

1967

SUBJECT                    Gilbert Cecil Russell (Bert)    (72 years old)  
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                             Braddon, ACT                      Ph 47 0119

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TOPIC                        Early days at Adaminaby and in the mountains

INTERVIEWERS             Dorothy Brown - KHA  
                             Deidre Shaw - KHA

I lived in the old town. Our place went under water in Old Adaminaby. We were a big family of 13 kids and with mother and father that made 15 altogether. I left there in 1940. My dad died and when he died I got out. I came to here and then I joined the Air Force and did not get back until December 1945. I lived at Queanbeyan for a little while before we came out here.

I was born in Adaminaby. I went to the old public school on the hill. I just messed around there. I did a bit of fencing, ringbarking, general labouring work.

I put some fences in for Coles who had the place on the Eucumbene River at Benefield they called it. I did a couple of mile of it and then I worked for G W Mackay up on the plain, on the back of Bald Hill.

(Dorothy)                    Is that the one Mackay's Hut is called after?  
Tibeaudos?

1968

No, it would be a different one. There were a couple of other Mackays there. Norman was up at Mountain View and Big Sam was between Mountain View and Adaminaby but this G W Mackay he was not related to these fellows, or they might have been distantly related, but they didn't claim any relationship.

He was a terrific man. I could go there any time and start work. I didn't have to ask. I would just start work and when other jobs come up I would say "Well, righto, I am finished. I'll see you later on". And he'd say: "Righto" and away I'd go and do the other job whatever it was and when I came back I would give him a few days spell and then I'd ride out again on the pony. I never asked about a job or anything because it was always right. He used to say: "If any of you fellows that works and knows how to look around and find yourself a job, you're the sort of fellows I want." I used to ride around his fences and have a look at his sheep and that sort of thing to make sure they weren't fly-blown or knock a bit of wig off them or crutch them. There was a bit of timber there too. Dry timber lying about. I used to take one of his hands from down in the yard and go up and stack them into heaps and burn it out of the road so there would be plenty of grass. I didn't have to ask him for a job - I just used to go out there and put my pony in the paddock with the rest of them and my gear in the bunkhouse.

There was always plenty of water there but nothing like there was after the dam. To look at it now you would wonder where the people lived because people lived all over that flat you know; down by the racecourse and the showground. Before Adaminaby was a well stretched-out town. A lot of people lived down on the road to Cooma.

1969

There was Mackays, and Chalkers and Ecclestons and O'Neils, they all lived down there. Down the bottom Rossiter had a shop there, a general store and up the road a little bit further there was a bakehouse, Greg Welch & Co and across the road from them old Jack Kelly had a blacksmith shop and on further a bit was the bottom pub The Australian Hotel.

I think originally the bloke that had it was a fellow of the name of Cawsley. Old Tom Cawsley was his name. There was three pubs there; there was The Australian and up the road was the old Commercial and above that again was the one that Yen had a garage at, The Federal. It got burnt out.

We lived on what was called The Flat. The house paddock was about 3 acres.

There were two schools. There was the convent school where the nuns were the teachers and there was the public school where all of us unropable fellows went. And we all went to that one unless you were a Catholic then all the Catholics went to the other one.

I had a band there for a long time, or I played in a band with Ron Clugston. It was a five piece band that over the years we had different fellows in this thing. I used to play fiddle. Ron was the pianist and a fellow by the name of Cliff Smith he played with us for a while. He got a trumpet but he wasn't much good at it and they advised him to get something else so he got a saxophone and he made a job of it. He learned to play. Henty Kennedy was another one. Henry was his name but they used to call him Henty and he got a B Flat tenor-sax which is

a different pitch and then a brother of mine was drumming for a while. A bloke by the name of Mat Foley was drumming and he left us and then Bert Tozer he did some drumming for us but I stuck religiously to the fiddle except on nights when they would have a ball. On Friday it would be a ball and the juvenile on Saturday night and the ball used to go from 8 o'clock till 4 in the morning. They started supper as they called it about half past eleven or quarter to twelve at night and they would take about half the quantity of the people in the hall and as they came back more would go in and we had to break it up so that we would be there playing all the time. We had to have music going all the time and with only one pianist I used to have to sit in and fill in for the pianist and that sort of business. When I went for tea there was no fiddle because there was no one else to play the fiddle. There was enough there to keep the music going. I was generally the last bloke.

We had it in the finish that <sup>we played at</sup> Berridale, Jindabyne, Dalgety and Nimmitabel, Cooma, Yarrangobilly Caves and Kiandra and down to Tumut. We used to go all over the place. And we used to go down to Bega. They had a band in Bega too and someone said "Oh no, you ought to get the band from Adaminaby. They play decent music. Good music." Old time music and we were up with the modern stuff too. There was quite a lot of jazz and a lot of people couldn't play jazz, couldn't play the correct tempo and we could. We used to have people waiting. They used to postpone their ball. Jindabyne was one in mind because they wrote to me once and said that they hoped to be holding their annual ball at the Catholic Church or something on such-and-such a date, could I tell them whether we were engaged for that or what was the nearest date that we would get to it. I remember the first time it had to be about a month away we had it because that was the only one we had vacant so I just

wrote back and told them that. Said I was sorry we couldn't help them because the only vacant one we had was on such-and-such a date in such-and-such a month and they wrote back and said "Would you please keep that open for us, and we will go ahead and advertise our ball for that night". It was two nights - a Friday night and a Saturday night.

It was good money because it was during the depression - in the 30s - Hungry 30s they used to call them. We were were making 30/- for the weekend. We were certainly earning it from 8 at night to 4 in the morning for a ball and 8-12 for juveniles.

I got a job up here (Canberra). I just walked into the pub for a drink at the Ainslie Rex and old Les Hooker, the big estate agent. He took over all the Rex pubs in NSW and this was one of them. I walked in there and a bloke come over to me. He was the boss fellow. I knew him. I had known him for years. He said "I never knew you played music." I said "I don't: I make a noise but that's all." He said "That's not what I heard. I have a Sax player that is going and that only leaves the drummer and a pianist." They only had a trio. He said "You play 2 or 3 instruments don't you?" Well, at that time I was playing fiddle, guitar and I used to do a bit of a song and dance act. Anyhow, I started there with them and again we reverted back to the old time music and all the old people, the old women, you never saw anything like it. They were flocking into the pubs, into the bar and some were dancing out in the back - they could hear it out the back in the little dance room they had there, the dance floor was in the back there - and I used to get up and tell them yarns; not dirty but getting fairly close to the wind and those that were listening pretty intently would get it. The drummer they had there he was a very good singer and a very good

dancer so he and I used to work out a dance routine and we would turn this on and the old pianist would play. A bloke by the name of Anderson. He had a brother who played for years at the Trocodero. This bloke couldn't play but he was playing on his brother's reputation. He was just an old thumper and half the time if you didn't know what you were about you wouldn't know what he was playing. Anyway, we would put on this song and dance act and I used to do a bit of a turn with the guitar. Someone would say "What about giving us a few bars of Hot Canary on the fiddle". "Yeah, yeah mate." So I would get up and I'd play something else. "How was that?" "Beautiful, beautiful". He had no idea what he was talking about.

