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OH 829/7

Full transcript of an interview with

DONALD ROSS BUCKLEY

On 30 May 2008

by Sally Stephenson

for the

MEADOWS 150 ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

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**Interview of Mr Donald Ross Buckley, conducted by Dr Sally Stephenson on
30th May 2008 at Meadows, South Australia.**

DISK 1 OF 1

**I'm Sally Stephenson interviewing Mr Ross Buckley in Meadows on 30th 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.**

**Ross, I'd just like to start with a few brief biographical questions. Can you tell me
your full name, please?**

Donald Ross Buckley.

And when and where were you born?

30th November 1935 at Clarendon.

What were your parents' names?

Leslie Arthur and Ivy Doris Ethel – Buckley, of course.

What was your mother's maiden name?

Hughes. She came from Willowie, up in the Far North.

What work did your parents do?

Farmers.

And they had a farm at Meadows?

Yes, they married at Willowie on 6th May 1934 and moved from – at six o'clock in
the morning, because they had to catch the train back to Adelaide and they had
bought the farm at Meadows in 1934.

Where is the farm?

Just off the Bull Creek Road, between the Bull Creek Road and the Macclesfield
Road.

Can you describe to me what type of farm it was?

Dairy farm.

Roughly how many cows did they have?

Fifty-six acres and milked round about twenty-five to thirty cows at the end, but at the beginning there was only about a dozen or so cows and they milked by hand.

Was that fairly average for farms at that time?

No, that's a smallish – a smaller than average farm. Eighty acres was probably regarded as an average-sized farm in those days, or a good-sized farm.

So did you use to help out on the farm?

Oh, yes. Yes, we had to. Two brothers, I'm the oldest of the three, and yes, we all had our chores. And when I left school at fourteen I worked home for about five years on the farm.

What sorts of things did you do?

What Father told me to and nothing more. You know, milking, feeding cows, making silage and hay at certain times; and in the meantime I'd go out picking potatoes for Gileses generally, few odd jobs like that – picking grapes – in between milking, all that sort of thing.

Where were the grapes being grown?

Clarendon. Back then we had a bit of an agreement with a guy called Lindsay Loud who used to come up and help sometimes on the farm when it got busy and we'd go down and pick grapes for him when he needed it.

You mentioned to me in the preliminary interview that you can remember stock droving, that that was still happening when you were a child. Where did you – – – ?

Yes. When I was early days at school the old pound yard used to be down by the Macclesfield Road. It's all been altered now with that big fill across the entrance there, but you'd often find – about once a month or perhaps a bit more often or less – a drover'd come along and have his sheep all in the pound yard overnight and move on the next day or so. That's what it's called is a water reserve: there's quite a bit of Council reserve down that area.

So were the sheep herded along the main street of Meadows?

Yes. Oh, along the roads, any road with a bit of feed on it, because of drought conditions elsewhere.

Well, I'd like to ask you now about your schooling. Which primary school did you go to?

Meadows. But it was only two teachers in Meadows those days: Miss Crystal had grades one, two and three; Mr Hayward, Wally Hayward, he was the headmaster, he had four, five, six and seven. Probably about eighty pupils, something like that. I just can't remember how many of us. But we did have Jean Meissner, now Mrs Page¹: she was a student at the Teachers' College and she came out for about a fortnight or three weeks and they hooked off grade four into a special class and she taught us for about two or three weeks. But some of the other people used to get out of control. Mr Heyward'd come in and sort them out and two or three days they'd get back. I was never like that, but the others were.

How many rooms were there in the school then, when you were there?

There was three: grade one, two and three were right in the northern end; and four, five, six and seven were in the southern end; there was a woodwork room or a storeroom or a mess-around room in the middle, which we got drafted to on those special occasions; and there was an old – the original old school was still in the front yard. I think it's out at Prospect Hill now in a part of the museum. That was still there in those days. And a porch running right along the western side with a couple of wash troughs in it, you know. We didn't have any washbasins as they are now; they were a trough with two or three taps on it.

Where were the toilets then?

They were down roughly about where they are now. There was a girls' one in the southern end and one up the northern end, and there was a little tin country-style dunny for Miss Crystal. When she used to go in there some of the other guys used to throw stones at it, make it rattle. Nobody was around when she'd come out.

¹ See OH829/6

What sort of person was she? How would you describe Miss Crystal?

