

Interview with Mrs Suthern of Berridale

Recorded 29th November 1970

- Q Mrs Suthern, would you mind telling us how old you are?
- A I was 75 years old on 5th November. (1970)
- Q And where were you born?
- A Born at Briardale, nine miles north of Berridale.
- Q You've lived in the area all your life, or you've been away?
- A I have lived here except for five years I lived in North Queensland.
- Q And been on the property all your life?
- A I have been on the land all my life, on my home and here I have been for 42 years.
- Q Your husband, I take it was one of the early settlers in the Berridale district, was he?
- A Yes, he was the grandson of the pioneer man who first settled in this land.
- Q Now tell me, Mrs Suthern, did your mother or your father ever tell you anything about the aborigines around the place when they were here?
- A Yes, my father was Tasmanian and he never remembered Tasmanian aborigines at all because they were all deported onto Flinders Island, but my mother talked much about them here. She could remember when they would always come through at certain times of the year from Gippsland to meet the Monaro blacks, and they would have a battle and a corroboree not very far from their home which is now what is called the Cow Bed, but my grandparents called it _____, that was the original name for it but it is now known as the Cow Bed.
- Q You mentioned earlier when we were taking before we started the tape, about a place just outside of Berridale where your mother used to say these aborigines used to meet and have their battle and so on, what was the story on this one?
- A The aborigines used to come through from Victoria and already the Monaro blacks would have gathered on the hill in the range above the Cow Bed which is called Deegans Range and they would camp perhaps for weeks there, and then the others would come through from Victoria or Gippsland, I mean a part of Victoria. And they would have a battle and they'd kill a few of each other and they even ate the babies, the piccaninnies, if they killed one or they'd take one. One old aborigine woman worked for my grandmother, her name was Jannie, and she turned up for work next morning after of their battles without her baby and my grandmother asked where her baby was, and she said "Oh those horrible Gippsland blacks ate it last night".

- Q And this was Deegan's Range, just whereabouts would it be from Berridale?
- A Its north on the road that goes from Berridale to Middlingbank on the bitumen road.
- Q How about the early settlers and pioneers in the district, do you remember their names, I suppose, or the early landholders at all?
- A Well, the early landholders were the Brooks's mainly at Gegedzerick and also Glen Brook and the Jindabyne West and Kalkite were the Bodys and the Ryries and there were many others. Small settlers who had little selections and they'd just take up a few acres, about 60 acres perhaps, and it would be what they called dummies, that land, when their time was served would go into the station that it was bordering onto, they'd be really doing it for the landholder of the station. That's how Coolamatong grew to such a big station.
- Q How did these small landholders manage to get hold of the land in the first place, was it a Government grant or did they buy off the major holder?
- A No, they used to get it for one pound, they'd pay a deposit of one pound and then they would get so much acreage and they would pay five shillings an acre for what they would get.
- Q Was this bought land or did they rent it?
- A They called it selecting and if they served their time on it, it would become theirs and a lot of them would serve their time on it but for the simple fact the station adjoining them would be paying them a wage to work it very often because that was the only way they had of earning money, and then when their period was up the station would take the land in.
- Q And when you say serving their time, they had what, five years or ten years to serve on the land before it became theirs?
- A In some cases it would be 20 years, some of it would be leased, it all depended what area it was and also it would be the quality of land. And very often they would only get a few acres, just enough to build a hut on and they would rear their family and some of them suffered privation a lot because they had no means of earning money, only working at the station that they were nearby.
- Q And who actually set this time limit? Did the station owners say, well you can work there for 20 years and if you work there for 20 years, it's yours, or did the Government set these?
- A I don't think things were so organised that the land would be, the station owner would go to the Lands Office and tell them that a man really couldn't support his family and that he would be paying him and then he would take the land.
- Q How about transport in those days, it must have been very

- difficult to get from place to place? What was the major form of transport?
- A The major form of transport was horseback and when they went to mountains to the snow leases they had packhorses and then people going to town, they had spring carts or drays and the station owners, they had buggies and pairs, and then sulkies became the fashion and they were very popular. Nearly everybody could afford a sulky and a lot of men, blacksmiths, the blacksmith's shop in Cooma used to make sulkies.
- Q Well, how long ago do you think it would be?
- A Well, the first motor car came into this district in about 1908. There were two chappies who set up a garage in Cooma, Peterson and Gjerstrop. Peterson was Norwegian and Gjerstrop was Danish and they set up a garage in Cooma, and then Balmain's they got a car about the same time.
- Q Did they concentrate on the garage as their main business or did they also have land?
- A No they just had the garage and of course they used to run mail services and I think that they were the first ones, well Balmain's and Rays' together, ran the first buses and coaches to Kosciusko and before that it was all sulkies.
- Q And with the introduction of the motor car to Cooma did it take very long before the local land owners and people in the towns themselves started to come into the motor car or was it a pretty slow process?
- A It was a slow process, I can remember when I went to school in Cooma, Cooma Public School at home. Later I went to school in Cooma and one would stand and look if they heard a car to see who owned it.
- Q The standard of roads for motor cars in those days, I take it, would have been very, very low?
- A Yes, a lot of them were open cars and we used to laugh about it and say they folded the hood back just to let us see who owned the car. One of the first cars I ever saw belonged to Mr Arthur Litchfield. I think it was a Fiat.
- Q And a trip from, say Berridale to Cooma in those days, when the first cars come up here, would you have any idea how long it would have taken them to say travel from Berridale to Cooma which is, I think, about 20 miles.
- A Yes its 20 miles. Well it would have taken them the best part of an hour or more because I remember we were riding to Berridale from home one day and we saw a car coming from Gegedzerick Bridge to Berridale. We were coming from up just about where my mother's old home was. We saw this car approaching Berridale, and we just stopped our horses to watch it, to see how quickly it travelled. The main transport for goods was horse wagon. Many bullock wagons too.
- Q How about communications, how often did you receive mail