All the old girls they reckoned there was nothing like me, nothing like it at all. I would sit down with them and have a beer and I might even buy them one. It was costing me nothing. I would just call the waiter over and say "Give these ladies a drink". "Oh, we aren't ladies". "I know you're not but we'll let it go for the moment", and I would buy them a drink. They used to flock into this place and old Les Hooker come up one time and Trudy Hearn, the manager come and he said "Hooker wants to see you". I said "What for? What have I done wrong now?" "Nothing as far as I know" he said. So I went down and I spoke to old Les and we had a drink and he said "They tell me you are the fellow responsible for this band here". I said "No, I'm not responsible for it at all. They were playing here long before I came here." He said "Since you came they have taken, the money has gone up by about 300%. I have some people down town and we've got 6 pubs in Sydney, around Sydney, I want you to go down....."

Nell: They asked if you had any pictures and I was just showing her the photo of the old house.

Bert: That's where we were born. All of us. 13 of us. 13 in our family. 8 boys and 5 girls and I'm the last of them (alive?) There were a couple younger than me - 2 younger than me. My sister, the youngest sister, she died last christmas 12months.

Dorothy: Did most of the 13 stay in Adaminaby or did they move away?

Nell: No they stopped there until there was only two of them there.

Bert: When I left there I think there was a general exodus. I said "Well, I'm getting out of here." My dad died and I decided to get out. He was an invalid for most of his life. He had a paralytic stroke and he was all gone down one side and he had broken his hip and the doctors didn't realise it was broken, or reckoned they didn't. We took him to Cooma hospital and they said his hip had been broken and they said they couldn't do much about it. They said they could set it back but he would probably be shorter in one leg than the other - and he was, he was 2" shorter. When he died I said "Well that's it. I'm getting out". I lived in the town.

I packed up then and left and I came down to Queanbeyan.

I wandered out here one day. I got off the bus at Kingston and came up through the railway yards and up to the power house. A bloke walks up to me and said "You're not looking for a job are you?". I was dressed up in a navy suit, grey hat, necktie and a pair of light shoes, black shoes. I said "Well, if there's one going, then yes." He said "Well, here's the boss. He is short." They were shovelling coal at the power house. He said "Have you ever done any of this?" "Oh, yes. Plenty of it down the coast." I had never done any in my life but I knew how to swing a pick and shovel and how to use a shovel. I'd been in bush work all my life. He said "There's a 15 ton truck. See how you can handle that one." I said "Right oh." There's three blokes in a truck over the other side and one bloke said "Hey, you are going too fast." I said "It's the only way to get rid of it mate. I hate the sight of this bloody stuff and the sooner I can get it out the better". So I got it out. Over come one of the blokes and said "Now look what you've done. You've got to get another one." I said "That's all right. That's what I'm here for. I'm getting paid for it." So they got me another truck and I did that one as well. He said "You can't tackle a job like that - come back tomorrow." I said "No. I'm here now. That's it. If you want a job that's it. If you want a man, I'm your man and that what's I'm here for." He said "Suit yourself". I didn't have lunch or anything with me and I didn't know where I could buy anything but I didn't have to because the blokes had too much each they reckoned and gave me 2 or 3 sandwiches and that was it. So I had lunch. The next day I came in a different bit of clobber though - not white silk shirt and navy suit.

It was just the fact that there was a job there and there was a few bob. I was intending to go to Port Kembla and the steel works. I stayed here which was a good thing because he said there was only 2 or 3 day's work but he kept me on for a fortnight and he came to me and said: (in those days you had to have a registered number to get a job for the Government in Canberra. You had to have your name registered.) "Listen. Well, I've fixed that part of it and I like putting men on but I hate putting them off, especially when they'll work." I said "That's all right. It's been very good of you to keep me on for as long as you did." And he said "I'm not putting you off today. Don't think that. I'll give you a bit of time to digest it but leave everything to me. There's another bloke down here and he might be able to place you." So I stayed there for about a week and then "Everything's right." he said. "You won't lose any money, lose nothing." he said. "Go down and see a bloke at the Government Stores at the top of the ramp, a bloke named Jack Shea and tell him you're the bloke I sent down."

He (Jack Shea) looked at me and said "There's not much of you." And I said "Well, it doesn't take a lot because there's not much brains required to shovel coal and cement and that sort of thing about." He said "He gave you a big wrap up and there doesn't look to be enough of you there to do anything." So I said "Well, you'll find out won't you?" "Oh", he said "There's a shovel in the box up there. Go down and help them blokes", doing the same thing, unloading coal. So I hopped in the truck on my own and said to them "What about you blokes splitting up a bit and one bloke coming over here and giving me a hand with this one." So they had a bit of a confab and they sent one bloke over. He was a real drone and I said "Get you're head down and tail up and keep that shovel going and we'll get this thing out today with a bit of luck." And

1976

we did. This bloke kept his eye on me, this boss, for a day or two and everytime he wanted someone to do overtime he used to come to me. He's say "Saturday morning. You'd better come out Saturday morning for a couple of hours work, but once you come you get paid for the half day at penalty rates." I said "Righto". So I'd come out and I'd do the work and finally I got the brainwave to join up.

I joined the airforce.

There were quite a few of us. A brother of mine, Percy, he got some sort of fever in New Guinea and it finished up he was hospitalised. A bloke come to me one day and said "Are you any relation to Perc Russell?" And I said: "Yes. He's a brother of mine." He said "I'm very sorry about that. I thought by the look of you you looked a bit like him." "Yes, he's my brother." I said. "You mean he was your brother." he said. "No. He's still my brother." "But I was with him the night he died." he said. "But he didn't die." I said. "But he had scrub typhus." he said. "Yes" I said, "But he didn't die. He got over it and they sent him back to Townsville or somewhere and as soon as he got right back into the jungle again." He died of a heart attack in Queanbeyan here.

I had a brother in Goulburn, my youngest brother, the youngest one in the family, and he was a male nurse during the war, in the army at Goulburn and he married a girl there after the war and got a job at the chenille factory making bedspreads and that sort of thing and he got some of this stuff into his lungs. They had to sedate him.

1977

Our old house in Adaminaby, it went under. We had a big orchard there. Our yard where we lived was 3 acres. There was a gully in the middle and that used to supply all the water we wanted because you could put a well down anywhere and get water. We had it right at our back door, a well, and there were some wells that I knew were there but they had been filled in and I asked about them, what they were and that sort of thing and the old man told me what was what. There used to be one there for the cattle or cows or horses and that sort of thing. When they put the ones up close to the house then it was no trouble at all, they just run a bit of water down there and they had their trough. They didn't have a pump actually, it was just suction down the hole and there was this pipe. You would block it up, the hole in it for the air to go out and then you would fill it with water and when you (pulled) out at the bottom it sucks the water through from the well and away you go. A syphon.

There was a big gravel pit on top of the hill and that was our snowshoe course there. We made them. The old dad was a cracker on them. He would go up in the mountains around the old mill at Alpine or Sawyers Hill and get a nice little mountain ash and drop him down and split him up into palings, take them home and he would leave them lying around out in the sun but tied flat so that they didn't buckle until all the sap dried out of them and then he would light a big fire and a bucket of water and dip the skis in it, the nose of them, put them in the fork of a tree or an old grind stone that we had and pull them round with a rope and tie them and that put the curve in the nose and a slight curve in the centre. We had none of these clip on boots or anything like that, it was just a matter of a piece of leather across the centre of the ski.