Oh, she was a very strict, old-time, old maid teacher, I think we all know the type. Very fair – she only belted us when we needed it. We came out of grade three fairly versed in what we should have known, too.

Well, you were at school during the [Second World] War. Were there any differences during the War about the school?

Yes. I started in 1941, I think I started. So the War was [1939–45] and where the bowling club is now we had a zig-zag trench – the Home Guards, I think, they dug that for an exercise. The Scout Hall was also there at the back of the school: that finished up being transferred to Prospect Hill and was then consequently burnt down in the 1983 fire², replaced by another hall. But the original Scout Hall was at Prospect Hill, finished up at Prospect Hill.

Were there particular activities that you used to undertake during the war years at school?

Oh, yes. We used to collect – well, I suppose they'd call them 'recyclables' now, but paper and tin and bottles and all those sort of things for use in the war effort, or any metals that could be used; and used to get an aeroplane with several badges on the bottom of it for doing the extras – the more you collected, the more you got, the more medals you wore.

Do you remember how many medals you ended up with?

Don't think I got any.

What was your father's involvement during the War? I think you mentioned to me he was in the Home Guard.

Yes, he was in the Home Guards, as were most of the farmers around here. They weren't required to go to the War because of a need to produce food – I presume; I didn't read the rule book, but I think that's why it was.

What did that involve?

² Ash Wednesday bushfires

Military training on probably every Saturday or something like that and a few evenings and nights, during the week. He had a .303 rifle which used to be kept in a cupboard at home – no ammunition, of course; it'd be issued, that, on a job, probably.

After Meadows, where did you go to school then?

Mount Barker High. Had a bus service – probably there still is now – going.

Was that where most of the children went?

Yes, pretty well. A few went to colleges and Urrbrae High School was an agricultural high school down – still going.

Did you all meet up – the children who went to different schools, did you all still tend to play sport on the weekends and see each other?

Oh, a little bit. My gang mostly had youth club and church, we were brought up in the Church and Sunday schools. Football came sort of a bit later in life, there weren't any under-age football or netball teams, so from teenagers on, mid-teenagers. As the years went by it got younger and younger and more people came into sport. But we used to go rabbiting and all that sort of thing at home, up in the scrub.

What other things, then – you mentioned the youth club, what did you use to do in the youth club?

Oh, (laughs) there was quite a few girls used to go to youth club, too, but I don't know what we did. Just they kept us all under control. It was a meeting usually at the manse once a month or something like that or we'd have a sing-song, or we used to go out singing Christmas carols on the back of a truck with a piano all around the district. Just those general sort of things.

Now, I know, when you were at school in the area - that just before you were born the poultry settlement started in Meadows - but that some of the children from there were at school with you, I think.

Yes. That was during the Depression – it was probably about 1932, '3, '4, something like that, '33 is usually regarded as the middle of the Depression. Yes, there was quite a few people around in the poultry settlement in those days.

When you were at school, were they treated any differently?

No, they were just people. We didn't realise it. We didn't know – we had no prejudices. We were only kids, we didn't – – –. I think, you know, when you look at what my grandchildren know at the age of six and seven and what I knew at the age of ten and twelve, there's a little bit of a similarity. They're much more advanced than we were. I don't know whether it's good or bad. But no, we didn't have any – – –. They were just people. Some of our best friends were from the poultry farms – Lommans, and my father and Ned Lomman and his father, they used to work together on the farms, criss-cross over doing jobs for each other. That's how we got to know a few of the people around there. But we knew who they were but we never – see, we never went out very much back when we were kids, there was nothing on. Pictures once a week, on Wednesday nights.

Where were they held?

In the old Hall, which used to be right next to the school. That was knocked down in, oh golly, the '70s, I think, sometime.

And do you remember what was it like going to see a film there?

Oh, it was great. It was really something for us. Never went very often; it was a real outing.

Can you remember what the seats were like, or what was it like?

Oh, yes, the seats were those sort of long three or four or a dozen together and they fold up (demonstrates). Then they had the canvas ones at the back up on about a foot or so high, that was the upper class went in those (indicates).

Who was in the upper class?

