

LILA BURZACOTT

This is an interview with Lila Burzacott in her house in North Cooma on the 15 February 1982. Lila was married to Charlie Wheeler and her maiden name is Whitehead. The Wheelers and the Whiteheads are both families that were intimately connected with the upper Murray and Wheelers hut and that area, from there through to Tooma. Interview by Klaus Hueneker.

KH: If I could start maybe a bit further back. Do you remember when the Whiteheads came to that area. How much of your family history can you recall?

LB: Well my grandfather came out here from Scotland in about 18..... (let me
about this) if he were alive today he'd be over 100 [her father] and my grandfather was 95 or 96 when he died, so that would bring the Whiteheads to coming to the upper Murray in about the 1840s or earlier.

KH: That's very early, very soon after the first explorers probably. I think Hume and Hovell went through there back in the 1830s.

LB: If I'd have known you wanted that ...

KH: Oh it doesn't matter so much, I'm just trying to fill in a little bit of family history as you go.

LB: Dad would have been 106 - 110 if he'd been alive today. We were teenagers when my grandfather died so that would be 50 years ago. He came from Scotland down here - now I know that he came from Melbourne to Burringmah^a (?) when he first came here, married my grandmother and she was a Scammel, she was married when she was about 16, they had a log hut at Burringmah^a but just exactly where I don't know now. The first two babies died - I think there are about ten in the family ...

KH: This is your father's ^{brothers and} sisters.... ?

LB: They lived at Burringmah^a, my grandmother used to tell me - there was some Aboriginals and they left a baby girl behind and she mothered it. Thinking back now, I was only a kid when she told me this - I think they were coming in the bullock dray from Burringmah^a to what is now known as Wabbah^a near Walwa^{or} Cudgewa, out of Cudgewa and they were crossing a creek in the bullock dray and my grandmother and this little girl - I would say at the time she would be 3 or 4 years of age - the dray hit a log and threw the little Aboriginal girl off and the bullock wheel went over her and killed her. I never forgot that. She used to talk about that quite a lot. Well then they moved from Burringmah^a and that was the first decent home they had.

KH: What were your grandparents names?

LB: Johnny - Johnny Whitehead. Never swore, never smoked in his life but could he drink whiskey. If he got annoyed with you - he was always known

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'beggarin' Johnny - it wasn't bugger it was beggarin'. He used to scream at us kids 'You beggarin' kids be quite' - he never swore.

KH: And his wife was Scammel?

LB: Yes Franc~~es~~s.

KH: So you'd be related to Errol Scammel in a sort of a way?

LB: We'd have to start getting into 47 cousins I think, but there would be a connection. Then my grandfather moved down to Towong and if you want to see some beautiful *adzing* and a very old slab home, it is still standing.

KH: At Towong, not Towong Hill? I must look out for it next time I'm over there. How far is it ...?

LB: I'll tell you who's in it. There are three boys living in it, Archie, Mervin and Paddy Whitehead.

KH: Your grandfather built a hut there, which is still standing ...

LB: Yes and my father was more or less grown up at the time and he did the *adzing on* the slabs. It was a big old home, I don't know what it's like today, the boys are living in it. Well they're not boys anymore, the eldest son would be 70 or more. Then the house at *Wabbah*(?), *Wilwa* my grandfather owned practically ... all ... practically owned from *Wabbah* to Towong in those days. I think it was his son John that went into *Wabbah*, then there was Eddie not far from there. His grandson has that now. There was a big family and Aunt Agnes was killed. She was riding out to *Wabbah* with an umbrella and it frightened the horses ... you know when they had the telephone poles and the thing out to stop them from falling over ... she ran under that and broke her neck. There were only two girls in my father's family - Agnes and Elsie - oh and boys, crumbs, there was Tom, Jimmy ...

KH: There would have been 7 or 8 boys?

LB: Dave, Bill and Arch and Ernie.

KH: What was your father's name?

LB: Ernie, he was Ernie George. He was Ernie George and then he had a cousin Ernie who was very deaf. My father was deaf too, but dad was known as Ernie George and the other was known as deaf Ernie.

KH: Any reason as to why they went deaf?

LB: Yes. Dad went to boarding school, he was the only one in the family who went to boarding school ^{in Melbourne} and got some virus or something - not home with mum to sort of see to him - and I think the other Ernie, he was in the First World War, because he was older than my father, dad wasn't old enough at that time. (I think.) It was through his ears and then the one that we called deaf Ernie, he was very deaf, being at the war didn't

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help him.

KH: Did they start going up to the mountains at all?

LB: No.

KH: The Whiteheads didn't?

LB: No, they didn't go to ~~Towong~~ Towong, not until after I was married. Dad would send a few up, it was a bit short of grass, but he used to go there a lot with my husband, he enjoyed it - fencing - he was very good with ~~the~~ hands. That hut that's there now, that was built before I ever went up there, before I married, but how long it had been there I don't know.

KH: You mean the first *version* of it?

LB: Yes. It got to this stage ...

KH: Lindsay Willis remembers a hut there, back in the 20s I think.

LB: Well I would say yes.

KH: So it could^{go} back to the first World War, the 1910s or something.

LB: No. When my mother-in-law used to go up there when she was first married. That would have been, my husband would have been 70, that would only be 60 years ago wouldn't it, when that hut was there.

KH: That's 1920?

LB: Yes.

KH: There was quite a few buildings built after the First World War or about that time.

LB: Well that first hut I know, I was never in it. I would say that this hut, the original of this site, must have just been thrown up a bit together and then my father went up and helped to make it what it is today.

KH: Do you know if they rebuilt it completely?

LB: No.

KH: They pulled the old one down?

LB: No.

KH: Would the old one have been a slab hut too?