Deidre: Are we talking about skis or snowshoes?

Bert: Skis. We used to call them snowshoes in those days before the foreigners got over here and told us about their skis. Anyhow, we used to call them snowshoes. I have mustered cattle in them, not in them but on them. We did it at one time at Rules Point. We were up there and the snow come a bit early on them and they got trapped. A bloke by the name of George Day, whose wife was the licencee of the Yarrangobilly Caves House, and as soon as the other cattle went out and sheep, he would go round and round up his cattle and take them off and put them in the paddock. The Murrumbidgee River runs right through this paddock and he got caught and we had to go out and help him, me and a brother of mine who used to work at the Rules Point Pub, he was a sort of a groom I guess, and he used to kill the sheep and beast and that sort of thing for food and anyhow he had to come over and the Day brothers came up and they brought one of the girls, Joan was the girl, she was a very big built girl and she came up riding a horse and leading three draughts. They take the shoes of them and go across the river.

Deidre: Why do they take the shoes off them?

Bert: Well, the snow builds up and it is just like ice and it will keep going up and up.

Deidre: So the horses walk just on their natural feet so the snow doesn't build up?

Bert: No, it is just the steel shoes on the horse.

Dorothy: There was a ski champion back in the 50s called Billy Day. Would he have been one of those?

Bert: He would have been one of Greg Day's boys I guess. The Days all lived at the Yarrangobilly Caves and it would have been one of his kids I suppose. Buster Day, of course, he moved out of there and went to Tumut and Greg married a girl called Patterson from Kiandra and George ... I spent a winter with them at Kosci with George when he got to be the manager of the place at Kosci, the Chalet. I was up there running around with skis and people used to come up on Saturday morning and a bloke from Jindabyne used to go in and pick them up at Cooma and bring them up and the next week he would take them down, take them back and pick another mob right through the winter. This was about 1935.

Deidre: The Chalet must have been about the only place in the mountains.

Bert: George was the boss cocky. They had the pub there at the Blue - Cold Waterhole. There was schooner sitting on the bar there and a 5 pound note in it for anyone who could take it out and dip it into the water and drink it straight down without stopping and a lot of them tried but none of them ever done it. It was just like ice.

We were there. There was myself, Buster Day and a fellow by the name of Skardarazy, an Austrian bloke. And there were two young fellows came up there to stay, they came up there for the weekend. I can't recall the name at the moment, but they were told not to leave the Chalet, to stay there, in no circumstances were they to go out. It was a black mist came down over the whole of the hills and they

went out and they didn't come back so the next day we had to go and have a look and see if we could find them and eventually Scardera~~sy~~ found one of them with the skis sticking up behind a rock and he bellowed out "I've got one here" he said "Out behind a rock". We scratched around and got the snow off and we had one bloke but can't touch him. We had to go back to the Chalet.

Deidre: Was he dead or alive?

Bert: No, he was dead. He froze to death overnight. We rang the police at Jindabyne and they come up and then the big trot was on. We had to get the dogs and the sled and go out and pick him up. It was just useless trying to look for any more, because there was another bloke out there somewhere. I can't even think of their names now. I got an idea one of them was Evans, but I'm not really sure about that. Anyhow, we got him and brought him back and the newspaper blokes from Cooma of course were up there with their little cameras. So they took the dog sled, you know, the dog sled was something and they put it in the big paper in Sydney at the time, it was a magazine type of thing, sort of like a Bulletin, and they had this with pictures of the three ski men going out with the sled with the dog and bringing this corpse back and this was so silly because we'd brought him in 2-3 days before this and he was gone - he was in Cooma in the morgue at the hospital. But this was about 3 days later that they put this thing in the Bulletin and it showed us going out and it showed us coming back with the body in the box. So silly.

They got the other fellow I think in the spring time in the thaw. Somebody found him. But this bloke had the right idea, the one we got. When he knew he was lost with no chance of getting back and he stuck in his skis with the point sticking up over this rock and with the wind blowing and the snow drifts over and it covered him completely and only the point of the ski was sticking up.

Deidre: Was he trying to make a little shelter for himself?

Bert: No. He was putting it there in case someone came looking for him.

Deidre: You mentioned dogs.

Bert: Yes they had dogs for pulling the sled. They were husky types. They weren't pure husky but they were husky type dogs and they were trained to pull the sled.

Dorothy: I think Mawson used dogs.

Bert: I think they had them up there when they did all that work there a few years back too, on the Snowy Scheme. I think they would have needed them there for some jobs. They have the snow cats and that sort of thing but then there are places where they can't go with those and you can with dogs.

When I left there I went to work for a fellow by the name of George Warne who put some roadwork down through the other side of Jindabyne down off of the Ingebyra River. We were down there. I put in

quite a few miles of road through there just round through the hills. There was no tracks even we just had to break it out of new country out of the side of the hills. There was a river running down through there, a creek rather, and they went down to the Victorian border with this road job.

Deidre:           What was the purpose of the road?

Bert:             It was going through to Victoria. There is a road right through there now.

Deidre:           Yes, it comes out near Buchan doesn't it?

Bert:             Yes, that is the one. In those days there was stock in all the mountains in the summer for the grazing. That was before they put the skids under them and hunted all the stockmen out of the mountains which was the worst thing they could have ever done because had they left them there even now you go up there and there is nothing. In those days they had the place stocked with cattle and sheep for a mere pittance but the Government was getting quite a bit of money, otherwise the stockmen - I did it - they used to supply me with matches. They would give you a dozen boxes of matches and as you ride along on the horse you would strike them and flick them ahead and burn out all the old tussocks and that sort of thing so it was practically impossible to have a fire there in the summer because all the rubble and rubbish was burnt so when they got the stock out of there they burnt all the old tussocks and snow grass and that sort of thing off out of the road so that when the stock came back up again in the spring, late spring, there would be nice green feed for them. Of course, there's no fires when there's green feed and there's no

rubble lying around there to start a fire with the sun. We used to burn. You would track them for miles. A bloke riding on a horse might say "Oh, I'll go up to the Blue Waterholes for a ride today. There's nothing to do". He would get on a horse and all the way up he would see some rubbish and would burn off as he went. They could track you for miles.

Deidre:           Did you use the huts up in the mountains?

Bert:             Yes. I helped to build a hut there for two people from Adelong, Jim Prowse and George Allan. They had a snow lease across from Rules Point Hotel across the river, the 'Bidgee River. I used to go up there every year. I would get a job taking stock. That was enough money. It was 30/- a day. Good stuff. I used to get it. I wouldn't touch it. I would go out to Adelong with them, take the sheep out and come back to Tumut with a pocket full of money and very often I got a lot more than I should have. They were both good blokes and I would look after the hut all winter for them to get a bit of extra money. I would come back and I would buy half a ton of chaff for the horses, I always had two horses, and the rest would be food for myself, and the dogs of course used to have to rely on me to get food for them. I used to take them out and they would look for food. I used to winter there every year and in September ...

Deidre:           Where was this hut?