God, I don't know. I had a job selling candy and lollies and stuff with a little tray, rope round my neck and a box of cash. I used to sell lollies there at one stage, half-time and beforehand. But it's hard to remember who they were, now. I can remember some of the guys from out Peters Creek way, they used to ride their horses in and tie them up at the school. After we got out of the pictures they'd get on their horses, their horses'd be cold on a winter's night and they had to ride them full-bore down the main street, shod horse, and they'd make a lot of noise, that's one of the

things I can remember. I know one of the guys is still around, so I won't mention his name. (laughs)

Well, I'd like to ask you now about some of the different jobs that you've had. What was the first job that you had after you left school and I guess after working on your parents' farm?

I worked home for about four or five years, then I went to Kondo factory, cheese factory, out the Kondoparinga Road, which was then United Co-operative Dairymen, later changed to Dairy Vale, and it's gone into shares now. I don't know whether any of the factories still exist. Different shareholdings.

What work did you do in the factory?

I started off just labouring. I was a pasteuriser operator, cheese-maker. And that closed down in (pauses) about '67, '68, and I went to Mount Compass for about a year and a half. That's a butter factory and a milk powder factory. That's closed down now. But then I started work at the Council, Meadows Council, 11th November 1968 – one of the few things I remember – and I stayed with them for the rest of my life, though it did change to 'Mount Barker' [Council] in 1983.

I'll come back to your council work in a moment, but I just wanted to find out a little bit more about what being a cheese-maker actually entailed and what did you physically have to do in the factory.

Well, we had seven thousand-gallon milk vats they used to make cheese in, and in the springtime when we had a lot more milk coming in than the Farmers Union, which is now the Hall, they'd even double up the first three, hold a little bit of milk over in vats and keep them overnight and that. A thousand gallons of milk would make about twelve eighty-pound cheeses. Do you want me to go right through the process?

Yes.

Oh! Golly, I don't know if I can remember all that. The milk vat was filled up with probably about eight hundred gallons of milk, as it comes in, tested for butterfat, was reduced to .38 per cent butterfat by adding skim milk. Then a starter was put in, a cheese starter, a rennet mix which set it off into a junket type thing; it would be set for about twenty minutes, half an hour. Then we had square things (indicates) like that, with a lot of piano wires through, about a quarter of an inch apart, one going up

and down, one going across; they'd be dragged up and down to cross and they'd cut all this formed curd into about quarter-inch little cubes.

Then it'd be heated *via* a outer shell, an inner stainless-steel shell, in between those two would be water, heated with steam, was slowly cooked up and agitators would go around in this vat, four agitators to the vat, and just gradually firm the curd. And as the cooking process went on the curd got firmer and the whey separated more and then we'd drain it off, drain half the whey off, put cheesecloth over a big tap at the end to catch the little bit of curd that went out into it, and it'd generally settle down and you'd find it'd drain off; and that'd be heated a little bit more and the beaters would be stepped up a cog and it would be beaten a bit quicker so it firmed up again, got more moisture out, drain it off again. Then it would set into – up the edge of the vat it would be set into a row of – it would set fairly firm, then it was cut [?in the knives?] and then turned every now and again to keep draining away, which is called the 'cheddaring' process.

After that was finished at a certain time, the acidity was at the right level, it would be then put through a mill which made it come out like a heap of chip potatoes. That would be salted, left up in the side of the vat to drain for quite a while, then it would be put into already-dressed hoops – around eighty pounds, they were, hoops that we used mainly; there were a few other sorts that we did make occasionally – with cheesecloth, it was lined with cheesecloth, then lids were put on, be pressed for about half an hour, lids taken off, unpressed, taken off, and the cheesecloth folded over and another cap put on the top and pressed again, left overnight. They'd be taken out the next morning, counted, branded, put into the cold room. Left in there for several days, then we had a wax dip, left for another couple of days, then they'd be carted off to, quite often, Cudlee Creek Cold Store and then exported to England. Mainly. And then I got paid.

Was it mainly cheddar cheese then that was produced?

Yes. Pretty well all cheddar cheese.

How did the Farmers Union factory in the main street differ from the one at Kondoparinga?

They did make a bit of cheese – they only had, I think, three vats – in the springtime they'd make a bit of cheese; but mostly their milk went straight to Adelaide for human consumption, the milkies. In those days it was the milk bottles; even earlier than that was the dippers. We used to send a lot of milk to the city. Dunn Brothers used to come up with two trucks and take milk, we used to send a load to Amscol; we had a depot out at Glenelg somewhere, another truck load would go there; and, as the years went on, there would be more milk sent to the city for that sort of thing. Then tankers came in, that stopped all that: it went straight to the factory in town where they bottled it.