LB: I think the old one was a slab hut and all they did was pull any bad ones out, sort of refurbished, rebuilt.

KH: It looks in good condition on these photographs and this one was taken in 1945.

LB: Yes it would have only been there about '35 or '37. It was when they remodelled.

KH: When was the first time that you went up?

LB: I went up there about '32.

KH: You did see the old one?

LB: Yes.

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KH: It's substantially the same, it had two rooms and the verandah across the front?

LB: No.

KH: The verandah may have been added!

LB: I think the back verandah and that back room was put on it when they remodelled it. The front verandah might have had a *skillion* over it but no floor on it in the very early 30s.

KH: Where the fences around then?

LB: No.

KH: So the fences went in at the same time as *they* ?

LB: Yes, I would say that was all done at the same time. There were fences there but not very good. They remodelled the hut and built yards and fences.

KH: Were you there when they were building?

LB: No.

KH: Do you know how far away they went to get the trees for the slabs? Did they take a bullock team up with them?

LB: They'd have to, that would be the only way in those days.

KH: The forest of alpine ash is right behind the hut on the hill.

LB: Yes, well that's where they would have got the timber, they wouldn't have travelled any distance with a bullock team. You see, the bullock dray is there in one of these photos.

KH: It was your husband Charlie and your father who built it, who did the remodelling?

LB: Yes and the fencing. That might have been when this chap by the name of Bill Hamilton was with them, he was just *sort of* working there. He was no relation or nothing to do with the family.

KH: It was on freehold land!

LB: Then we used to go up there trapping. That chap is now dead too.

KH: Trapping rabbits?

LB: Yes. We used to pack traps in. I've been up there with them for a couple of months. *Cooking and*

KH: Have you?

LB: Yes when they were trapping I used to go with them.

KH: Did you sleep in one of the old iron beds?

LB: Yes.

KH: There's a double one in the living room I think and there might have been one or two single beds around.

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LB: We used to have one room and then we had a single bed when my daughter - she was only ... I don't think she was going to school the year we took off and Father Xmas came there - *and packed everything in.*

KH: That's a long time to be in there, that's really good. There wouldn't have been many women that went up with the men to the huts.

LB: Oh yes I'd go up, I'd leave my daughter with my mother-in-law.

KH: And Charlie was working with or for his father at the time.

LB: It was a partnership.

KH: Oh was it, between Charlie and Bill. The property was in the name of both of them I suppose?

LB: Well it would have been then, yes.

KH: Did Charlie have any brothers or sisters?

LB: No, he was an only child.

KH: And *Wingy* would have been up there too?

LB: Oh heavens yes, he used to go mustering. He used to bring cattle from over here, he used to come here and buy cattle.

KH: Were they cheaper to buy here?

LB: Oh yes. My husband came over here, rode from there, over the mountains when he was about five.

KH: *What* on his own horse?

LB: Yes. My daughter had her own horse. Before she started school she was up there.

KH: Do you remember how many head of cattle or anything like that, *Wingy* and Charlie would have brought over from here.

LB: I wouldn't like to say how many. We'd take from our side a hundred or more - more.

KH: Mobs of 500 or 600?

LB: Oh no, wouldn't be that big.

KH: 200 or 300 maybe?

LB: I used to go up there with them mustering and they'd take me out and leave me anywhere.

KH: Did you boil the billy or ...?

LB: No, with a dozen head of cattle and take them back to the hut. Half the time I wouldn't know where the hut was, there'd be that much scrub around me. But I'd usually turn up before dark ... *and* snow.

KH: You stayed on sometimes - or this is freak snow?

LB: Well we'd get an early snow - no they'd never take me if it looked like bad weather, but they've mustered in snow. As late as April or May.

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KH: What was usually the time that they came out by?

LB: Well they'd always like to be out by April.

KH: Easter or something?

LB: Yes, because that would be when the snow would start, but then they'd get caught. Then they'd go back for a second muster, to get the stragglers and they'd very often get snow then, very often.

KH: So they'd have one big muster and then they'd combine with some of the other lessees and so on.

LB: Yes, well now the McPhies ^{from this side} they had country there too.

KH: They seem to be everywhere, the McPhies.

LB: Everybody used to sort of go around about the same time to muster and if they'd get any of your cattle or if we'd get any of ^{theirs}, we'd either take them to them or put them on the track home. It was generally an unwritten law in the mountains that you sort of helped each other.

KH: It would be a devil of a job going through every creek flat and everywhere where the cattle could be.

LB: And then as you say, the meats ^{safe} and the hooks up there ... if we killed, we'd share it.

KH: So you'd kill a bullock and what other stockmen would come and collect some.

LB: Yes. Who was the old chappy, Tiny somebody, who came from Tumberumba, used to ride a little horse ...

KH: Wasn't very tall?

LB: No. He used to look after the old Toolong hut over across the river from us. Did you come across that hut?

KH: On the Toolong Range?

LB: Yes, the McPhies would have had that I think.

KH: That's on the track from Round Mountain to Jargunal?

LB: Yes.

KH: It's a ruin now. There's a place there known as Toolong hut.

LB: Yes we used to call that the old Toolong hut.

KH: What did you call your hut?

LB: Well I don't know. I suppose it was just our hut then.

KH: Was it known as Wheelers then?

LB: Well yes, other people always called it Wheelers hut. It had no particular ...

KH: It didn't have other names?

LB: No.

KH: Names didn't change or anything like that, it was always Wheelers?

LB: Yes.

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KH: Because sometimes names changed when a new lessee took over a particular hut.

LB: No, it was always Wheelers hut, everybody spoke of it as Wheelers hut.

KH: Do you think ^{Winger} would have built the first one?