Bert:             It was at Rules Point. Prowse's Paddock they used to call it.

Dorothy:          Is it still there?

Bert: No. It has been burnt down. A bushfire went through it and got it. There were two there as a matter of fact. There was this one I helped to build in 193--

Dorothy: Did it have a name?

Bert: They used to call it Prowse's Hut. Nearly everyone that built a hut, they called it after them. Like Locker's Hut, Prowse's Hut, Delaney's Hut down towards Adaminaby. Then there was a lot of them up on Long Plain: Long Plain Hut and there was a fellow there, they used to call him The Radium King. He reckoned he could find radium up in the hills there. He was finding money but where the hell he was getting it I don't know. A fellow by the name of George Gavin. They christened him The Radium King. Where he got his money from I don't know. He was the best man I have ever seen handle a horse. He could get a horse, a brand new wild horse and he would talk to him. He would crawl all over him. He would get underneath the legs and play with his belly and the horse would take no notice of him. Anyone else to do it would be mad. We busted a horse in, my brother and I. There was a big mob of brumbies in what was called Fiery, the Fiery Mountain and this was, of course, from the old Rules Point Hotel. We built a yard shaped with a wide mouth into it and a narrow end. We got our horses in pretty good nick and we started this mob up and headed back and they come back beautifully. Into the corner and bust if they didn't get a bit excited. ....Oh, we'll just come along quietly following the back of them. And he got a bit excited and he raced in amongst them. I don't know what he thought he was going to do. He never did explain why he did it, but he raced in there and they turned and they come back out and they all got away - all but one little

fellow. He was a little weed and he wasn't a foal he was a fully grown horse. He was the only one we got, he was the only one left. I put a couple of ropes on him and I said "I'll take him up and give him to the old Radium King up here." And I took him up and he had to follow because I had him tied around the pommel of the saddle and he had to come because it was much easier than being dragged by the neck. Anyway, we got him up there and the old Radium King was there and he heard me coming and I used to whistle all the time. I get up there and I put this thing in the yard and shut the gates and I said "Have you got the billy boiling?" and he said "Yep". So I said "I'd better come over and have a cup of tea with you." So I did. I had a cup of tea and he had a damper made. I said "I've got a horse down there in the yard." "A horse?" he said. "Yeah." "Oh, well, we'll go and have a look at him." So down we go and I said "Only look with one eye because if you use both you'll have him all gone, he'll disappear." "Well, he's a pretty little fellow isn't he." And he walked in and this fellow's ears were back and he never made any move and he walked right up to him and he was talking to him and he put his hand on his rump and he gave him a bit of a pat and he just thumped his back a little bit and he was all over him like a rash. Anyhow, I went up to the hut again and I came back down after and here he is cross straddling him. He wasn't sitting on him but he was straddling this little fellow but his legs were touching the ground without touching the horse and he said "He's a quiet little fellow. I must get that little gig over there and I'll put him in that and drive him over to the Point in the morning to get some chaff for him to feed him." I said "For a start he wouldn't pull you and the gig." "Yes he would", he said. And I said "Another thing, if you put a bag of chaff in the sulky, it'll lift his feet off the ground." "No," he said, "It's all right". And he used to put him in.....

Those huts up there they were a boon and there was an unwritten law there. There was an old fellow by the name of Mick Shanley - he died about 100 yards from his hut out at Kiandra near the 3 Mile Dam and he didn't make it by about 100 yards. The snow just got him and that was the end of him. There was an unwritten law there for all those huts in the mountains that you left matches, you had baking powder, flour and tea and dry wood. You would put dry wood inside. That is the thing that was done. All the huts were the same. Some fellows would come along, especially tramps and they knew that this was on and they would burn the wood and they would eat what was there and some people would leave half a damper there or a lump of meat or something as well and it saved many lives. Undoubtedly it would have saved lives.

Nell: Mostly it was people that was used to being there with the stock.

Deidre: Did you have trouble with vandals?

Bert: No

Nell:

Bert: Normally I was there all the winter and when it came springtime I used to go back to Adaminaby because the music season was on again.

Deidre: Didn't you play in winter?

Bert: It was too cold for people to go out at night. We used to walk. Put an old pair of gumboots on, put the shoes under the arm and away we'd go up the hill to wherever the party was on and take the old ones off and put your dancing shoes on and that was it. Then walk home again in the morning when it was all over through the snow. It would come over your knees in snow.

Nell: You'd hitch your dress up to your waist and put your overcoat on so you wouldn't be cold and you'd be holding that up too and plough on through the snow.

Dorothy: You didn't wear skis?

Nell: No, I couldn't ski.

Bert: I might have one or two dances and that was it otherwise they would have me stuck on the end of a concertina or an accordian and that was it. Yes, with the band we used to go to Nimmitabel, Bredbo. We played for the opening of their hall in Bredbo in the 30s; it would have been the early 30s. We played for the opening of the hall. As a matter of fact there was Henty Kennedy, myself, Bert Norton and a woman whose husband was the stationmaster at Michelago. I can't tell you her name now. She played the piano, and played very well. They got the hall finished and they had a big dance night and they had a great old time; full band. There was a little place there, Cowra Creek, out from Bredbo out towards the coast and they were doing a bit of mining, getting a bit of gold out of the creek and they all flocked into town, more to the pub than anything else.

Deidre: What made you decide to leave the mountains?

Bert: I don't know really. My dad, when he died, we were real mates. I never called him Dad, I always called him Bill - Bill was his name and I always called him Bill and I got a clip on the ear one time from his sister, my auntie, she said "That's your father you're talking to." I said "I know. I know him better than you know him even if you are his sister. He calls me Bert and I call him Bill." The old man looked over at me and give me a bit of a wink. She was very upset over me calling my father Bill. It was just that the old fellow was a cripple for so long that you got used to it and I used to cut his hair and shave him and all this sort of business and if I was going up the town for something and I had a car I would say "Come on, we had better go." and we would go up the town and I would put a couple of plonks into him and he would want to dance and the old ladies would say "Come on Will, dance." - they used to call him not Bill but Will. He was a funny old fellow. If I was going to Cooma and back in the one day he would say "Well, I had better go with you. You will need a gate opener."

The Russell family up there were the first settlers in that area. There were a lot of different Russells there. For some reason they claimed there was no relationship amongst them but there was too much evidence there that shows that they were related. They were all related. They must have had a bust-up. They took up selections.

Deidre: Do you think they were all related back to some original settler with his numerous sons who had all taken up selections?