in Berridale?

A As far as I can remember it was a daily mail to Berridale. Because the train came each day to Cooma. The trains first came to Cooma in 1888 I think it was.

Q And that train came from Sydney?

A It came from Sydney. I believe there was great excitement. One man went to my father to borrow money to go and see the train come in and my father said "Well," he said, "I'd like to go and see it myself come in, but I haven't got enough." (He often used to tell us this) "I haven't got enough money to take myself, so I don't think I can finance you." Besides he just didn't want to lend it to him because he knew that he wouldn't get it back again. There wasn't any hope.

Q I see, so mail deliveries as far back as 1888 were pretty regular?

A Yes, and I think that it used to go to Jindabyne, before that. Because there was always the old coaches which used to have as many as three and four horses and it used to take them all day to get to Berridale.

Q With the mail run coming daily, how did you manage to get from your properties, did they have a Post Office set up or was it just a local place where everybody used to meet the coach and get their mail?

A No, they had a Post Office I think as far back as in my mother's day in Berridale.

Q At the present site?

A No, it was in varied places. It was at where O'Brien's is, there was an old man, Mr Scott, had a store and they used to have the mail and then somebody else would have it, but it was always an official place.

Q What about postage in those days, you wouldn't have any ideas, I suppose, it was a long while ago, what it used to cost you to post a letter in those days?

A One penny, and in the early days it was a halfpenny.

Q And that was anywhere in NSW was it?

A I remember we used to get letters from Tasmania with a halfpenny stamp on it. And a halfpenny stamp would take a letter from Tasmania to us here from my grandfather to my father up there and then when he moved over to Victoria and a later postage went up to one penny a letter. But each state had its own stamp, every state was different.

Q What about rail service, you said the first train came into Cooma in 1888. Were they on a daily basis, they'd come up one day and go back the next, or would they come up and go back the same day?

A They'd come in morning and go back at night. They'd arrive in the morning, it was always a night trip each way. Cooma trains as far back as I can remember was night trains and the first day ones were the diesel. Well the bullock teams were very popular. They used to

have bullock teams for taking goods to Adaminaby and Kiandra and all the copper that was carted from Kylo mine at Adaminaby went along the Middlingbank Road and it went in horse and bullock trains.

Q How about telephones, did you have any form of communication between properties or between here and Cooma?

A There were very few telephones until, well, we were married 40 years ago, there was seven on Berridale Exchange.

Q I think you've already said the roads were in pretty poor condition. How about radios, did you have radios?

A No, there were no radios until in the 1930's.

Q And that was when a local Cooma Radio Station opened up?

A The Cooma Radio Station started about 1937.

Q That was more or less the advent of radio in the district, was it?

A No, you could hear the ABC (Australian Broadcasting Commission) news, direct.

Q And where would you pick that up from, from Goulburn station or Canberra?

A No, Goulburn had no station, you'd pick it up from 2FC in Sydney, or 2GB.

Q All Sydney stations, they must have been pretty good radio receivers then?

A 2FC was Farmer and Co, and GB was Grace Bros.

Q All these radio stations were owned by a firm or a company?

A They were sponsored by a firm and they were the national stations. 2FC, 2GB and then there was the ABC news just the same, we'd get it.

Q How would you get on if your radio broke down? Did you have any tradesmen about who could fix it, or was it a matter of months of waiting?

A No, there would be somebody who could fix it up from immediately radios came in. There were often young chaps who'd know something about it like they do these days about motor cars. Somebody would know something about it. But I don't know that there were any radio shops until in the early 1900's.

Q How about church services and clergymen and so on. Did you have a church in Berridale in the early days?

A No, Gagedzerick up on the hill where the cemetery is, that was the church, it was opened in 1865. My mother was amongst the first children christened there.

Q And what about clergymen? The clergyman was a local resident was he?

A He lived in the old rectory up nearly two miles out of Berridale, just where the Dalgety Road branches off. That was the rectory until that one was built in Berridale at about five or six years ago.

Q I suppose you would find your clergyman would be in the

district probably a long while, they wouldn't change them about much?

A No, one would be sometimes up to ten years. The Rev. Hart, I think he was here about ten years. From 1890 something until 1902 and he always drove about in a buggy. Sometimes a buggy and one horse and sometimes a buggy and a pair.

Q I suppose it was a little bit different to what it is now, you've got a Presbyterian Church, a Church of England, a Catholic Church, you just had the one church and everybody went?

