abuse at poor old Eric Ellis, the umpire. So it was quite interesting.

I played with the Meadows Football Club all of the years until I retired and still involved with the Meadows Football Club.

And you're actually a Life Member of the club, I think, now.

I am, I am a Life Member of the Meadows Football Club. Most grateful, and they were gracious enough to grant me life membership.

What were the ovals and facilities like? You mentioned the lack of clubrooms at Callington; was that fairly common?

Well, we didn't, we only had one shed. It was made out of stringybark poles and the timber from Wally Wilson's sawmill, I think, offcuts, galvanised, on one sole shed which served not only the home team but the local team. It's about right behind where the old [Oddfellows'] Hall was and I think which is a gift shop now in Meadows, it was a shed behind there. That was the only facilities that they had was the one shed. The oval was boggy, wet and mud and had trees overhanging it. I can remember them kicking the ball and it hitting the trees and dropping back onto the oval. The jumpers that we had were a ragtag lot of jumpers, they could be all shapes and sizes – they were all green and gold but varying knitted – – –. My first jumper was knitted by my mother, she knitted me a football jumper with the green and gold band in it, I felt very proud going out in my brand-new jumper. And the shed, it was a great sport.

The cricket club, I played with the cricket club under the guidance of the late Don Collins – never a very good cricketer, but we did play both of those. And never tennis, I was never good enough to play tennis, but I did play cricket and football.

You also told me a bit about some of the entertainments and I think that there were the dances, too, that you referred to. Did you use to go to them, or mainly as a teenager, or how old were you when you went to those?

I would have been a teenager, perhaps fifteen, fifteen to go out to those; and you'd walk to the local area and the band would come along, mainly a band called Miller Peake. Miller used to play for three pounds, that was a pianist, a saxophonist and himself, and then it went up to three pounds ten and it was quite good. Two shillings, two shillings it would cost you to go in, except if they had a ball and that would cost you two-and-six but then they supplied supper with that so the extra sixpence you got – what is it now, twenty cents or twenty-five cents – and you got supper for the extra thing.

Very strict, it had to end at midnight, you weren't allowed to go on for that, and in later years it did extend to one o'clock and that was *very* late; no-one should be out at those late hours – you could only get into mischief if you were out after midnight, it wasn't done. So yes, it was delightful. But I would have been fifteen before I was allowed to go to dances.

Did you use to take a girl along to the dances or would you meet them there?

Oh, you couldn't afford to *take* them, Sally! (laughs) You'd have to meet them inside. It was only *very* serious if you actually paid for your girl to go to the dance, and I guess it was much later years when I could afford to buy a motorcycle before I had enough money to take a girl along. But yes, I would have been nineteen before I had a girlfriend that I would take to the dance and you were very proud, *very* proud, when you could ride up on your motorcycle with your *girl* on the back and then march up to the window and buy *her* ticket as well as your own. You really did take a step up in society.

Carry on.

The dances were very good. All the boys stood by the door, by the front door, in a great group and all the girls sat around the edges of the hall and as soon as the master of ceremonies would announce which dance it was there would be a mad scramble to grab your girl or some girl that you had your eye on and it was a great free-for-all. But there, they were great social gatherings. And when we had a motorcycle, of course, we could travel to other towns and go along to *their* dances or, if one of your friends had a car, then you went along with that.

And that's another interesting story, in the fact that the cars, if someone was able to borrow his car – and of course during those times there was petrol rationing – your contribution would be a gallon of power kerosene if you could sneak it from your employer or buy it from your employer, go along with a gallon of power kerosene, which was illegal to use; but we used to fill the car up, start it up on petrol and then run it to the dance on power kerosene, and then start it up to come home on petrol and drive back home again on the power kerosene. It allowed us to go as far as Echunga and Macclesfield and even as far as *Strathalbyn* – that was a big trip: you'd almost

have to take a cut lunch to go to Strathalbyn – but we would on occasions get that far away to a dance.

I've read about the names of some of the dances at the time. Can you explain to me what was the 'confetti dance'?