LB: No. I would not think so. I don't know who had that country before he did.

KH: Maybe he was the first!

LB: I've never heard it spoken about. This Russell chap might be able to tell you about ^{that}.

KH: Leo?

LB: Yes.

KH: I don't know that Leo knows that much about that country.

LB: They didn't come quite that far on this side. Some of the McPhies should. I don't know, there's a Geoff McPhie about my age around here, but I don't think he would have known anything about it.

KH: No one else from the Jindabyne people has mentioned any McPhies that I should go and see.

LB: Yet there was McPhie's hut.

KH: That's the Grey Mare isn't it? That's what's known as the Grey Mare?

LB: I suppose that would be, that would be McPhie's hut on the Grey Mare. Is it still there?

KH: There is a miner's hut there. It was put up in 1949 as part of the Grey Mare mine.

LB: We used to get quite a lot of their cattle, we used to get very annoyed with their cattle. They'd eat their side out and their cattle would come over on to us.

KH: Did you ever meet any of the Bells when you were up there? You may know of Charlie Bell, who's the fishing inspector, but his father was involved with the Grey Mare mine back in '35, '36, about the time you were down at Wheelers.

LB: No I don't recall a Bell.

KH: Would ^{Wingy} have been old enough to have built the first hut at Wheelers?

LB: Well if he were alive today, he'd be over a hundred wouldn't he?

KH: You said he died when he was 81 I think.

LB: He was a couple of years older than dad, they both died the one year. One died January and one died February, that would have been ^(oh dear) ... 27-28 years ^(ago)

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KH: That puts it back in the 50s - '54/'55. So ^{Wingy} would have been born in the 1870s - '78/'80 - so by the time the first World War came around he would have been in his 30s, so he could have been in a position to buy some land up there.

LB: He probably did. I've never heard them speak about, or how they really got it.

KH: It's very unusual, they would have been surrounded by crown land with a leasehold ...

LB: How they came to get that I just couldn't tell you. When I came into the family it just appeared to me it was something they always had.

KH: I think it was Colin Finlay said it was about 700 or 800 acres. Would that be about what you remember it to be?

LB: Yes.

KH: That probably partly explains why they built such a substantial hut. Most of the other mountain huts are just one-roomed, a lot of them are just a dirt floor, they're nothing as sophisticated as Wheelers, especially looking at these photographs ^{and} the trouble they went to for some of these fences and so on ...

LB: And then of course the National Park took over and we did nothing but go backwards and forwards to Wagga.

KH: The office was in Wagga then.

LB: Yes. We had to drive from Towong to Wagga. To be quite honest, we never ever got what we paid for it. With what it cost us to get what we should have got for it, we were robbed.

KH: When would that have been, in the 50s? When ^{Wingy} was still alive?

LB: I've got to stop and think about this because after we were married, and that's in the 40s

KH: Because the National Park was declared in 1944.

LB: Well that's when we were having all the trouble and it went on and on and on.

KH: Did you still take stock up there even though it had gone back to the National Park?

LB: Well we did for a while, there were times we couldn't eventually. But we stuck it out.

KH: It would have been until about 1957 I think, that the grazing leases were still going on.

LB: It's a bit hard to work out.

KH: It's a bit like a school test ^{this} isn't it - remember your dates.

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L.B. ^{It's} worse.

LB: We got rid of it before Charlie's father died, but it wasn't all that long I didn't think.

KH: Did anyone else ^{graze it?}

LB: Well ^{we had Welumba} too - we had country freehold ^{at Welumba} and the Patons paid us for it, or paid the deposit ... in those days we were very poor and running on a mortgage and we thought, beaut, now we're out of debt and we had to damn-well give the money back to the Patons.

KH: Which property was this for?

LB: They were over at ^{the} Welaragang, Patons, they were going to buy it. They had gone as far as paying the deposit and then when the National Parks came, ^{we had} to give the deposit back. Well I think we'd about spent it. Still these things happen.

KH: The Patons have got a hut, or there is a hut known as Patons down Tooma Dam way.

LB: Yes.

KH: Did you ever go to it?

LB: I've been there.

KH: You would have ridden out that way sometimes I should think!

LB: Well sometimes, then we used to go up through Pierces and up ^(Bradney's?) Bradley's Gap. I remember we had traps on a pack horse going up Bradley's Gap and it got very tired of course - I think we had too big a load on it - and it slipped over the bank and I got screamed at to hang on to it's head ^(of course). I was always the one that got screamed at. Who was with us that time ... Henry Stockwell I think, he's dead now, he was no connection, he just worked for us. They gradually got the horse, with it's tail up against a tree, otherwise it would have gone and we're getting these damn traps off. You try and get a pack horse down and get traps off it. That night we arrived at the hut about midnight, it was pitch dark ...

KH: At Wheeler's hut?

LB: Yes.

KH: Was that considered an easier route than over Snakey Plain way?

LB: Oh well sometimes we used to think it might be a bit quicker if you were just going straight through, it was six of one and half a dozen of the other really. You'd miss the Roaring ^{Mag} and the Old Bay ^{oh} Bradley's Gap was a shocker.

KH: Did you ever go in by Everards Flat or Everards Spur, further to the south?

LB: No. If we were going with cattle we'd go to Greg Greg and

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stay a night or we'd go to Clover Flat and you'd pull your saddle off, take your boots off and slept.

KH: Just under a tree?

LB: Yes.

KH: If it rained that was bad luck was it?

LB: Yes. You'd never take a tent with you. Then we'd go to Greg^{Greg} quite often and stay there with the cattle. Because Greg^{Greg} was owned by my husband's aunt. All sorts of things used to happen, the cattle never wanted to go up the Roaring^{Mag} or the Devil's Elbow.