A No, the Presbyterian was there for a very long time. The Roman Catholics used to have the service in their own homes.

Q What, a clergyman used to go round?

A Yes, he used to go round. My mother told us about their old home and my grandfather used to have a service there every three months at the home, and if he could get the priest he'd have it every month and of course they'd come from near and far.

Q Education must have been a bit of a problem, you've told me before that you had a school or a type of school in Berridale itself. The kiddies, how far from around the district did you used to go to school, and did they attend regularly?

A There is a roll-call book in the possession of the Schoolmaster in Berridale and it says on it when the child registered and then sometimes it will say, "But did not attend school."

Q The major problem would be transport to and from school, wouldn't it?

A Yes, they'd walk up to seven miles but I don't think they were able to attend every day because last year I was looking at this roll and it was sometimes three or four days between the day the children attended.

Q Would they teach up to 6th class and what about secondary schooling, was there any available?

A They didn't talk about secondary school in those days. There would, they'd go to about, all public school would go to 4th class and there was a reading book, 1st reader, 2nd reader, 3rd reader and 4th class reader and it was beyond that if you went through the book in a year, before the year was up you started over again.

Q So if you were a quick learner you were obliged to wait for the class anyway?

A Yes. You alway entered in the class at the start of the year and just went on and the slow ones, well they'd never get very high marks but they still stayed in the same class.

Q And did they have an age limit, was it normal for children in those days to go to school until they were 15?

A 14 was the time. They never started until they were 7 and they were allowed to leave at 14, but many left before that and they would say, "Oh well, he's not learning anything, he can go to work."

Q What about teachers? Did they have a local person who used to go and teach these people or did the Department of Education supply a teacher to the school?

A The Department of Education would supply one, unless it was in a place where they had a subsidised school. They used to have the parents board the teacher and the Government would pay her and she could be local girl without any qualifications.

Q They had no definite qualifications of how far a teacher had to train before she could actually go into teaching at school?

A No. A lot of them would just say they would start a school and they did that, rent a school room and then apply to the Department of Education to be paid and there used to be an inspector, he'd go round. In my very early days he'd go round and inspect the school and he'd travel in buggy and horse and he would inspect the school and give a very good report and quite a few of them were taught in the country schools by local girls without having any teacher training.

Mrs Suthern has just shown me a book called the "Whirlwind Country" by Peter Knowell, with some very interesting historical information in it, including buckboards and so on. On the 4th or 5th page there is a photograph of a buckboard and the title on the photograph is "Journey's End for the Buckboard."

Q Mrs Suthern what about medical services, what happened if anyone got injured, was it all home treatment?

A Well, it was a very difficult thing occasionally. My brother next to me was shot in the foot when he was 8 years old. We were going to school and somehow or other a stray bullet went through his foot and I had to carry him home over two miles and when we got home I had stopped the bleeding. It went right through his foot between the toes and the ankle and when we arrived home, me carrying him on my back my mother got my eldest brother to go to Berridale and ring Adaminaby for the doctor. She thought that would be the nearest. And the doctor came by buggy and pair and arrived about 1 o'clock in the morning. They'd never been to the place before and found his way.

Q What time would you have called the doctor?

A It would have been about, between 5 and 6 o'clock.

Q So it would have been about a six or seven hour trip?

A Yes, he came from Adaminaby and found his way, buggy and pair and he brought his wife with him who had been a

nurse. He treated him and he only had to come the once, and gave full instructions what was to happen and that was one of our instance of it. Other times there would be accidents and they'd be able to be transported by sulky.

- Q Transported to where, Mrs Suthern, Cooma or Adaminaby?
 A Mostly to Cooma, people went, but at this time this doctor was said to be very good. My brother tried to get the doctor in Cooma, he rode to Berridale in a hurry on his bike and he rang Cooma, but the doctor was away. At Nimmitabel there was no doctor then, so the Post Master at Berridale suggested ringing Adaminaby, so he rang and the doctor, Henderson, who was a wonderful doctor at Adaminaby, he came and it took him all that time.
- Q What about bush nurses, I know in Jindabyne in the early days of the Snowy anyway, Sister Passmore used to be the bush nurse at Jindabyne. Did you have any bush nurses at all in the district in the earlier days?
 A Not until about 1910 the first one came, I think Jindabyne was the first place I just can't remember, then I think one came to Nimmitabel, but I remember seeing them. They used to wear a uniform with long tails on their cap, right away down their back. It was outdoor uniform and if they went to town they used to wear the same thing, it was an outdoor uniform and the nurse was expected to wear it.
- Q It always intrigued me, ladies in the early day, having babies and so on, did you have any midwives or was it just up to your neighbour?
 A Yes, midwives or very often a neighbour, but she would be classified as a midwife mostly because they made a study of it, because there was no other means. My mother had eleven children and she never had a doctor for one of them, just a neighbour.
- Q Must have been a remarkable woman!
 A Yes, well, I don't think I ever heard of any woman having a professional attendant.
- Q How about homesteads in the early days, what were they primarily constructed of?
 A Very many of the old original homes were built of stone. And the lesser homes were built out of split slabs.
- Q And where would they get these rocks and so forth from? Would they get them locally or?
 A Round about in the paddocks and in the hills round about where the home was being built, or they'd cart them some distance. Most of this house is stone and it was all from round about here.
- Q Homesteads in those day, they'd be fairly scattered would they, or did you find that you had a neighbour pretty close by?
 A Oh, most of the homes were a distance apart, but there were smaller selector's huts that I was saying that the

selectors would have. They'd be shepherds and very often they'd be some huts about, but the main homesteads were quite a distance apart. I suppose between Berridale and Cooma there would have been only about ten. I can remember, you couldn't see hardly any off the road.