When you said a truckload, you meant a truckload of the cans.

Cans, ten-gallon milk cans, hundred pounds – twenty pounds in the can and there'd be a hundred and twenty pounds you'd have to throw around. Some of those truck drivers used to lift them from the ground onto the truck.

What other businesses were there in the town at that time?

At that time? Well, one time we had a sawmill, Wilson's Sawmill. That employed people. That turned later into a creosote post place where they used to – under pressure the creosote would be put into the post. We had a PMG,³ it was up by the Post Office, that employed; the two factories; the Council had a yard; there were one, two, three, four shops – probably only employed family of perhaps one person each one. And I think that's about all. The mill out at the Kuitpo was only just started; but before that Douglas Mawson had a sawmill out at Kuitpo, Harewood – he owned that property, Harewood – and there was a mill there for a lot of years.

During the War, some people used to burn charcoal, which they used to use [for] gas producers on their cars because fuel was so scarce. They'd go around setting a few fires around the roads, what have you. Other employment, well, I don't know. Yes, we had an electrician, I think. We didn't have much electricity, early. We didn't have electricity when I was a young fella. It went from Meadows Road through to Bull Creek. Nobody down that way had electricity. It went through our

³ PMG – Postmaster General's [depot]

properties in the earlier days, though I just can't remember the years now. But it certainly made a difference to us, any rate, getting electricity.

Other employment: early, a lot of little councils, like Echunga had a Council, Macclesfield had a Council, Clarendon had a Council; then they gradually amalgamated to be the Meadows Council. That was before my time.

Well, perhaps if we come to *your* work now in the Meadows Council: what did you use to do at the Council?

Well, I started off as a truck driver. Then I went to drive a 'dozer for a while and then I became a ganger, which is a small-time foreman type of thing. That means you do all the dirty work, the work that nobody else wanted to do. The manual stuff.

Was this mainly with roads?

Yes. Outside stuff. Roads, and you get a variety of jobs in the Council – pruning trees and in suburbia, all that sort of thing, footpaths, drainage. Yes, heaps of work. We did a lot of work – when it was the Meadows Council we went right down to the South Road and down the end of Sturt Creek. Sturt Creek was the boundary, used to be a Neptune service station right on the corner, down the South Road there; and we went right down to Cox's Scrub on the way to Goolwa; went to within about four kilometres of Strath[albyn], about four or five from Mount Barker, we went way up almost to Wistow, went past Wistow on part of it; and Coromandel Valley. It was a fairly big area, a lot of area.

So were you based in Meadows?

Yes.

Was that the depot?

Yes. Then when I first started we used to do a lot of work round the Happy Valley area because it was developing, and I think – I'm sure – that most of that is what caused the split when the Council was split later on. Representatives per head of population meant that the rural area of the Council didn't have as much say as they were used to and the urban area had more representation on Council, and the old farmers got a bit shitty about that, I think. They wanted more say. There's

amalgamations have gone everywhere. I don't know that they've been of any benefit. I cannot see any benefit. Made a few people get better jobs.

What happened with the Council boundaries, then, in 1983?

Happy Valley formed its own Council from just below Brookses, that way, west. Part of it went to Strath, just the other side of Prospect Hill right through to nearly the Wickham's Hill. On the southern side that went to Strathalbyn; and Macclesfield, Echunga, Meadows went to Mount Barker and are still there, that's part of the Mount Barker Council now. The other councils who have amalgamated were Happy Valley amalgamated with two other councils and now form the Onkaparinga Council, and Strathalbyn have amalgamated with Port Elliott and Goolwa and they're called the Alexandrina Council. Mount Barker's still on its own, I don't think anybody wants them.

What effect do you think that had on Meadows? Because it had had its own council since 1853.

Yes. Well, it took all the office work out of Meadows. It took a fair bit of employment out of Meadows. A lot of the guys, perhaps half of them, went to Happy Valley Council to work from up here and some of them are still there. That's the main thing, I think. And all the inside staff, some of it was local, a lot of it wasn't. Probably only a little bit of outside staff that it affected.

Do you think, psychologically, did it make a difference to the town? It had been at the centre of a council area for a long time and then it was at the edge of a council area.