KH: They're very steep are they?

LB: Very, very. When the bullock dray went through Clover Flat, cut through Wolseley^{Cap} when they built the dam.

KH: The old S.M.A. road, followed that old bullock track!

LB: As a matter of fact the chappies ^{that} were surveying that road got my husband to help them put the road in there. They started to put one in up the Roaring^{Mag} and he told them they were lunatics, they'd never do it.

KH: So they went somewhere else?

LB: Yes.

KH: So the bullock wagon would have gone ...

LB: No exactly no, because when we got to Clover Flat and the Snowy kept on going that way, well we used to go straight up to the right - zig-zag up through to the river. It's just a bit different to the way we used to go.

KH: It's a real bush track.

LB: And somewhere, probably when we're leaving Cooma in about October and whether I've still got it - I've got things stuck away - I don't know what I've got. I've got a beautiful picture, or did have, my daughter-in-law would have that, of the bullock dray going up out of the river - it was very steep.

KH: And then it would have gone along Broadway - Broadway Plains and up the Toolong^{long} diggings.

LB: Very often when we were taking a load - it used to be horse feed - we'd have to take the bullock dray to take horse feed and salt mainly. We used to feed our stock horses.

KH: You'd take your own oats and chaff in with you on the bullock dray.

LB: Yes.

KH: So the bullock dray would have to go in at least^t once a year.

LB: Yes, always once a year. Well you'd feed your horses at home for three months to get them conditioned, you couldn't just pick a horse out of the paddock and go up there - mustering was hard work, hard riding too, I know that. You couldn't take a green horse in - you'd feed it and rub it

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and never^{ever} go up there without a spare or two. Usually you'd be able to ride one of your pack horses, but you'd always make sure that you had an extra horse to ride. You don't know what might happen. I can remember one day we were going along Swampy Plain, there was a mud patch there with a log in the middle of it, my husband rode through it, got over this log and it was very boggy. His horse was floundering around, he sang out 'Look out' - but he was a second too late and mine had fallen - away I went. I'm rolling down the hill and it's rolling after me, what else could you do but roll to get out of its way. Well all sorts of things could have happened. We were up there once - on what I used to call my pony - she went lame and had terrible trouble trying to get her home. You always had to allow for this sort of thing and we never ever left our hut without feed. We'd lock the bedroom, we always used to lock our bedroom. We used to think of our own personal blankets and things like that and we'd leave a few clothes there. But we always left bed and blankets and food in the main room.

KH: What sort of food did you leave?

LB: Things in tins like tea and sugar and flour, oatmeal - something that people could get a feed from. I was very cranky once ... the mountain men always took plum puddings - you seemed to do nothing but cook damn plum puddings all the time - and I'd made these plum puddings for them to take up. Of course you just used to hang them up in the bedroom, that you wanted to keep. We might leave one small one in case somebody came along ... and some coot broke into it and ate all the plum puddings. They got up there to mustering and there were no puddings. But these were the sorts of things you'd do but we would never ever leave the hut - if somebody got into trouble or lost or something - there would be something that they could have a meal and a bed and blankets. The last day before we left we'd just have a day around the hut going through food and we always cut wood ^{kindling and} and stacked it on the back verandah. I mean you might get up there yourself and it'd come on a storm and you've got no hope of lighting a fire if you've got wet wood.

KH: That's a tradition that's still kept going by and large. Some people abuse it.

LB: Well we never have. Some people would use it, they mightn't leave as much as you'd left, but we never ever left there unless leaving wood.

KH: It would be nice to come across a plum pudding hanging in the bedroom. It doesn't happen these days.

LB: I think at the time they had an idea who it was too. They broke into the bedroom. Well we didn't lock it, we just put a chain and a lock, just for honest people. If somebody wanted to break in, as you know very

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well, they only have to pull a slab off and they could get in. It was just a few little personal things that we ^{would} leave there.

KH: Was there a double bunk in that bedroom at all or were there single beds?

LB: We had a double iron bed and a single iron bed in the bedroom. It wouldn't have been a full double bed I don't think, what they used to call in those days - a three quarter. You went in the door here and the biggest bed was there and then over here behind the door. Then we had a round table over, that was the dressing table.

KH: A round table ^{goe} that's not there any more.

LB: Isn't it? A dining table.

KH: A mirror too.

LB: Oh yes. I'd take up a nice cloth and put over it and I had a railing across the corner and I'd take a little curtain. We were always out picking flowers.

KH: Nice homely touches.

LB: When the wild flowers were fresh and blooming - do the washing, hang it along the fence. The only trouble was when you were having a bath. The boys would leave and I'd say I ^{well} am having a bath at such and such a time and then you'd watch ^{for} fear somebody ^{rode over the horizon,} you'd always have a big towel.

KH: You'd boil up the cast iron pots in the open fire place!

LB: Kerosene tins.

KH: Just the one or several?

LB: Several, you'd want to have ten to fill them.

KH: You'd get the water out of the race line.

LB: Yes and we used to cook in the camp oven - make dampers, stews, bake a dinner. The year we were up there for Xmas we had roast goose.

KH: You brought it up with you?

LB: Yes. My husband took my daughter and we went up - I can't think - we were up there for quite a while, must have been a month at that time. He was probably mending fences or something. We took her up and took pack horses and before we left home I packed ^{the Christmassy} bits and her and I stayed there on our own and he went home one day with the pack horse and he packed Father Christmas.

KH: Would he play Father ^{Christmas} too?

LB: She didn't know there wasn't a Father Xmas then, she was too young - well she thought it was great - Father ^{Christmas} finding her up there - it was quite a thrill, and to us too.

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KH: Did he come back dressed up?