- Q Cooking must have been a bit of a battle too. I take it would have been all over the open fireplace, or did they have the stove in?
 A Yes, a lot of people had open fire cooking or a brick oven for cooking the bread. An oven built in the wall very often in the kitchen, an oven in the wall where they'd make a fire in the wall like a fireplace up high so it was at the height of a woman working, and the fire would be made a couple of hours before it was needed and then it would be scraped out and the bread would be put in and baked and the fire all scraped out clean.
- Q I take it then, nearly all of these homesteads and properties would have been self sufficient. They cooked everything for themselves?
 A Yes, they were self-sufficient in every way, they made their own bread, did all the baking, corned their meat, made their soap.
- Q And what would they make their soap out of, it would be cow's fat or something, would it?
 A Melt down the tallow, put it in buckets on the fire and pour it out when it was melted, into another utensil, that would be mixed with all the ingredients and it would have to be boiled again, usually chose wooden boxes to put it in.
- Q Makes you sit back and think now, of the amount of waste that comes off cows and sheep and so on that were probably used up in the olden days.
 A Everything was used up, yes. The tongue would be corned, the brain would be used and all the heart and livers and everything would be. Everything would be used of every animal, and all the fat would be rendered down and if it wasn't used for soap it would be put into a drum and sold.
- Q How about heating, I'd imagine in those days would be all by open fireplace?
 A Open fireplaces, yes. All the time because there were not other means of heating at all, it was only wood fires.
- Q What would these people that lived in these homes, and so on, what was their life like, it was pretty well strictly confined to their immediate family I take it?
 A No, there was always a great lot of visiting. Most people would visit each other, perhaps once a week and some might be a cart and horse or sulky and horse as time went on, and people were always able to help each other, and they kept in touch very closely and if there was any urgent message, then the man rode off immediately. There

was always a paddock and a horse handy.

Q How about food preservation, how would they keep their food for any length of time if they killed a bullock and it was only a small family of four or five, how did they manage to preserve the food for any length of time?

A When a bullock was killed it would be shared, it would be pre-arranged that different neighbours would take a quarter and it would be arranged so that there wouldn't be too much and then when that person would kill, they took the quarters around until if somebody didn't want to kill then they'd pay for it. And pigs, everyone had pigs, and they'd have to make their own hams. My father used to make our hams and he would season them and corn them and smoke them and then we had rolled beef, spiced and dried and corned and spiced and corned and dried, or sometimes it would be left in the brine. But women bottled fruit, made jam and when women could make conserve, so that it would be different to jam, you'd get more fruit.

Q Tell me, in those days, you must have had to a minor degree some criminal offences, and this sort of thing. What did you do for Police, were there any about?

A Yes, there was always a policeman at Berridale as far back as I have heard people talk there was a policeman at Berridale. Three of four different places were used for a police station.

Q And what about judging these people, giving them access to courts as far as cases and so on, did you have a circuit judge who used to come round every now and again?

A They would have to go to Cooma, Cooma was the only court. Dalgety was a court for a good while, but it closed up a long time back. It was the court for all this area this way.

Q And what would you say was probably the major problem as far as offences went? Did you find there was much stealing?

A There was sheep stealing, it wasn't so much cattle, sheep stealing was the main thing. Of course there was a lot of cattle stealing, what they call cattle duffing, a lot of that went on and they would be taken down through Victoria, through the mountains to Victoria, down Gippsland. That was the safety market, or over the mountains to Albury.

Q People convicted, would you remember at all what was the usual term of their sentence, or how were they fined?

A Well, I don't think they ever proved anybody, I never heard of anyone. There was always some way that they got out of it because it was just be accident they were picked up.

Q The laws were pretty flimsy by the sound of it?

A Yes. well I heard of a man stealing a saddle, he was caught and he got eighteen months jail for stealing a

saddle.

Q And where would he have to serve that eighteen months, would he serve it in Cooma?

A No, there was a jail in Cooma, but local men, they used to usually send them to Goulburn.

Q What did they do, as you are probably aware now, prisoners from the Cooma Gaol are involved in restoring Yarrangobilly Caves and doing work of a civic nature while they are in prison. These are not hardened criminals, but anybody in for minor offences such as stealing, they send them over, or they might do the Parks up in Cooma. At the Gaden Trout Hatchery in Jindabyne, they're working on that. In those days was it all confined to, in the jail itself, just digging up rocks or something, was it?

A Yes, or they'd do carpentry or blacksmithing or something absolutely inside the jail, there was no outlet until they were free, until their time was served.