Bert: Well, I know that they were because what happened was that they all hit the Monaro. They were the first settlers there actually and they all denied that they were related but as the years went on there were too many instances where you could pick that they were related. For instance Mark is not a common name and there is a Mark Russell in our family and there were three other Mark Russells in town, like in the other mobs and there were about four Bill Russells, or five. I worked it out for my niece. She wanted to know all about them and when they came out and whether they were convicts. They were not convicts because convicts could not take up a settlement. These fellows come straight through onto the Monaro and they spread out and they completely surround where the old town was. In our family we had a fellow named Percy Reginald, now one of the Bill Russells who lived over in the Picnic Gully area they had two sons - one was Percy and the other was Reginald and there's too many likenesses of appearance from the families and you have to say that they can't be anything but related. I think they all knew, the old people. Old Ned, my grandfather he knew. I don't know whether they were afraid that there was too many of them and they wouldn't get these leases as they were then, they were practically free. You take a piece and measure it off to whatever they wanted and that was it. Well, there were too many joining too. From Long Plain from the old town and Yaouk was a little plain there goes right through to the Kiandra road on the other side. That was the piece of old Ned Russell, my grandfather. He selected it, or his father selected it. I can still remember when the old house was on that Long Plain. I think the Clugston s have got a bit of it now and some of the Lockers had it after and I don't know how they finished up out there but that was originally, my ancestors' settlement. There was old Frank Russell, they spread everywhere these Russells, they spread right out to Providence, Walter

was out there. There was Walter and old Bill and old Ted. There were about four Ted Russells too. My grandfather, my dad's father, his name was Edward and another one of them was Edwin. A brother of mine who died here a couple of years ago his name was William Edward and my old man's name was William Edwin. That's where they went astray. I think it was their wives that was doing this, calling the kids after their father or their brother or somebody and getting such a batch of them. Talk about Ted Russell, there was one out at the Six Mile Bridge on the Kiandra Road, the old road, that's not there any more; then a bit further old Ted was just the other side again and there was a Ted in Adaminaby, he was a skin buyer and old Ned Russell, as we called him, because his name was Ted too, that was my grandfather, and my dad's name was William Edwin. It's a funny old mixture.

Deidre: What about the females? Did they do the same with the girl's names?

Bert: No, the girls were all pretty well just commonplace. In our family there were five girls and the eldest one was May, she died here a couple of years ago. She was 90. Then there was Ruby, then Violet, then Marie and the youngest one was Dorothy. Each had two names, of course, like Dorothy Eileen and Marie Ellen, and Selina May. May was Sarah Levina May but she got May; Maisey they called her, but it wasn't Maisey, it was May.

Old Digger Russell they used to call him, Joe, he said to me "Do you reckon our families were ever related?" and I said "I always said they were Joe". He said "So do I. No one will convince me that they weren't. They were cousins for sure, all the men were

definitely cousins. They were too much alike, not only in their features to look at but in their mannerism and the way they go about doing something." and I said "That's right Joe. I always thought that myself."

Deidre: Did they intermarry - the Russells?

Bert: No. They didn't. My old grandfather, old Ned, he married two sisters. He married one. They had two children, that was my dad and a girl, Ellen I think it was, and the old lady died. She had a sister who was a couple of years younger than her and old Ned married her then and they had two children, a boy and a girl. And she saw him out, or just about saw him out and their name was Brown, and they were sisters.

There was a mix up there with them. They came from Scotland or just over the border in Scotland but most of them come from northern England and they were the first mob and they all settled in that area.

My mother's people they came from Scotland. There was one little bad egg in the barrel there, but that didn't matter. His name was John Gilbert. My mother's name was Gilbert prior to marrying William Russell and Alec Gilbert was the father. John Gilbert didn't migrate to here when the others came. They went to Canada, him and his father. I think the mother was dead. In our case both the mother and the father they both came out here to Australia and they settled in Adaminaby, or just out of Adaminaby, between Adaminaby and Dry Plain. He bought a selection there. He bought it in Sydney before he come up there. They got going there and they had two children, my mum and Billy, her

brother. Johnny played up a bit when he was in Canada, him and old Angus and they moved them out here and they come to Australia. He came to that area too and that's how they got known around here. He's over here at Binalong. There's a grave there on the side of the road, John Gilbert's grave. Johnny was a bad boy in some sense. They reckon that he killed people but he never did. This Nelson that they reckon he shot at Collector, this policeman, I read the book that they had there - everything was run up on tick in those days until they got their pay from the government and this copper he drank two full half gallon jars of rum as well as Lord knows how much beer and other stuff that day and when they worked it out there was Gilbert, O'Malley and Hall. Those three blokes and Gilbert was the bloke that shot him but Gilbert, O'Malley and Hall were nowhere near the area at all - they proved that later on, that it wasn't them, but they always said it was Gilbert but they had to change their tune after because they found out who did shoot him, the copper. But the copper killed himself because he just walked out, straight out, and lifted the gun up in the air and he fired a shot and someone put the gun up in the air and it went straight into him. He got blamed for a lot of things he didn't do too, John, but he wasn't a good boy by any means. I'm not making excuses for him. He wasn't a tidy Sunday School boy or anything like that. He was a pretty rough sheep.

William Thomas Alexander was the old grandfather and the grandmother was Lavina

Nell: I can remember my grandfather's names too: Herbert Clarence Jones from Gundagai. Thomas Henry.....

Bert: The dog on the tuckerbox was for many, many years 9 miles out of Gundagai. Now it's 5, of course. Originally it was 9 miles from Gundagai on a little creek. There was a shop built out of tomato cases and orange cases and that sort of thing on the side of the road. And when what's-his-name wrote that song, Jack O'Hagan, it was 9 miles from Gundagai but they soon altered the thing when they altered the dog and brought it back in there and put him on the side of the road where he is now. Five fits into the rhyming the same as nine does. That is what it was originally.

Those huts up in the hills. There's miles of them. There are quite a few on Long Plain.

Deidre: Dorothy has a book (Huts of the High Country-Klaus Heuneke). Have you seen it?

Bert: No, I haven't. There's Kiandra. Talbingo. Goandra. Where was a hut at Goandra. It used to be a big house at Goandra. You go out from Kiandra here, only about 6 miles and there is a turning goes right down to Goandra. That was a big station at one stage and it belonged to Fred Lampe, a bloke from Wagga.

There was a hut at Long Plain, of course. Yarrangobilly Hill, just past Rules Point towards Tumut. I was in that general area. I was around Tantangara. I was in the whole lot of it before ever they put that dam in. There's Peppercorn, that's up the Plain too as well; and Coolamon - Codamine Plain, there's a hut there. Harris', that's old George Harris'.

There was a fairly big property and there was a bloke by the name of Sanko Smith, Jack Smith was his name, he had it at the finish and they used to go up over this mountain up over Yarrangobilly and down on the road through to Tumut. That's Currangorambla, or Currango as they call it these days but Currangoorambla was the full name for it and Old Currango.

Cooimbil. Where's Cooimbil - not this one - that's only Cooimbil Hole. They had the snow leases, various blokes there. This Harris lived there for most of his life and he had a son, Bung Harris, who was a legend. Bung and Percy and Jessie was the girl that's where they lived, old Pod Harris and he had the Rules Point Pub.

Circuits - that was only named because a bloke come there and they asked him what he wanted and he told them his name was Circuits. (laughs). It wasn't Circuits at all but they christened it Circuits.

That's the Goandra I was telling you about. It belonged to Fred Lampe.

Deidre: Lampe's were related to a lot of the people from Tumut and Talbingo?

Bert: Wagga mainly, but he had relatives in Tumut.

That's Pockets of course. It was just a hut. It was part of a snow lease initially.

Dorothy: Ogilvies hut was burnt down just a few weeks ago.

Bert: Was it. Well, that would be someone messing around in the dam.

Dorothy: Is Ogilvies towards Round Mountain Hut and Faithfull's Hut?