LB: Oh no. I think he came back and took the pack saddles off, waited till she went to sleep and dragged things out. We all had our ^{Christmas} presents up there. This is when that Sinbad the sailor's mob - they used to call themselves - he was a schoolteacher from Melbourne and they used to ...

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LB: we used to milk a cow - when I was there or my daughter - and quite often ^{my} husband. We always had in the mob, a milker. That's why they built yards, so we could keep the cow. There was a cow ^{bale} there.

KH: I haven't seen that there.

LB: Down the back of the chimney.

KH: Yeah, below there - it's all shrubby ^b there now, there might be still bits of it lying there.

LB: And we used to milk the cow, we'd shut the calf up at night - we mightn't milk every day. I used to scald the milk and we'd have beautiful clotted cream.

KH: Like a cream cheese is it?

LB: It's thick and beautiful.

KH: Did you make butter up there too?

LB: If we were running short of butter.

KH: How would you churn that?

LB: I'd just stir it up with a spoon.

KH: This cow would be up there for 4 or 5 months of the year, and the men would milk it when you weren't there!

LB: If they wanted milk and milk for the dogs. Oh yes we'd always have a cow that could be milked with a calf. We'd shut the calf up at night and milk her in the morning and then let her out with the calf, the same as we do at home. ^{Oh yes} I used to make custard and all sorts of things - boiled custard ^{to day} and baked custard ^{tomorrow} and then the next day you'd make a junket and you could ^{blancmanges.} You'd ^{run} it off ^{for the week.} We used to have a lot of boiled puddings in the old pudding cloth. We always had - fruit cake.

KH: You'd take up your raisins and mixture ...

LB: No, we'd make the fruit cake before we left home, they keep well. We used to have tins to pack them in - we always had some sort of cake and biscuits that we'd make to take with us. If you stayed up there for a couple of months you'd be eating very light. You'd say 'well we've got a piece

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of cake each for the next three days.

KH: Oh your rations would go down.

LB: Yes.

KH: I do that bushwalking sometimes.

LB: You'd take these sorts of things when it was good to cut packed lunches. You see if you're out mustering all day, you'd have to take your lunch with you.

KH: You'd make the lunches for the men in the mornings?

LB: And myself too and I'd go.

KH: You'd be up pretty early I suppose. *What 6 o'clock?*

LB: Daylight. As soon as it was daylight you'd be out of bed. Whatever you're doing - well you'd just go till dark. We used to play cards in the evening and we'd always take books.

KH: What sort of cards did you play, what sort of games?

LB: Oh well whoever could play what - euka, 500. Then when we got more sophisticated in supplies, we used to play solo. We always packed cards and a crib board.

KH: I don't know crib, is that with dice?

LB: Cards. If we couldn't find the crib board, we used to use a bar of soap to make a crib board.

KH: Did you ever make any damper?

LB: Oh yes.

KH: Did you ever mix damper with raisins or anything like that?

LB: Yes - make a bit of a change. We used to have a lot of dumplings up there, boiled dumplings.

KH: Just a lump of flour and water dropped into the pot.

LB: Yes, and we always had honey, golden syrup and jams. We took everything there, there wasn't anything ...

KH: Was this taken up on the bullock dray or in pack saddles?

LB: When the bullock dray had to go we would pack a lot of tin ^{need} stuff and preserves - jams - and send ^{that} up. But mainly we'd pack it because by the time you got the salt and the horse feed on the bullock dray it was as much as the bullocks could do and you'd want to keep your load

KH: You took a lot of salt up then?

LB: Oh yes, cattle need salt. By the time you went up to muster, the salt that they'd put out would be running low and it's more or less a track for the cattle.

KH: That's right, it's a nice way of keeping them where you want them.

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LB: We had our different salt camps, we used to call them in different areas and that was one thing, that when you'd go up you'd always check - how much salt was left at each camp. If they'd run out of salt, well you'd take a block to put out.

KH: Can you remember where you put your garbage, the old bottles and tins and things like that?

LB: We had a hole down below what we called the country dunny. We had to have a country dunny.

KH: That's gone I think.

LB: Has it. We built a beauty. Down behind the chimney.

KH: No, that's gone.

LB: What a shame.

KH: The hole would still be there no doubt.

LB: It had a couple of planks along and a door and a bag hanging down at the door.

KH: Not ^{his} proof, but not too bad.

LB: No not ^{his} proof, but private. You'd usually count heads if everybody was home, and say well it's my turn next.

KH: And the garbage is beyond that?

LB: Yes. Well you've got to have hygiene and this is something that we were pretty keen about. We just didn't toss things around. ^{well} It's like being at home, you keep your home tidy and wherever you're living you keep it tidy.

KH: Did you have much vegetables or fruit?

LB: No, we were never there long enough.

KH: No, but you took things with you like that?

LB: Oh yes.

KH: What sort of vegetables?

LB: Dried or salted down - take them in jars.

KH: That you preserved yourself?

LB: Yes. You would in the veggy season - ^{Christmas} on. I used to bottle fruit, make sauce - you'd always say well this is for here and that goes to the mountains.

KH: What about fresh vegetables?

LB: We'd take potatoes, but to take cabbage and that sort of thing - well, if you get a pack horse that can be as contrary as the one we used to call Jerry - he'd hit every tree. There's one way and he got stopped - if you have a bad pack horse you want to pack him with rock salt and take

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him through the heaviest timber you can - he won't hit a tree again - it hurts his ribs.

KH: It's like putting rocks in his pack.

LB: Yes. But all sorts of things used to happen with pack horses - packets slip, you'd turn around and here's the pack nearly on to the ground and you'd be wondering why the darn horse wasn't following you and you'd look round ... then you'd have to unpack and put it all back again. Then we had one that every time you started to pack it he'd want to turn around and bite you. They get very cunning, pack horses, very cunning.