Q Did you yourself or did your mother or father ever talk to you about bush rangers in the district at all?

A Well they talked about bush rangers, but they never happened to be here. The nearest to here was round about Tidbinbilla and there were around Captain's Flat that was long before my time, but the bush rangers were there.

Q So there was in fact, after the Kiandra goldrush, to your knowledge then, there was a lot of the diggers or the Chinese stayed around and started to settle properties?

A Yes they started to settle properties, especially the Chinese. Nearly any property of any size about in this district had a Chinese cook. And some lived onto the stations to a great age, quite a number of the Chinese had settled where my father's home was, and they eventually sold out to the Irish family and then my father got it from them. It was 1860 when the gold rush was, and it was over in 1862. It was a very short lived run, but a lot stayed on. The Chinese as soon as there was no rich prospect there, the Chinese scattered about and settled.

Q There must have been a lot of money about in the early days. What was the major form of trading, was it by barter, or would you give somebody a quarter of a sheep and give you a quarter of a pig or something, or was it monetary?

A Yes there was that amongst property owners, but there was always general stores would be set up. There was always the Hains in Cooma and there were stores from my mother's very early days in Berridale and then there were stores in Jindabyne opened in the very early days, and also at Dalgety.

Q Would you find there would be very much selection of items from these stores, or you'd be pretty restricted?

A It was restricted to the necessities of the day. There

would be saucepans and dishes and billy cans and all the necessities that a man would want in harness, and then there'd be groceries and flour and tea and sugar and all that sort of thing. The main thing I could remember you'd buy rice in a bag, done up in a bag, 7 lbs (pounds) and you'd buy rolled oats, they'd be in a calico bag sewn up, 7 lbs of rolled oats.

Q So virtually you'd buy everything in bulk?

A Yes, we'd buy everything in bulk and you'd ask for a bag of rice and a bag of rolled oats, and then of course there'd be bags of sugar, they be 70 lbs; there'd be bags of flour and everyone who went to town with their vehicles they took home perhaps three months supply.

Q What about banks, did they have banks anywhere in the district at all?

A The nearest bank, a savings bank started in Berridale when the Government started the savings banks, well the nearest banks were in Cooma.

Q And were there a couple of banks in Cooma?

A Yes, I can remember as far back as my mother talked about Cooma there were the NSW (Bank of New South Wales) and the Commercial (Commercial Banking Company).

Q Did you have much trouble, did you have any instances of bank robberies in the early days?

A No not here, I never heard of any. They were rather law-abiding mostly. They'd do little things on the quiet, but not any great criminal offence, but I never heard of any robberies, actually, the only one that I remember was the man who stole the saddle. But of course there would be, we would hear about people being away and somebody calling and all the eggs would be taken that day, or a fowl would be taken and you wouldn't know who'd taken it, little things like that, that were never anything great. It was quite a common thing for people to go riding about, just go riding and they'd go visit riding, and sit talking to all hours of the night and then they'd ride off home. That was one of the main things, three or four grown up boys in the family, they'd go out riding for the day and just perhaps scouting out for work or something and then they'd call at some place and have a meal and sit talking to all hours of the night.

Q What about food in those days, was it mainly what you got off the property itself was it? It was beef and mutton and so on?

A Yes, beef, mutton and bread was baked on the property and cakes were made. I can remember everyone always seemed to have plenty. When we had school picnics and everything it used to be beautiful food.

Q What about crops, did you grow any wheat or anything like this around, or was it purely sheep and cattle?

A Nearly everybody grew a certain percentage of wheat, yes wheat or rye. Rye was a great thing, and of course, some

would grow oats, but wheat and rye were very popular and a lot of people would grow in the garden, they'd have patches of corn. Most homes had a little mill, and they used to crack corn.

Q What about industries, was there any industry other than primary industries or the land industry at all?

Q No, there was nothing really. There were skin buyers and the skins would go away and the wool buyers or some people used to sell their wool, went on the train and there was a wool scourer at Cooma I heard of, used to be on the river near Cooma, but nothing in this area, no secondary industries of anything.

Q What about sport and recreation for the people of those days, and the children, did they have anything like tennis or cricket?

A Yes, we had tennis, but most people had their own courts and visitors would come on the Sunday, that was the tennis day, but Berridale had a public tennis court where they are now.

Q What about competitions, did they have any competitions or was it all social play?

A Social play, everything was social and we used to have gatherings of a form in Berridale and it used to be referred to as a social because it was a very small charge and everyone took some food.

Q Did you every have anything like Jindabyne versus Berridale or Berridale versus Cooma or Berridale versus Adaminaby in the line of competitions?

A No I never heard of anything until after the first world war. I never heard of anything at all. We had tennis once at Berridale, a competition, I played in it, but that was when I was still going to school.

Q What about old centres, what would you say was the oldest or the original shopping centre, or banks, or post offices, what was the start of Berridale as the township as it is?

A Berridale was started by old Mr Oliver really and then there was an old man, old Mr Scott, he had the store. Mr Oliver took up the land and I just can't think what old Mr Oliver did, and then there was an old man, Mr Anderson. He had a store down behind those tall pines and he had very fat cattle down there on the creek, and he'd specialise in fat cattle and they had a store always. But you had to go in down behind the pines and it wasn't everybody who knew about that you could go there and buy men's shirts and ladies readymade costumes.