That was specially on ball nights. The girls would be there in their ballgowns and their partners, and you would get someone to take a streamer or a series of streamers. The girl would hold one streamer in her hand, the boy a streamer in his other hand, and they would waltz around the floor until they were completely covered in streamers. There was a prize for the one who had looked the prettiest or disappeared behind the wall of streamers. Then, after Miller Peake had played for some minutes, three to four minutes, and the couple would waltz round and round and round, they would be completely covered in streamers and the blue, the green, and the white and the red and all of those, and depending on how much you had in your pocket, whether you could afford the penny each for the streamers, as to whether you and your partner would be declared the winner of the confetti dance, and if you won it would probably be a packet of powder for the girls and a bottle of hair oil for the boys or something like that.

There was also the 'Monte Carlo dance'.

Monte Carlo was a delight. You could change your partners. If there was a girl that you weren't able to dance with all night their chance would come up there. In the Monte Carlo, when the music stopped the girls made a circle in the middle, the boys to the outside; the girls went in a clockwise fashion, the boys in an anti-clockwise fashion; and when the music struck up again the girl that was nearest to you was your partner for that particular bracket. If you were lucky enough, it might have been the girl that you wanted to dance with all night, you could get her. There would be a very short little interlude where you would do one of the dances that the MC would recommend and then you had to leave her again. She went into the circle in the middle again to do clockwise, you and all the boys went to the outside and did anti-clockwise, then of course when the music stopped you would then grab the partner that was closest to you.

So did that involve a sequence of different dance styles?

Yes. Yes, yes, it would. A sequence. As the music stopped and you selected this girl, the master of ceremonies would then call out what it was going to be and away you went, and as you were good at all of them in those days you could do anything that came up.

So what types of dances were they?

Military two-step, the military three-step, the Pride of Erin, the modern waltz which was my favourite, the quickstep, the jive – oh, a great variety of things. The ..... waltz, which was too complicated for me, I couldn't do that particularly well. But yes, a great number of those particular ones.

The Canadian barn dance, that was a square dance of sorts. That went through a great set of different things and they had a caller up the front – it really was a square dance: they had a caller up the front who would call out the different sets and you did different things. Another favourite was the Canadian barn dance, where at each change of music you changed: the girls went clockwise again; the boys, you stepped back and took the next partner that came to you. The girls would move forward one, the boys would move back one and then you went on to the next partner. They were a delight because you'd get to meet all of the girls in the hall because we'd go completely right around. Very popular.

Was the hall decorated for those events?

On the balls, always the balls they'd decorate them with streamers and flowers. A debutante ball was a very big event. The hall would be packed and the girls would be presented to some notoriety. That would be decorated extremely well at that particular time.

There were a few other events in Meadows, I know, that happened when you were there. You've already told me about the bushfires but the year before that there was a 'Back to Meadows' in 1938. What happened then?

There were a variety of events – a lot of horse events, they used to use a lot of horse events on the oval: jumping, tent-pegging – because there were quite a number of horses, although motor vehicles were getting about, quite a number of horses. There

were a variety of concerts, there were a variety of all sorts of things in celebration of the hundred years of Meadows[3].

Do you remember the street parade?

I remember the street parade, yes. Yes. Not well, but I do remember the street parade and lots of things of decorated floats and the variety of things. I'm trying to think of some of the floats that were in that. Men dressed in beards and ploughs and horses – of course, mainly horse-drawn vehicles. And the buses in those days or the 'picnic buses' were a set of seats that were on the back of a truck that could be lifted on and off, I remember those, and girls waving from the decorated floats there. But a great recollection – I can't remember any of the specific floats; but it was quite an event.

I'll just ask you a few more general questions about Meadows now, about what do you think have been the major changes in the town since you first moved there?

Major changes, of course, were lighting. When street lighting come, when electric lighting come to Meadows[4] that made a change because all of the kerosene lanterns – that's in the Meadows town itself, that came. I think the sealing of the main street was first. They sealed the main street first of all and then they did the kerbs and the gutters, they did bridges, because there only used to be an old log bridge over the Meadows Creek, there at Battunga Gardens, and then they built a bridge over that. The roads got better. The milk factories, I think, when they had the second milk factory in Meadows which meant employment for all of the boys there was a lot more employment around, that then got us two football teams in town and two cricket teams were able to have those extra things. So the progress, I think, I think the Farmers' Union factory was there. The United Dairymen[5] was another big step forward. The farming seemed to lift in Meadows to better farming qualities, better

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[3] The precise motivation for the Back to Meadows celebrations is not clear, but it was not actually the centenary. The area was surveyed in 1840, and the first subdivision of farm acreages into township allotments was 1859. [SS].