KH: We had some problems - I went on a ride with Talbingo Trails through into some of that country, a five day trip, we had the same sort of problems. We lost several bottles of whisky the first day because the pack horse dumped one of it's packs.

LB: Yes, but you learn after the first time. This was something that we never ever went to the mountains without rum and whisky, but rum especially, because if you were out in the snow and you came in wet and cold - you had to look after your own health - you couldn't just go up and be sloppy or if somebody got a scratched finger it would become infected very quickly. We always kept bandages - a first aid ^{kit} generally.

KH: Did you use the rum as an antiseptic?

LB: I don't know that we ever had to really do that because we preferred that's how I learnt to drink rum and whisky.

KH: Did you.

LB: Yes, not that I drink much of anything but in the winter time I still will have a rum. It was a ritual at night, especially if it was cold. I don't think that we were ever up there - before you had your dinner - everybody would have a drink, even my daughter. She had her own glass and used to have rum and a drop of milk in it.

KH: How old was she when she first went up there?

LB: She'd only be about 4 or 5. She'd have about that much milk and about three drops of rum in it. You'd have accidents up there, sprained ankles were easily happening.

KH: Did you ever hurt yourself?

LB: Yes I did. ^{I had a terrible...} We camped under the trees at Welumba I think, took my boots off, slept on the ground and I got bitten with jumper ants. I put my boots on and it took two men to get them off ^{me} - pull them off - and they were the only pair of riding boots I had and I needed them. One was hanging around my waist, the other one pulling, eventually ^{they} got my boot off.

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We spent one night - none of us got to bed - I sat with my leg in a bucket of hot water and then in a bucket of cold. Rubbed metho on it and cloudy ammonia, I was crook then, ^{but} that's the only time - that would have been ^{one of} the worst thing that happened to any of us. There was never anyone with a broken leg or a bad fall. Oh we often had a fall, you'd be riding and the horse would stumble because it was rough. I fell off once and went head first into the river through a pony stumbling.

KH: It's pretty cold that river.

LB: In those days when we went up there we would always leave home early and we would arrive there by about 4 o'clock and we'd talk of nothing ^{from} the time we left home, until it happened that we would be sitting down to fresh trout for our dinner.

KH: That someone else had already caught?

LB: No.

KH: You'd catch them on the way?

LB: We'd get up to the hut and everybody 'bang' - unpack everything and put everything away and I'd stay and wash down the tables - you didn't know who might have been using it - I'd clean out the hut, get the table set, the billy on ^{and fire lit}. The men would duck down to the river and they might come home with half a dozen trout, ^{like that}.

KH: So Colin's drawings are not unusual?

LB: Oh No. If you wanted a meal you'd always catch a fish. Somewhere up in that territory is a beautiful gold watch of mine.

KH: It would be overgrown now, if it hasn't been found now I don't think it will be every found.

Did they go in with collapsible rods or did they just take a bit of a stick to go fishing with.

LB: Proper rods. We all had our own rod.

KH: You'd keep those ^{up} in the bedroom I suppose when you weren't there.

LB: We wouldn't leave those, we'd pack them. They were too valuable.

KH: There's still a razor strap ^{lying there}.

LB: We didn't have electricity.

KH: Would that have been Charlie's?

LB: Probably. I suppose it would have been his. Then our nights - we used to have to pack kerosene in for nights too. We'd always leave one or two lanterns out. We had a bit better kerosene light, we used to keep that in our bedroom - this is why it was locked - just for these few extras to make it a little bit more comfortable living while you were there yourself.

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- KH: Yes, fair enough. All the men would be up there for about four or five months wouldn't they?
- LB: Well no, not in one stretch. Only when we went up a couple of times trapping would we have been there for six months. But no, when they went up to muster, they would only be about a fortnight, three weeks away.
- KH: So they ^{would} take the stock up in November/December.
- LB: Always Melbourne Cup Day.
- KH: 2nd November or something.
- LB: Yes well they'd be away a couple, three weeks when you took them up and then as I say we'd go up at different times perhaps when we wanted too. Then when ^{you} went mustering you'd go up and do the big muster, ^{you'd} be about three weeks. I've been a few times. Then when they'd go back for the stragglers, ~~they would~~ only be 10 days or a couple of weeks at the outside. Then you'd sit at home and wait for the phone to ring to say well we're back.
- KH: We're back in one piece!
- LB: Yes, nothing has gone wrong. And especially we'd always know if it was snowing in the mountains ^{you know} - ^{it} was worrying.
- KH: By then it's pretty late - after Easter?
- LB: Yes. I've known them to go back in June.
- KH: To get some more strays?
- LB: Yes when they've had a bad muster. It would only take a day to go up and then probably dash around quickly where they knew the drifts wouldn't be to pick up any stragglers - only a few to bring home - ^{they would} hurry them a bit.
- KH: Did they ever have any cattle snowed in?
- LB: A little - you never got them all. You'd get them the next year or you'd probably ^{be} taking cattle up and you'd pick a few stragglers up on the way - they'd hear the other cattle coming and all bunch round and you'd say 'there ^{were that} half a dozen'.
- KH: Do you remember any serious losses, where the snow came early and they were snowed in and died up there?
- LB: No, never. I would say that they never ever come on to a dead beast that was snowed in.
- KH: So if they died, they died back down on the home property?
- LB: Yes and they'd be poor, we'd have to bring them out for the winter and feed. Sometimes the stragglers would be very poor because they'd do a lot of walking to find feed out of the snow line.
- KH: Did you ever take sheep up there?
- LB: No.
- KH: Always cattle - the Wheelers always took cattle?