Q No doubt you'd notice a big difference in prices as they are today.

A Yes men's socks you could buy a pair for sixpence.

Q What would the basic wage have been in those days, what would have been a good wage?

A One pound a week.

- Q A pound a week and that would be a five day week would it?
- A No it would be a Monday morning to a Saturday night. If it was a working man's hours.
- Q And what about hours a day, would it be an eight hour day or ten hour day?
- A While the daylight lasted.

Everybody made their own butter and did everything in the line of food. Everyone had milk cows and everyone that had any sort of paddock at all or a yard at all would have a cow.

- Q What about cemeteries? You've mentioned before the Gegedzerick cemetery has been there for many, many years. Did you find that there was much isolated burials where people got buried on their own properties?
- A Yes there are quite a few properties with people buried on, but many of them have been lost. On this property there is an old convict buried, he was the shepherd here for Bob's grandfather and he is buried down the bottom paddock. Well, when I knew it was there, I'd better not say too much, because he was buried down there but when he died on the property here and last year I said we all should put something to commemorate him, and immediately the nephew of my husband, he got the bulldozer and bulldozed the paddock up, so there wouldn't be any interference. Poor old Tom he was buried down there. They all used to talk about him, old Tom and helped to put the money into their purse and he worked day and night and he was scored all over the back with the cat-o-nine tails where he was flogged. He said he used to get 25,40,50 lashes a day.
- Q This was a fairly common thing then, lashing, was it by the property owners, or the staff?
- A Oh no, this was - he was a convict and he come out here in his young days and when he was quite a lad, quite a youth, and when they became emancipated they went out on properties and he worked here for them for about 40 years before he died. He died on the property and was buried down there on the paddock.
- Q What about old local identities, who would you say around Berridale, for a start was, not so much still living, but some of the early important people of Berridale? Do you remember any names at all?
- A Well, old Mr Oliver was one of the main ones, but a lot came and went in those days. They'd have a store and go. Old Mr O'Brien, he was here in the early days and he started a hotel at Bobundra then he came to Berridale and had a hotel here. You were talking about cemeteries, I was going to say there's a big cemetery out near Bobundra where they don't bury in now and it is very big, the population there, so far back, they would have been there

- over 100 years, some of them.
- Q Getting back onto cemeteries for a moment, would you say in the early days it would have been more popular to bury in a community cemetery, or on the properties themselves, or where they came from?
- A No it was more popular to be buried in a cemetery. There are quite a few old properties with people buried on them but families preferred to have the family plot in the cemetery.
- Q And Mr Oliver you were talking about, do you have any idea where he came from before he came here, or was he born in the district?
- A He came from Scotland. Miss Oliver still lives in Berridale, she's about 80 I think. She was born here. There were many people came and went in those days, they were not established and they didn't find the money sufficient for their need. You would never know where they'd go to or where they went, but in my early days there were always two stores in Berridale.
- Q In the letters you wrote to us, Mrs Suthern or you wrote to the Park, you mentioned quite a few old place names. Now one that sticks out in my mind was Barney's Range. Barney's, for as long as I can remember was always known as Barney's Range and then for some reason unknown to me they changed it to Varney's Range with a V.
- A Well it was Varney's Range. Old Mr Varney was the surveyor who surveyed the range and he was the first man to cross it and it was called Varney's Range. But for some reason or other during the war time I think, it was the Second World War, the signs were all taken down and stowed away and a new Shire Clerk came, Shire Engineer came and they had a bit of disuse and he said it wouldn't be Varney's Range, it would have been Barney's Range, so the new sign was painted and put up as Barney's Range, so we'd always called it Varney's Range.
- From my old home up there we'd all say "Oh it's raining on Varney's Range, get the washing in. The rain's coming along Varney's Range" and then "Its snowing on Varney's Range". Some mornings we'd get up and we'd say "Are we going to school today Mama?" And she say "Oh yes, I think so it'll only keep along Varney's Range." And my mother was very particular about keeping to place names and anyone's name and she always said Varney's Range, and I knew that it was Varney's Range. So talked to old Mr Amos Williams who passed away last year and I asked him, I said should that be Varney's Range or Barney's Range. he said that should be Varney's Range that's been called Varney's Range ever since I can remember.
- Q One other thing that does interest me a little bit, was your version on how Charlotte Pass came to get it's name. I was under the impression that Charlotte Adams was the

first woman to ascend the summit of Mt Kosciusko and that's how it got it's name. Now I understand that you believe that Charlotte Pass was named after Charlotte Adams again, but her father was up there and he was in a hurry to get back to the christening or something and he called it Charlotte Pass?

A Yes, he called it Charlotte Pass, but still Charlotte was his wife's name too or his grandmother, I don't know which it was, but he told this old Mr Jack Adams and I think some of the girls up there now, Mrs Willis is one and Carrie lives in Melbourne and another one up there, and I think she's Charlotte too, so its a name that's carried down. But that was what old Mr Jack Adams told my husband, about that he had to get down to the christening of the daughter who was named Charlotte.