Bert: They had a lot of stock in there. It was one of those come and go thing with a summer lease and of course out again in the winter. Anyone could go there in the winter time. It doesn't matter who built the hut or who didn't, it was open to anyone who come across there in the winter time and it wasn't anybody's hut. That's what happened with a lot of these and that's why a lot of them got burnt down. There's no sign of this Prowse's. That was a very good one. It was just in near Goandra. Down that road to Yarrangobilly Caves there was a hut there. It was a beautiful hut too: in the open and big pine trees right round it but the last time I went through there it was standing but only just. Well, it wasn't standing, it was just leaning.

Then there's Delaney's hut back down this side of Kiandra; there's the rest house but everyone knows that beside the road. Delaney's is just in a little bit and then there's one that belonged to the Lockers on the other side of the road down in the scrub, there was a good hut there but I guess all these people messing around through there they just don't take any notice of anything like that now.

[Looking through book "Huts of the High Country"]

Here's one of my chimneys here. That's Tin Hut too.

I was the lad that jumped 27ft off skis at Kiandra.  
Homemade skis too. The old man made them for me.

Dorothy: Do you have any photos of yourself in those days?

Bert: No, I don't think so.

Nell: I'll show you a photo of the old house.

Bert: Every stick of that timber came out of the bush; all the shingles and floors. They fell the timber and underneath the things they put the joists on were red gum out of the mountains, they just cut off round lumps and set them in the ground and made the foundation and then they put the timber on - cut the timber for the floor. My dad and a mate of his, Paddy Bollard, they got to work on it with two adzes and you couldn't tell that it hadn't been sawn timber. It was beautiful and it went under water when they sunk the town.

The old place at Adaminaby it wasn't worth much money but there was an orchard there. There was a 3 acre paddock and I suppose about an acre and a half, or more, was under fruit trees and we used to put in a big garden every year and on the other side of this little gully we used to plough it up with a horse and a single furrow plough and when I was about 12 year old I could plough that paddock and harrow it and we used to sow oats. We always had 3-4 cows for butter and cream and milk and the old lady used to make cheese and that sort of thing and we used to run them on the town common as they called it in those days and we used to grow the oats for the cows and the horses, although the horses would be away for most of the year but they would be home at the

end of the winter period. We always had an old hand chaff cutter and old dad used to feed all the sheaves of this stuff through and some of the chaff was very long, but it didn't matter for cow feed anyhow. I don't know how many types of apples we would have had there and plums and we had two different types of pears and we had apricots, cherries. Everything you could think of and most of the trees that were there came out from England. They had them sent out just after they settled, and flowers. We had roses and peony roses; we had a beautiful garden and when we left they just ratted the garden and took everything. I would have liked some of the stuff. I finished up with some of the white ones, it was a white one with a mauve back, only small roses, they were more of a runner than a climber. I got them off my sister in Queanbeyan. I put it in the garden out here and when Nell's mother and step-father come over from NZ they stayed here for a while and he said he would like to do some gardening. He wanted to put a vegetable garden in and he dug this rose out. I could have shot him on the spot after all those years that it had been up there (Adaminaby) and come down here for just a short while and he dug it out. I said to him "Do you know that that rose is the only one of its kind in Australia and there is no way in the world we would ever get another one of it. Where did it go?" He said "Oh, I put it out with the rubbish and took it up to the dump."

Dorothy: Do you sometimes still go back to the mountains?

Bert: Yes, I go up there every year. I go up mainly to do a bit of fishing and just have a look around the place. I used to do a lot of messing around there. There was a team of us one time rode skis one time from Kiandra across to Kosi. They used to have picnic ski meetings and that type of thing. A girl named Rita Yan, her parents were Chinese

or half Chinese, and a girl named Maisie Bell who was a local from Kiandra before the place got skittled and Billy Pattinson. He was a good skier, a beautie. We called him Silver Billy, he won everything. He went down to Hotham and Buller one year and he cleaned the slate. He was only a kid; he was only about 14-15. We went over just for the ride on this.

Dorothy: How long did it take you?

Bert: It only took us a few hours - 6-8 hours. Straight up over the back of the hill - up where this Mt Selwyn is now - straight across the top, the ridge, and follow the top as near as you could. I think it was about 6 hours it took us, which isn't all that long because it is a fair step to Kosci and the mileage is something like 48-50 miles. There was one grown man amongst us, Billy Patrick, but the rest were all young fellows and girls.

Dorothy: Did you use skins or anything under your skis to help you climb up?

Bert: Oh no. We just walked up on the skis. You never carried any stocks or anything like that. Maybe a stick to kick you along a bit more but you didn't carry stocks, just too much of a nuisance.

Dorothy: Did you have packs?

Bert: Yes, we had packs with gear in it. No tucker because we might take a bunch of sandwiches each when we started but we would be there in time for a meal.

Dorothy: Was this to the Chalet or to the old hotel?

Bert: To the old pub it was up near this icy waterhole.

Dorothy: Your father used to make your skis for you.

Bert: Yes, he used to make them. He would put them in the fork of a tree. We had an old grind stone there where he used to grind the axes and there was an extra leg you could put on it, a long bolt thing that used to go under the seat of a sulky to shift the seat backwards and forwards. He used to put them in that, bend them and tie them with a rope and when they got cold you could use them.

Dorothy: They had a good camber.

Bert: That's right and the old fellow, they were pretty clever these old blokes - when I look at the old house, that place there and the way they built that - 4 or 5 years before we left there the thing was all moss grown with moss on the shingles on the roof. It is a work of art putting those up and the fireplace at the back of the front room as we used to call it in the old house, there was no cement in it, it was rocks and just clay, mud and as you put it in you lit a fire to seal the outsides of it. The old man showed me all this. The old chimney had all fallen down with no one to look after it and the old fellow couldn't do it. I said to him "I'm going to knock the rest of that down, Bill, and rebuild her." "Do you reckon you can do it?" "Yes, I'm sure I can do it. You don't go too far away though because I might want some advice." He said "I'll be here." So I knocked it all down and set to work on it and levelled it all out with a mattock at the bottom

and started putting the stones up and mixing up the red clay. There was plenty of that there where the old wells were around the top. So I got up to the top and I said "Where do I go from here?" to the old fellow. He said "You've got to put a hip now to bring it in to put your flue on." "How do I go about it?" He said "Well, sit down and think about it for a while and see what you come up with." So I said "I think you slope in a little bit each go to get it right" and he said "Yes, that's it". So I got this thing going and it looked like a million so I got it all finished and the old lady come back and she has a cup of tea there, I'd been 2-3 hours on this thing. It was still standing when we sold the place to the Snowies.

Dorothy:           What sort of timber did your father use to make the skis?

Bert:               Mountain ash. Those days they weren't graining them or anything. They used to split them with a (throw-hook?). He would split these off and when they had peeled off it was all (reached?) the whole of the bottom of the timber, well, top and bottom but he used to clean the top off with an old plane but if there was he left them in because he said that they were what steered you.

Dorothy:           What did you use to hold them onto your boots?