[4] Electric power and light was switched on on February 7, 1938 [*Courier* newspaper 1 Dec 1938, page 5b].

[5] The Kondoparinga Cooperative Dairymen's Limited factory opened in 1938. It later became the Dairy Vale factory.

dairying – that made a lot more work and a lot more money around the town. The roads. As I said, electricity came into the town and then spread out from there, I remember the first street lights and going actually to see the street lights on – thought that was wonderful to see a street light on, never seen one of those before. The sealing of the roads, the sealing – the road was sealed to Echunga in the first instance, made travel a lot better, and then it got to sealing the Kangarilla Road right through to Adelaide and a lot of the people going from Meadows to work within the city. Look, the girls used to go from Meadows each day on the bus to work in the city. I think that probably was the changes.

The War made a lot of changes to the city where Meadows, actually, we all came together and it seemed to be more of a town in the war years and in later years, of course, we all progressed together. (pauses) Was that enough answer for that?

Yes. (break in recording) So Meadows changed a lot, I guess, from when you first moved there in that the settlement people were apart from the rest of the town and the War seemed to bring everyone together. What do you think is important in a small town in creating cohesion?

If it's possible to integrate with the social things – the football clubs, the clubs and the Boy Scout Movement or the Church or something like that, that would help a lot. But to have thrust upon them, the people of Meadows, to have thrust upon them these reprobate band of twenty-two [families] and all these hundred kids was a little bit hard to swallow, I think. It had been a little old country town, not exposed that greatly to the outer world, and then along come these people that came from the lesser areas – most of us were from the Port Adelaide area or in that particular area – to have it thrust upon them must have been difficult for them, as it was for us. As I mentioned, the abject poverty there. But when things got better, the life got better around Meadows, we were able to integrate more to – – –.

To find out how to get into the town I don't know; as far as I'm concerned, the whole thing was a total disaster. Even though it got us out of the towns it didn't really work. The settlement system didn't really work. I felt that perhaps we might have starved in the cities but at least we would have starved with a bit more facilities. I think I got off the track there, mate – can you cut that?

No, that's good. That's what I wanted you to tell me about that, anyway.

Right.

Well, how long did you actually live on that block, your settlement block?

I virtually lived there all of my life. I lived on that block until I was married and we had three children still living in the house. When my father bought the place alongside of us he'd had a house on it; my sisters lived in it for a while and when they went back to the city it was left vacant; and I married and moved into that place. So I lived in there until I built a house in the town of Meadows. My wife and I bought a block of land and built a house in Meadows. Really, I lived there a greater part of my life so I'm just trying to think when we actually moved out of there, and it would have been in the early '60s, so 1934 until perhaps '60, so thirty-odd years I would have been there, living on that property.

I've asked you all the questions I was going to. Would you just like to maybe check your notes to see that you've told me everything – – –.

I can't think of anything else that I'd say. Walking to school and we've talked about all the kids that were there and talked about all the children that were there and the facilities, where we were. The block, I don't think we need to say anything about the block having no water on it and not able to grow anything. You've got the feeling that it was pretty desolate and pretty hard, the ground just wouldn't grow anything, and Dad made a number of attempts to get water with bores and wells and things like that but it didn't do much good. But yes, you've got the feeling that you wanted, that times were pretty tough there and the town actually accepted us into the town, anyway, they didn't have much choice, but eventually we were integrated into the community and sort of become a useful part of the town.

I think we did eventually make a contribution to the town of Meadows. It made quite a contribution because during wartime, of course, a lot of the blokes enlisted and a lot of the fellows have done quite useful things within the town and supplied the workforce for the factories. The factories, they supplied a lot of work for the factories and the sawmills and the Council and a variety of other things around. So I think in the end we did make a reasonable contribution to the town of Meadows. Certainly to the tradespeople, we certainly made a difference to them, because they

were (laughs) able to supply us with lots of things and, in later years, we were able to pay for those things that we got.

Well, if that's all the things that you wanted to tell us, Harry, and I've asked you all the questions that I'd planned to ask; so thank you very much for coming today and letting me ask you questions about your time in Meadows. It's been a pleasure and a privilege to hear all your stories.

Thank you so much, Sally.

Thank you.

I've enjoyed it.

END OF INTERVIEW