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- LB: Never, we weren't sheep people. I don't think on that side that there were ever many sheep. I think old Toolong might have because this old Tiny, he used to live there all the year, except in winter.
- KH: Toolong hut that you're talking about isn't near Patons is it?
- LB: No.
- KH: There's another hut along there.
- LB: We used to have to cross the river, go down from our hut, it would be about 3 mile.
- KH: On the Toolong Range - there's another hut - I can't remember the name of it, near Patons.
- LB: That Patons hut, that was ^{built} in latter years, it wouldn't be terribly old would it, it wouldn't be like the Wheeler hut?
- KH: No, it might be the '40s, Patons hut. I know it just needed a lot of repairs, they've just rebuilt the chimney on it.

Refreshments

- LB: ... we'd taken my daughter - I mustn't lose those now that I've found them - she was speaking to me a couple of years, it might be 12 months, when we stayed with her and I'm sure she told me that these Findlay girls - they're sisters of Colin's - were talking about ... I think the idea was to go to Clover Flat and then walk in. They said to me, this niece of mine, ^{she said} 'Auntie Lila I'd love to do that, what about you' and I looked at her and I said 'Your age and my age, no thank you very much'. Whether they ever did it or not I don't know. Did Colin mention it?
- KH: No ^{I only} spoke to Colin on the phone. I don't think Colin's been in there for a long time.
- LB: Heavens, Colin wouldn't have been in there ...
- KH: Since '45 or something when he caught those fish I think, that was probably the only time.
- LB: The girls only went there once or twice perhaps too, his sisters. Whether they ever did that ...
- KH: There didn't seem to ^{be} much information about on that side of the mountains, I was quite surprised.
- LB: Well apart from myself and Harry - well he and my husband - every year used to muster and took the cattle up. My husband would ring Harry or see him and say 'will you be ready to take off on such and such a day, we'd better do something about it'. Of course they'd take a few of their cattle up. I think one year when we were burnt out we might have taken

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a few on *agistment* but we never did that sort of thing, we just paid for our own and Harry used to take a few of his.

KH: But you would have more - you would have had some lease ^{hold} as well as your freehold?

LB: Oh yes.

KH: Did you go right up towards Pretty Plain?

LB: Oh yes.

KH: It would have included Pretty Plain because that was Captain Chis^{nt}olm!

LB: Oh Captain Chis^{nt}olm had a bit up there but they didn't worry about it. But we used to go right up to Pretty Plain.

KH: You'd know the Log Cabin hut?

LB: Yes, with the lyre birds.

KH: What about the ^{old} Pugilistic hut, where the Tooma River comes over the mountains and the Pugilistic creek comes in?

LB: Oh yes, I was never at that hut.

KH: You would have seen it across the plain?

LB: Yes *and snakey plain.*

KH: Could I have rung up a Goldy Whitehead?

LB: Yes but he would know nothing about it, he wouldn't know what you were talking about.

KH: Yes, I think I must have rung him up.

LB: The Nankervis' yes, they only had country up at Geehi and Groggan.

KH: There's a Jimmy Nankervis that I'm supposed to see at Corryong.

LB: I doubt if they've ever been to Toolong.

KH: Errol Scammel might be good, but I think he too was mainly Dead Horse Gap way, up the other end of the mountains.

LB: And he only used to take fishermen.

KH: Yes, that could be true.

LB: He used to do that for a living.

KH: He used to take up Elyne Mitchell in the winter time to the edge of the snow, up Hannel's Spur and then they'd go ^{off} and ski.

LB: He was more for the tourist side. He might have had a few cattle somewhere up in there, but it wouldn't have been a lot. But apart from Wheelers, and we used to take ^{from} Greg Greg sometimes some of ^{their's} - that was Greg Greg station - the Milnes have it now, it used to be Pierces - my first husband's aunt. Paddy Daly would occasionally, if we were short of a man help ^{them}, he wouldn't have been there to have done much either. That's right, ^{the} time my daughter got so ill, we had to send home, it was Paddy Daly that went and got him - ^{and} rode all night.

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KH: She got ill out at Wheelers?

LB: No not at the hut, at home. My husband was up in the mountains and the doctor didn't think she was going to live, she got very ill. That would have been the time I think they were building ^{the} hut and dad was up there too and dad said he hardly slept for a week because there he was not knowing what was happening to his dear little granddaughter. Although it was nice up there, it was worrying.

KH: Your daughter seems to be a good yardstick to sort out some of these dates by, when was she born.

LB: She was born in ... it's her birthday on Thursday and she will be 47.

KH: 1935 she was born.

LB: Yes that would be right.

KH: She rode up there when she was five or something the first time.

LB: She wouldn't have been any more, if she were five.

KH: So that was 1940, the War had already started. You went up there before she was born, a couple of years before she was born, soon after you were married!

LB: Yes and then after we were married and after she was born, that stopped me for a while, and then I used to go quite often.

KH: So in the 40s you went quite a lot until what ...

LB: I've been trying to think when we didn't have the mountains, I'm sure we still had the mountains when we got the new home and the farm. We weren't in the home long when my husband had his first heart attack, then we just sold everything and retired, built a home in Corryong. The new home on the farm was built about 27-28 years ago and he will have been dead 18 years this year, so we were only in it a few years when he had his heart attack.

KH: Sounds like the early 50s!

LB: Then he lived for about 8-10 years after he'd had the first one, with a few in between.

KH: Sounds like the late 40s or early 50s was the last time you went in there?

LB: Yes it ~~would~~ have been late 50s the last time I'd have been there.

KH: In the late 50s your daughter would have been over 20 by then.

LB: Yes and she hadn't been there for a few years, she was working. She left home about 17, 18. This niece of mine - they'd have been kids when we took them up - say 10 to 14 - that would be about the age of them both.