Bert:               Just a strap across, you would kick your feet into that. There was none of these fancy clip-on bindings. A bit of old leather or a bit of cow hide, it didn't matter what it was. They weren't actually fixed in because they were brought down the side of the ski and with two or 3 flat head nails driven in and when he got the stuff in he

took all this off with an old rasp and cleaned it, took all the top off the board but he left the bottom one just with split marks in it. I never could work out how that did it but if you didn't have them they would slide sideways. We never had any trouble with them. I jumped 97 ft in a pair of them at Kiandra. I was only about 14-15. There were none of these fancy built jumps, these were just built up with snow, made by 3-4 blokes with shovels they just built them up and patted them down as they went, so you didn't know exactly where you were going to take off and you had to just judge it. Billy Patrick, old Billy, he jumped 100 odd feet. Billy was a grown man and he had been at it for years and years and the only practice I had had was on the hill where we lived so we used to make these little jumps about 2 ft high. You couldn't make them any higher because you had to carry the snow. We would practice on these things. Most of the time you would land on your bottom, you wouldn't be standing up when you landed, and one ski would go one way and the other ski another.

Dorothy:           Did you have any accidents?

Bert:               No, never had anything like that. I have been very lucky in my life. I'm 72 years of age and I had my first breakage here about 6-8 weeks ago when I broke 4 ribs.

Deidre:            Do you ever go up to the mountains now?

Bert:               Yes, I go up there quite often. I had a fellow here a few years ago. I think he thought he was going to die so I decided to take him up to the mountains. We went through to Tumut to the dam at Talbingo but didn't even see a fish so I decided to take him up over the

mountain over Talbingo. So we went on over to Tantangra and we caught a few fish there, but only what we could eat we came to where there was a big camp there from when they were putting the electricity through from up the top through to Canberra, out through Yass. We went in there and there were a few wood huts and a big mess hut and they had just walked out and there were pots and pans lying all around the place. When we looked and I said "Down we go" and we started belting into it. It was a fire and wasn't she going in these tussocks. I said "We have to clean them out or it will clean us." Next thing there was a helicopter coming over the top and they were waving their hands to us and I said "If they keep on they must be going for help." And it wasn't long before a landrover come and 3-4 blokes in it and they had a pump but it was no use to them because they couldn't get close enough to the fire. Eventually with the shovels and that sort of business we got the fire under control and one bloke said to me "I know you. I'm sure I know you." I said "You wouldn't know me, Bruce." He said "How do you know me?" and I said "I know you better than you know me. You're Bruce Cottrell aren't you?" He was amazed at that "Yes, I'm Bruce Cottrell. Who are you?" I said "My name's Russell". "Of course it is. You're Billy." "No I'm not. I'm Bertie." He said "You're the fiddle player. I've got a fiddle player down there." I said "Yes. That's Duncan Prosser." I knew the lot of them when we got talking; a young bloke by the name of Cornelsen.

His grandfather had a mine down from Yarrangobilly caves - Cornelsen's mine they called it. It is still there too. That's a wonderful place there too. Have you had a dip in the hot water there? I used to go in with my dogs there in the middle of winter and have a swim. I used to come down from Prowse's hut and I used to walk down there because there was this great big mansion down in the gully in Glory Hole and I think there is

about 8 or 9 rooms in this place; built by old George Harris. There was a Bill Harris and they were all related. There was old Pod Harris - old George they called him. He owned the Rules Point Hotel originally. He built it there and he started it off and a woman named Mrs Cook, her husband had been an officer in the Indian Army, he was an English fellow and they come out here and he was looking for someone to scrub it and they went up there and they bought this pub off old Pod, old George Harris and when old George got the money he built this big mansion down below and they took a piano, which was still there the last time I saw it, and a big range, a hellava big thing, and I said "How did they get them down there in the first place?" They took them down between two draught horses. I said "No wonder they are still there. There is no way they could ever get them out. They would have to take them to pieces and bring them up a piece at a time." I had the old piano going. A lot of the strings were gone of course but I got enough of it working to know what was doing and it was still playable. Half the ivory was gone because every Tom, Dick and Harry that came near the place had a thump at it. It was a wonderful place. You could be up the top on Little Plain and I used to come down and bring my dogs and horses and put the horse in the house. A brother and his wife were living there and I put the horse in the back of the place and he would stamp round there all night. You would come straight down this ridge into Glory Hole and you were in the tropics, or you felt you were because there was no wind in there and just this little creek running down into the Tumut river. It is amazing the hot waterhole they have there - the thermal bath - it just comes out of the mossy bank there at the side and yet 100 yards down below it there is the river, the Talbingo River and it is mighty cold.

I helped to put light in the caves, or in some of them, the Jersey and the Jilabeman and one other. I was in there and they had this wire all hooked with little spikes to be driven into the wall. I took it in and where the sockets were you had to make sure that they were spiked into the wall too. You would find a little crevice in the wall and drive the pin in and that would hold it. I got it all in and I was congratulating myself on how good it was and I thought I wouldn't like to do it again. I was crawling in there and getting through little places and I wasn't very big because I was only a kid at the time - about 16 years old - and when I come out the bloke said "Do you know what's wrong? You have to go back in. We forgot to give you the globes." And they had. They had forgotten to give me the globes so I had to paddle back in there again with a miner's helmet with a light on top and some of the time it would go out because there was a loose connection somewhere.

In Prowse's paddock there is a point comes down out of Goandra and there is this big ridge comes down out of there and it chops off overlooking a big hole in the river and someone got a brainwave that there should be gold in there and so they went in there digging and they dug right through and out the other side and they never got a speck, not a sign of a speck and I went in there one year to have a look and see what was going on there and there is a heap of rabbit traps and Lord knows how long they had been there, about 60 traps there and a trap setter. I thought that I could use those so I got them out. I waited until I had the old draught horse and I brought him over and plonked them on him and then I set all the traps. When I had finished at the end of winter to come home I gathered them all up and put them back where they were and I was telling Bill, my brother. I said "When you go up to the point go and have a look at the back of the tunnel hill, as they called it, and you

will find 60 rabbit traps." He asked me where I had got them from and I said they were there all the time. He went in and there wasn't a sign of one. Somebody else had been there and got them. They were gone.

The stockmen would come down from the Long Plain at the weekend on Sunday; all go into the pub, get half stung, out they would go and they would start talking about who had the best horse and all the rest of it and they would jump on them, hit them with the spurs and they would be thrown right over the fence like nobody's business - all drunk. They made a great show then they would wander back up when they got knocked about with skin off them everywhere, back into the pub again. There were two Harris' there, a bloke by the name of Bung Harris, you have probably heard of Bung, he was a well known character through the mountains, a very good drover and a very good stockman. Bung had a brother, Percy, a big gingery fellow and Bung had a beautiful big brown horse about 16 hands high and he was a beauty and he could do anything with this horse. They were both tied standing to an old jump and this Percy said "That horse of yours Bung he's wild compared with that red fellow of mine. You watch this." So he's down on his hands and his knees and he crawls along and the horse is standing there tied up and down goes Percy and creeps up behind him and bit him on the hock. The horse hit him and back goes Perc and the next thing he knew he woke up in the Tumut hospital. Bung said "That's a quiet horse you've got there Percy. Something must have upset him."

An old fellow there by the name of Alf Hitchcock, he was a funny old bloke who used to live down at the foot of the hill, on the Tumut side of the pub at Talbingo. He had his wife and two girls, one was Lizzie, that was the youngest one, and I can't think of the name of the other one.