Oh, yes. I think, look, all these things – like change doesn't settle very well for a little while, but after that it's just a part of life. I think the bank leaving the town was probably the worst thing for the town, but it certainly left the businesses up in the air because there wasn't electronic transfers in those days; you had to go to the bank to get your money out and that sort of thing, so when you'd go to Mount Barker to the bank you did your shopping over there because they started to get big stores and cheaper stores, probably, and just gradually the businesses all sort of left, folded, didn't go on, didn't happen any more. Some are still going. The shop down the bottom is going very good; the bakery is an addition which has gone very well; the

butcher's shop has stayed. The bakery used to be the headmaster's residence for the school when I was a boy. Probably Mr Gerlach, he was one of the head teachers there, Brian. And him and a guy called Basil Gransbury, the late Bas Gransbury, they were instrumental in getting the swimming pool built at the school; they had a lot of physical help from a few of us not-so-bright people to do the work, but they were the great instigators and movers of getting a swimming pool in the school.

Do you remember the Gransbury family well?

Yes. Mrs Gransbury's still alive. She's just honoured by the Queen, just recently – not the last lot but the time before, I think. I can't remember what she got, but she got one of those Queen's honours, and well-deserved⁴. Basil was the manager of Harewood, which was formerly Sir Douglas Mawson's, but Phillipsons, E.C. Phillipson and Company, own it.

Were they quite involved in the activities in the town?

Oh, yes. Yes, yes, very big in the Scouts and the school, and had five boys so they were involved in almost everything. Except the netball club.

Well, you've mentioned Scouts. I think you were a member of the Scouts when you were a boy.

Yes.

Who was in charge of Scouts at that time?

Lindsay Rogers was the Scoutmaster. He had a few assistants: my dad was an assistant Scoutmaster; Ted Olsson – they had the store up on the corner of Kondo Road – he was an assistant Scoutmaster. That's about all, I think. Could have been others but it's a fair while ago.

And who used to go to Scouts then? Was it accepted that most boys went, or was it – – –?

Yes, most boys went. I think we didn't have Cubs here, they had Cubs at Prospect Hill. I think it was probably about ten, eight or ten, I'm not too sure what the age was

⁴ Mrs Betty Ann Gransbury was awarded a Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) in June 2006 for service to the community through providing assistance to charitable, aged care and church organisations. [SAS]

to start Scouts. But we used to have a few barbecues. When you went out the next day and cleaned up afterwards some of those chops were pretty raw. (laughs) They were all right in the dark, though. Burnt on the outside, *red* on the inside.

Where would you have the barbecues?

Oh, a lot of them up in the old quarry at the corner of Macclesfield and Goolwa Road, generally in there. It's sort of overgrown now, but it was ---. Bit of wood fallen down off the top and we'd make a bit of a fire in there.

And how would you get there?

Walk.

Just along the extension of Mill Street?

Pardon?

Did you go along the extension of Mill Street?

Oh, occasionally; but mostly up the main road. We had tracks up the side. We used to walk to school, we used to live up past there, and we had tracks up on both sides of the road. The road to Bull Creek in those early days wasn't built then; it was only started on my first year at high school, which was (laughs) – now I've got to add it all up, don't I? Six and seven is about thirteen. Be about '40s.

What was the road like before?

Ironstone gravel, corrugated. Bus used to come from Goolwa through to Meadows through to Adelaide and you could hear him going up and down the road. Couldn't hear the motor, you could hear the rattles. Used to be graded by horse-drawn graders, occasionally.

I think you told me that you used to have camps as well when you were in scouts?

Yes, used to camp a bit generally out at Kuitpo. In back of the forest headquarters there was a big hall type thing there and an old cleared patch looked a bit more like an oval than anything else – yes, we used to camp out there quite often.

And what sorts of things would you learn in Scouts?

(laughs) Oh, mostly things that we didn't need to know. We used to tie knots, and you'd get badges for doing certain things, you know: knot-tying was one; semaphore and Morse code; and just how to be a general nuisance.

Yes, I was wondering what were the things you'd learnt that perhaps were unintended.