Q Now, your husband had a snow lease up in that area somewhere, would you like to tell us a little bit about perhaps some of his earlier experiences and what he did up there? We'd like to hear them if you could?

A Yes, he first took the snow lease there in 1929 right at the Summit and he was partner with his cousin Howard Suthern and they had that until nearly 1930 and they used to take the sheep from here and one would go by cart with all the things and bedding and everything and all the food. Well, later they went to cars, but when they first went it was carts because the road was so bad right up to the top and they used to go and take a cart from Jindabyne. From there they'd bother going in a cart, and then they'd take all their food but they would go up first about three weeks before and put up the wire, they'd have to drop the wire so the snow didn't break it.

Q This wire was fencing wire?

A Fencing wire, they'd drop all the fencing wire, six wires that they had fenced in. Dr Foreman owned the block on the other side on the Mt Townsend side and they'd go up and they'd put the wire fencing up in order, and then they would come back and leave on Boxing Day, they always left on Boxing Day with the sheep from here, go as far as the near Jindabyne the first day, the next day he'd probably be beyond Jindabyne at the Reserve and he'd pick up Howard and they'd go together. They would take four days to get up to the snow lease at the top. Long days they'd have but there wouldn't be many cars on the road in the early part of it, but one time they used to leave them until about 14th March, but they'd have to go up a lot of times and one would mostly stay up a good lot. They'd take salt up.

But sometimes they run out of food and they'd have to come back for food and then they'd leave the sheep up there until about 14th March because any time after that the weather would break and the snow would come. One

time it did break when they'd got the sheep down to Jindabyne they had to go back for stragglers, they found that they were several hundred short and they went back and they had to rent a car and had to go up in a car and it snowed in the night and they had to dig for miles and drive the car to get it out.

Q One thing you told me about there was the fencing now between these snow lessees, did they used to meet half the cost each of the fencing, or was it an obligation when you got a snow lease that you had to fence it?

A Well if they were partners they'd find half each, or one man would find the materials and the other would do all the work. And then when they were leaving perhaps loosen the wires, drop the wires because the snow would break them. Well then you see, when they'd drop before then, fasten them up or thread them up or fix them up, sometimes they'd break, even if they left it in a post like down that side and up and through the post and down that way, go right along to see that the netting was alright in places. And they'd have dingo trouble and they'd have to put out dingo baits or get the dingo man. There would be a man in the mountains usually.

It was old Mr Reid, he was the dingo man and then one of the Boltons did a lot of dingo work. And then Jack Bolton over the years, the young fellow, he did a lot of poison dingo baiting, but they found out it wasn't so bad if they moved amongst the sheep, but they always come out at night again. But when they finished that lease they came down lower down and bordered onto the Chalet, they came well back this way when they got the next lease. They thought thatthis other one was thrown open, see you could take it for seven years and if you didn't want it after seven years, somebody else could have it. Well, you'd go to the Lands Office and find out was, or find out from Bill, Tom, Jack or Harry, who was not going to the mountains any more and somebody else would put in for it or usually two or three. It was better to have a partner or three of you.

Q And what did they do about disposing of their stock, selling the stock, where was the markets?

A Well, they'd bring them back here, put them in the paddocks again for shearing time. See they were brought back again at the end of the season. Everyone did the same thing and you'd get word from, say beyond Dalgety, they had a few stragglers beyond for you, they'd wander about the mountains.that went up that way and you'd have to go to Dalgety to pick up your stragglers or you'd attend every general dispersion that would be at Jindabyne.

Q What about crossing the rivers and so on to get up the mountains? They wouldn't have had bridges in those days

over the Thredbo River and over the Snowy River at Jindabyne?

A Yes all through our time they had the bridges and up to the pass over. And they would have no difficulty like that, but sometimes perhaps up Spencer's Creek or up towards the top they would be a little bit high, but they'd soon run down and they'd get across alright.

Q So if they came to a river that was a little bit high, they'd sit on the bank and wait till it went down so you could get across.

A Just wait, yes. We had quite a good hut up there and right in the position where it was somewhere up from Spencer's Creek there's a pretty place built now all out of stone, and its got pink doors and windows. Dear it was pretty, it was a lovely spot. Old Mr Adams used to.....

Q That would be old Jack Adams, would it?

A Yes, he used to shepherd for us, he'd take a few sheep up and he'd shepherd.

Q How many sheep would you run on the lease and how big was the lease?

A The lease was about 11,000 acres up at the Summit but the one we had it was more than that, about 15,000 and it would come up beautifully green after spring and carry plenty of sheep until March. More than a couple to the acre and then when we got the one down lower it was 11,000 acres. The one that bordered just beyond the Chalet and it was very good country too. Last time I was up there I saw our old posts alongside the road.

A You'll have to come up one day, we'll arrange for a vehicle to come down and pick you up and take you for a ride up there.

Q I'd love to go up again.

Q You'd like to have a look around and you could probably tell us a lot about the country where the lease was.

A We had the lease up there. My husband, just about the time, young chappie, the memorial hut up there, Seaman's Hut, we just got the lease when Laurie Seaman was found and his pal Hayes.