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LB: That would be about the time when they were finished going up.

KH: Right that brings us to '48 or '49 or so. Colin told me on the phone that he thought the hut, this is probably the old Wheelers that he's referring to, was built in about 1925 or so and that he camped in the old hut.

LB: That must be this remodelled one.

KH: You reckon it was remodelled about '33, '34, before your daughter was born.

LB: Yes, but when this one here was first built, that's there now, that would be what he is talking about, that's what he's speaking about. Is that damn tape still on.

KH: Yes I've turned it over, it goes for 1½ hours.

LB: Oh well if somebody hears a couple of words that shouldn't be in it, too bad.

KH: You didn't say anything...

LB: You wouldn't like me to repeat some of ^{about} "One Arm"?

KH: Yes.

LB: No I don't think so.

KH: His swearing, I've heard a lot of swearing in my time. There's a number of people who refer to his swearing. Lindsay Willis talked about it and Elyne Mitchell talked about it.

LB: And yet you know Elyne Mitchell really didn't know him.

KH: By hearsay mainly.

LB: She didn't come to To_wong until after the War. Tom and Elyne, the oldest child would be only 40.

KH: I know they started having children in the late 30s. There were two daughters first. They were very busy skiing in the 30s and then Tom went off to the War, he became a prisoner of war I think.

LB: She didn't come there until she was well grown up.

KH: Yes I know, she met Tom through skiing.

LB: She can't go back that many years.

KH: She was going by hearsay partly and the fact that they went there with their jeeps in 1949.

Interruption

LB: ^{He}. spilt a cup of hot tea and gave her carbuncles around the neck. That was in the first Wheeler hut, the one's that is down below.

KH: How can spilt tea give you carbuncles?

LB: She got burnt, it scalded her.

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KH: That was Charlie's mother, in the old hut?

LB: The original.

KH: That would have been back in the '20s.

Interruption

KH: Would I be able to borrow some of these, four or five to possibly have copies made. This one is a beauty of Wheelers hut, it tells you about what state it was in, about the fences, shows you where it is because it's got Jargungal in the distance, it's a good one. I think there's bound to be other things turn up, I think that happens to most people when I interview them. They're so surprised that's someone is even interested in the first place.

LB: After you rang me that night, I went one day and I scribbled down these few notes and it took me about 2 hours to find where I'd put them. I had those of us in the jeep up there.

KH: It's not that important, I can always get some of that story from Tom.

LB: I've forgotten half the people that used to go with us. We'd get to the foot of the mountain and Tom would get out and pick a gum leaf and put it in the back wheel of the jeep to keep the evil spirits away. I bet he didn't tell you that?

KH: No. I've never really done a proper interview with him.

LB: And he had an old hat with the cross bones on the front of it and we used to go up and all take steaks - b.b.q. - in the bush ...

KH: When you went skiing?

LB: Yes. This was before the Snowy, there were no roads there then. We got right up on one of the spurs and we said 'look if we go down - zigzag - Cooma is just down over there sort of thing' and we always wanted to do it. We had this old jeep 'Iris' and we used to just go on these trips. We'd sit up and have these lovely b.b.q. and everything you could think of and Tom would sit up with a tin of bully beef and his old tin mug. Quite eccentric, always has been - it's fun with these people with all these brains I think. But as for any of the mountains and what we did and the happenings up there, you do forget.

KH: Do you remember any other outstanding things about ^{"Wingy"} or about any stories that he told or saying ^S he had, apart from the ones that you can't record.

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LB: He was a very down to earth man, he was never a drinker, he smoked cigars and there wasn't a thing he couldn't do.

KH: Were there any particular stories that he told?

LB: I can't think of any particular one that he used too. Of course they reckon the Kellys were into Toolong you know.

KH: The Kelly Gang?

LB: He swore by that.

KH: Did he talk about the gold rush?

LB: Yes, and the Kiandra gold rush, he used to go through there and the mountains, but I don't know that he was ever up there when they were digging, I don't think. He always used to say there's still gold there.

KH: He never did any panning himself.

LB: No and we never bothered when we went up there either. There was an old chap by the name of Anderson used to live in a house right on the river at To-wong. My father's told me this too, that he'd kill a beast and hang it up at night and he'd be gone next morning - it would be the Kellys and then pack it back to To-wong. So it all probably was in the time of the Kellys and the Wheelers, I mean the very original hut, they may have used it.

KH: Was there anything of that original hut left?

LB: I don't remember.

KH: You don't remember any old fruit trees, ^{old} tracks, or ^{old} foundations?

LB: I could have ridden over old bits of timber and not taken a great deal of notice, I suppose I have but not to be confident and say yes I know just where that post was. But of course that could have gone from the time I was born until when I got married. I don't know what happened in that period of time.

KH: That sounds like a very old hut that one. Do you remember anything about the building of Wheeler's hut, like what time of the year they cut the trees?

LB: When my father was up there, that was in the summer.

KH: Did they go up earlier in the spring to fell the trees?

LB: No.

KH: Would they fell and split at the same time?

LB: Well yes, because they only did this remodelling in the one jolt. I think they went after ^{Christ-}mas, I think. I would say they probably left January and come back March. They were a long time, a couple of months.

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KH: The floor was already in, in the old hut?

LB: Yes, two rooms. They probably trimmed it, levelled it off.

KH: And the windows were in?

LB: Yes. I would say that they levelled the floor off and probably put new bits in. I know they had to put new foundations, jack it up.

KH: New peers probably!

LB: Yes, they had a bit of that to do and I think the chimney was rebuilt, it was only a tin chimney.

END OF SIDE 2.

END OF TAPE.