(laughter) Oh, I can't tell you all of them. But we used to go to each surrounding Scouts' birthday parties, if they had a birthday party, every year we'd go to that. I can remember back at the old Meadows Methodist Church, it's on the same site but it was closer to the road; in fact, they built this present church – it was just behind, that's right – they built this present church by pulling up those beams over the old church. And behind the old church was a shed, long shed, about four or five partitions in it, and we were waiting to be picked up and were in the back of this shed on a cold winter's night, smoking, and Mr Kaipert[?], Reverend Kaipert, was the minister, and we could see a light coming down the side from the manse and of course cigarettes were put out down handlebars of bikes and stomped out, and he shone this torch in and he knew everybody that was there and he said he was looking for swallows. Well, you know what smoke is like on a cold winter's night: it just hangs there. The shed was *full* of smoke. I don't know how he could find any swallows; he was lucky to see *us*. We got a lecture next week at Scouts about smoking. That's one thing I remember.

Now, you've been involved in some of the sporting clubs in town. Which ones have you been a part of?

I've been in the footy club. I didn't play any sport until I was about thirty-three – oh, I did play football earlier in my life; but when I worked at Kondo, I started there when I was nineteen and worked there for twelve years, and you work a rotating shift so you had two Saturdays off in every seven so you couldn't play any organised sport. When I got a job at the Council, which was in November, the next footy season I went back to playing footy. They needed a few more people to make the B Grade up. I was president of the club for a couple of years after that. We had reasonable – no great achievement. We did have a B Grade grand final in that time. And then I went umpiring for ten years in the Hills Football League.

Which were the traditional rivals of the club at that time?

Oh, yes. We were involved in originally it was the Hills Central and it was split into zones, and I think they call it 'Country Division' now and they take in a lot of Birdwood and Mount Torrens and up north there, which in our days we used to play Strathalbyn, Milang, Langhorne Creek, Echunga, Macclesfield, Kangarilla, Clarendon; Happy Valley even had a side at one time; Hahndorf and Mount Barker at one stage, but when I was in it, it was only Hahndorf had a B Grade. We were down to the southern – Strath had gone out. But some of the great rivalries, they're still going, particularly Macclesfield, Kangarilla, they've been great – always been (laughs) tough, hard, sometimes quite frightening games. Echunga have always been good, close rivals; they haven't been quite as fierce as probably the other two, over a number of years. I don't think they're quite as bad now.

What was it about those clubs that made them such rivals?

Oh, I think just the close association of people. In those days, the next town was – you didn't go a lot further than that, whereas now Adelaide's only half an hour away and it's so easy to get anywhere, until they put the price of petrol up, that might change things a little bit. But I think that's the reason.

Then more recently you've been involved in the bowling club. How did that start?

Yes. That started in 1947. I didn't join up until 1969. I started football in the same year, went back to football and took up bowls in the same year. Yes, that was an extra bowling green put in in my time and they've had a fair bit of success over the years. We played in Alexandrina Association, which was Milang, Langhorne Creek, half of Strath and Meadows. And after a few years Strathalbyn went together, they all went to Great Southern, which they had part of, which left us a bit too small to be on our own so we joined Southern, which is Christies Beach way, down that way, for about twelve years; and in the last about eight or ten years we've been in the Hills, which suits us, it's more our size. Very good competition.

And now I'd like to ask you a bit more about the recreation ground in Meadows, because I know you were on the Recreation Ground Committee.

Yes.

Tell me, what does the Committee do, what's its role?

Well, the Committee is a manager for the Council of a recreation ground, they have these sort of committees in every town where they have a recreation ground, and the Recreation Ground Committee manages and organises. The clubs pay rent to the Committee and the Committee get a bit of finance from the Council, they finance them to a certain extent, and they are virtually the managers of the grounds for the Council. The Council, of course, is the people. And it was a little old oval jammed up against the school and the western boundary is where, if you look along that little oval at the back, you'll see that's an extension out; well, if you look straight up you'll see that was the boundary before of the oval. And the Council bought approximately five acres, I think it was, and then we proceeded to shift things around and fit things in, in a more leisurely manner that you could cope with more people. And we had to shift the oval forty-five feet – this was before decimal – westerly, so we put a track around the top side. There was no track around the top side, it was right up against the school and the bowling club. And the tennis courts were stuck in one corner, down the north-western corner. There was a croquet club there at one stage but they didn't have lawn, they had sand or gravel or some sort of – and that was up a bit further. There was a playground down in this other corner, and the footy clubroom was sort of stuck between or partly on the old croquet court. And when we shifted the oval, the old footy club change-rooms became part of the oval and until they built the new premises which was there we worked around it.