They were as queer as meat axes, all of them. Alf arrived up there one time and he had a mare there heavy in foal, him and his daughter, the youngest one come up in a sulky. Someone said "What brings you up Alf?" He said "I've a good one going here tomorrow. I'll win that handicap." "What with?" "That mare of mine, but don't tell anyone - she's a race horse. She's a beauty." I thought that this was a funny turnup, they won't accept his money surely but they did. He said "It's all right for you fellows. You won't be laughing when the race is finished." "And who is going to ride her?" "Lizzie". So they took them down on the flat and lined them up there and the further they went the further she got behind. He nearly got behind where he started from. It was half draught this horse. It was no use at all. When I asked him what happened he said Lizzie must have hit her with the wrong spur. It wouldn't have made any difference because she couldn't have run out of sight on a dark foggy night. Poor old thing, he didn't see the show out. The next morning they found him laying up near the meat house. He must have tripped over and broke his nose. He was in a mess so they had to cart him off to Tumut too.

They were always playing jokes on one another them blokes in the mountains. If you had a horse standing there and you left him with the saddle on you would go out and take the saddle off first, go over all of it and then put it back on again or they would put it on backwards or any way at all. It wouldn't matter or they would put a big thistle under it or a piece off a briar bush and as soon as you hit that saddle you were gone.

(Talking of the store at Old Adaminaby) There was a bloke called Rossiter and he had a horse that was a bit of a rogue and he had a bloke there that used to cart the stuff out to the people who ordered it and they delivered it on this horse in a basket. This bloke took off with the stuff in it and he wasn't a very good rider and he finished up with a broken leg so they run the horse down and Rex Rossiter came up to my place and said "I'm stuck for a basket boy. My bloke has hurt his leg. I don't know how he done it. I want you to deliver some baskets for me." So I went down with him in the car and got this horse. I know this horse, he's a rogue. I knew it the minute I put my hand on him. I thought I would take him up home and put the saddle on him, my own saddle. So I rode him up to my place and he behaved all right. It was the baskets that he didn't like. I had a big Winnacke?? saddle which I put on him and I went down (to the store). He said "I've got some stuff to take up to Dave Mackay's." I said, "That's 2 mile out on metal roads." So I filled the basket and I said "When I get on here, you hand me the basket." So I put the basket across the pommel and set off and this horse started side stepping and carrying on and I hit him with the spurs and he didn't like it at all and he took off for a bit of a race and I got hold of the thing and I grabbed it back on him and I pulled it back and I still kept hitting him with the hooks and I kept him on this metal road and I put the 2 mile down in nothing flat. Got there with all the stuff, took it in and Dave Mackay said "What are you doing with the basket?" I said: "Twisty? hurt his leg." He said: "He broke his leg. That horse broke it for him. He got him on the metal. Watch him." "Don't worry" I said, "I've got him under control." And he knew it too this horse. His eyes would roll a bit but as soon as I got on he would take off and nice and gentle we would go. No trouble.

I had a bloke one time by the name of Christie Rees. Christie was what was known in the mountains as a grass thief. As soon as they would shift their stock out to take it out down below Christie would move in with some of his stock and this day he had six horses and a few head of cattle and some sheep, a couple hundred sheep. He put them in the house paddock too just below the hut. I don't know whether he thought I had gone or what was going on. I saw these horses and thought that it was strange. I could tell by the horse that it was Christie Rees. He was heading for Tumut so I thought I would have a bit of fun with him. So I got the horses and I rounded them up into the yard on the top of the hill. There were two nice young things there that looked like they would be good. So I got the saddle and the bridle, put the bridle on them and left them and left the saddle hanging on the fence so they could see it. And I got this bit and I tied him up fairly tight and left him all night and the next morning I went up and I took the saddle and put it on to him, loosened the bridle and put another one in his mouth and climbed aboard and he pig-rooted 2-3 times and as soon as he did I laid into him and that horse was as flat as a lamb and within about 3 days you could walk out and he would walk up to me and I used to give him a bit of bread or something like that. And I would go out and call him and he would come, no trouble at all.

So I thought I would try another one and I gave him the same treatment and they were good horses but they had been badly knocked about by this Christie Rees' son, who was a breaker and he would break your heart, he wouldn't break them in as a horse. He used to go too far with them. You have to show them who is boss he would do that and he would belt into them and they were never any good after. Anyhow, I saw old Christie in Tumut. I said "I see half a dozen horses of yours up there

Christie." "Where are they?" I said "They're in Prowse's hut, in the house paddock." He said "What were you doing up there?" I said "I was doing a bit of rabbit trapping." He said "Is there any chance of getting anyone up there to break a couple of them?" I said "I'll break them in. Ten pounds a time." He said "You break them in and I'll come up and if they are properly broke I'll give you ten quid for them." I said "They'll be properly broke." They were already properly broke, I had already broken them. Anyhow, he arrived up and I was there when he arrived. I said "Those horses over there are as good as gold." He said "They are very quiet." I said "Of course they're quiet. When I break a horse, I just break them in for riding and that sort of thing." He said "Why didn't you get Clarie on them?" "No, he's too rough on them. I break them in gently and they're gentle horses, and that's all you have to worry about." He come over to the hut and this first one that used to come over to me came up but the other one didn't, he stopped with the others. Anyhow, I got this fellow and I climbed on to him, put a halter on him and he was fairly quiet so I said "He's fairly quiet this fellow, or do you want him quietened a bit more." He said "He'll do." So I went down and I got this other fellow, brought him up and I said "There you are. There's two of them broken. There's 20 quid you owe me." He said "Did I say that?" "Yes you did. You get that cheque book out. I'll take a cheque off you, don't worry about that. Just write a cheque for 20 pounds, that's all I want." Very reluctantly he gave me the money. He had never paid anybody in his life, he never paid for anything. He even walked into the pub for a drink and he would walk out if they didn't watch him. Old Jacob Wilson had the pub at Kiandra he used to have to watch old Christie all the time because he would come in for a couple of drinks and shout a couple to blokes and never put any money down. I got this 20 quid out of him and I took it over to old Mrs Cook and I said "Will you cash that for me?" "Yes. For sure." "Do you

.....The old lady used to use this for mopping up and I got up one morning. I was only about 3 or 4 years old and I ran out the door and I turned too quick and I hit the cupboard and I fell in it and I cut all my hand and my face on the ice. It was frozen and I broke the ice and it cut my face and it cut my hand and it taught me never to run inside.

.....picked up some iron to cover that roof of the old house because the shingles were starting to split. I went home and he said take whatever you want Bert. I took the iron, enough to do the house, but when I went to get the ridge capping he didn't have any. So I said that the best thing I can do is to take another 3 or 4 sheets and fold them so he gave me some more iron. I went home and put them on and Les? my brother come home and the sparrows and things used to make holes and nest in under the shingles. Well, this blocked them and they were all sitting up on the top and Les said "I'll get a couple of them." He got a 410 gun that was there and slugged into them. He peppered all the top. I had to get putty and putty up all the holes. He put all these little shots, shots out of the cartridge and peppered the place. I said "Didn't you notice it was tin there?" He said "I wasn't even looking."