But the Town Planner, I asked him – because I used to work for the Council and he was in the Council, of course – to give us a plan or draw us a plan and showed him what we wanted, and that plan is just about exactly what is there now. There was a gap between the two tennis courts, but when they put the second lot of tennis courts in then they closed it up to use one backstop, which is more practical.

What were the old tennis courts like, for example? What was their surface?

They were just sort of bitumen. They used to use a lot of – to repair them we used to use that colass[?], which is a form of tar and then a bit of sawdust on it . I never really played tennis that much, but I think they were all right. But they were in a position where you couldn't – they were right up against the oval, was just a track

between the oval and the tennis courts and they weren't in a very good position. But that was the first thing we did was move tennis courts before we could move anything else, and they were built. There was a dam where those tennis courts are, we had to get that filled in for a start. The bore was on the property: we had that tested, it was tested at about ten thousand gallons per hour, which was quite a good water supply, and when it became watered, we changed a couple of things over it, put drainage under it since. So it was a fairly big project.

The Education Department offered us ten thousand dollars if we could match it, so we got a loan through the Council. I was Secretary, the late Pauline Masters was the Treasurer, and we had to go to Council meetings and show that we could finance this loan and then proceed. We did it with a lot of help from Council workers and Council equipment which was loaned to us free of charge as long as it was operated by Council workers, and that was a very, very big part of the whole process.

And how was the money raised to service the loan?

Well, we used to get a grant from the Council each year, I think in those days it was – no, I've no idea what it was – but that and the hire, like we hired the tennis courts, the tennis club paid so much, the netball club paid so much, the football club paid so much and the cricket club paid so much for the right to use and the maintenance of their facilities, and that's the main way we did of raising revenue. We didn't have any other organisation that raised it, like now they've got the Country Fair – well, perhaps they get something out of this, I don't know how that's split up now – that's been a very good revenue raiser over the years for the local community.

Well, I'd just like to move to the end of the interview now and ask you some general questions about Meadows and what it is about Meadows that you particularly like.

Well, I suppose I was born here, grew up here and used to know everybody here, but some of them left; in fact, most of them left. Oh, no, it's just you get used to something. I can't say that I like or dislike anything about the place specifically.

I mean you've chosen to stay, so why have you done this?

Yes. Well, I was employed here, so I'm probably not a very ambitious person – I didn't think I'd make Prime Minister or something like that – and this is where I worked, this is where I lived.

Well, Meadows' population is predicted to double in the next few years, potentially, with the new housing development; how do you feel about that?

Oh, as long as we've got enough water for it I don't see it as a problem. I think we're the same as the rest of the state and in fact the whole of Australia: I think water is going to be a number one priority. We're dragging it from underground, it's been dragged from underground for a long time, a lot of potatoes and stock feed were irrigated around the district: how the water table's holding up I don't know, I haven't had a look down there yet. They reckon where I go it'll be hot.

What do you think's important about living in a small town like Meadows?

Being part of it, being part of something in the community. You only get out what you put in. I get out more than what I put in.

Well, I've asked you all the questions I was planning to ask, so are there any things that you were hoping to add that we haven't yet covered?

No, I don't think so. Just that right back early, when I was a little boy, there were more businesses. Like they had a saddler, which was on the corner down here; the garage was opposite, the middle, where the hardware store is now; there were a lot of little things like that. And we had a blacksmith's shop, up opposite, just up from the post office over the other side of the road; and there was an old folks' home there as well, the blacksmith's daughter was a nurse and she ran an old folks' home there for a while. There's a lot of those old things are probably forgotten, they're part of history. There's a lot of photos up in the hotel that are pre-me, some of them are very interesting to look at. Some of the old names. We've got Ellis Road: Ellises were a large family, not all closely-related but there were several families of Ellises here. Rowley Road, Rowley is the name of one of the head councillors, the chairman of the Council, that came out from England, had five hundred-odd acres of land here. And we haven't got a Buckleys Road, but we've got one up on the way in to Lobethal: if you ever go past that, that's where my dad came from, up that way. We didn't have a Buckleys Road down here – *yet*. (laughs) But a lot of the roads and places are

named after some of the old pioneers, the people that were around here long before me.

Well, thank you very much for your time today and for agreeing to be part of the project. It's been wonderful to hear about your experiences in Meadows. Thank you.

Okay, thank you.

END OF INTERVIEW