Q There's been a lot of variations to the way Laurie Seaman met his death up there. Did you husband have his own interpretation of it, or your father at all, did they ever talk about it? I know Percy Harris in Jindabyne has got a local interpretation about how Laurie Seaman died and it differs very much from the official transcript of how they died.

A Well some said that he died round under the rocks on the left hand side nearer to Lake Cootapatamba, and others said he was sitting between rocks just where the hut is, and somebody pointed out to me and showed me that that was where Laurie Seaman was sitting when he died. When they found him he was sitting there and crouched between

these rocks. Others said he was round near Lake Cootapatamba and where Hayes was found round that way too, and they said that they were not far apart, but they definitely said that Laurie Seaman was found there and somebody else definitely said that he was found sitting between three rocks. I think I could almost put my hand on them if I went there.

The three rocks between they said, he had his back up to one and his feet out and that was where he was, just near where the hut is. We went to the hut one time and it was beautiful! I came very bad weather when we were up there one day and we went into the hut. My daughter's four little girls and we were all up for the day looking for sheep and we had this day, our own food and everything. The hut was beautiful and about two years after that we went into the hut again one day with some friends we had from Sydney to show them. They were very interested and had known somebody that Mrs Seaman had stayed with when she'd come from America. It was a shambles!

Q Vandalism is a very big problem.

A People had ripped the mattresses with knives and bashed up things. It was left in a terrible condition. I thought it was a shocking thing to do.

Q It's a shame when those sort of things happen, unfortunately we have got people around who do them in some of these shelter huts. It could make all the difference if anyone was stuck out there. I understand Laurie Seaman was the first person to die in the Summit Area. Do you know of any of the local graziers or of the shepherds or anything up there that did lose their lives?

A No I've never heard of any. We often met old Donald McGufficke and different ones like that about the mountains when we'd be there with the men, but my husband often said how lucky it was that nobody had ever lost their life up there.

Q How do you think the advent of the Snowy Mountains Authority affected some of these older residents? Do you think they accepted it?

A Well they were very resentful for a start but they had to accept it, they found out they had to. They were very stand-offish and wouldn't mix with them, but they gradually sort of changed their mind when they saw what was being done, and it was for the benefit of everybody.

Q The withdrawal of the snow leases in the higher area about 4,500 ft, do you think that had any say, financial effect on the local graziers, or do you think.....

A They all said that it did, but I think they recovered from it. I think the mere fact that it was a change for themselves, very often, but it certainly did give properties a rest. But we had gone out of it just before

then.

- Q And did you sell your stock?
 A No we bought another property down here and my husband was beginning to, as he said, beginning to crack up and he considered that it would be a lot less worry and a lot less work if he had another property here, so we bought a property down near Bobundra down Dog Kennel Creek.
 Q Its interesting, the name of this property "Wangalee". Is that an aboriginal name?
 A Yes it means where pigeons drink. And when we came here there were a lot of wild pigeons and there was a deep water hole in the creek. Every evening the pigeons would drink there, so I looked up the aboriginal names and Wangalee meant where pigeons drink.
 Q How about the tribes of aboriginals that used to be around, do you remember the names of them at all?
 A No only that one was the Dora Dora blacks, they came from Dora Dora. They used to call them the Dora Dora blacks. I can always remember my mother saying about the Dora Dora blacks, they were very big men.
 Q What sort of workers were the aborigines, I imagine there would have been some of them around in the early days that used to work on the properties.
 A Yes the men weren't as reliable as the women were. The women were very reliable. My mother said the women were good houseworkers but the men they were good shepherds, but not easily trained into other things.
 Q I suppose they'd find it pretty hard to accept to start at daylight and finish at dark after a life of just wandering around working when they wanted to?
 A Yes and finding a possum when they were hungry. And of course they resented that there were a lot of killings. I've heard a story just lately, that a blackfellow killed a man between here and Jindabyne and that the two men were camped and the black man killed one of them and the other one roamed the bush until he shot 100 in revenge. I don't know how true it is, but it was just told to me lately. I was asking what happened to them because in my time I only ever saw one pure blood black and that was old Biggenhook who lived at Glen Wallace near Dangelong, out beyond Cooma.
 Q What sort of accommodation did they have to live in, were they just rough shanties, or did any of the graziers build them decent homes while they were working for them?
 A Yes they built them a sort of a hut and if they had a wife and family they'd all be in the one room. Just a one-roomed hut they'd build them, but they didn't like working on properties. They didn't mind shepherding, but they'd have a hut built for them, but that was about their main thing, riding about, shepherding. Later on some of them became civilised, but when my mother and grandmother and grandfather had the snow lease in the

mountains, they took a black boy up with them, a young black fellow. Grandfather was riding in the lead, then grandmother and the boy was riding behind, and he said when they stopped for something, he called out "Stop!" and they stopped and grandfather asked him what was the matter and he said "Let me go in front of you" and grandfather said "Why is that?" he said "Never go in front of a blackfellow because" he said "he can't help killing."

He said never go in front of a blackfellow, always let the blackfellow take the lead because he said I had the urge to sneak up on you. He said I couldn't help but tell you. That's when they were riding, when my grandfather was taking one up from down here up to the mountains. He said never let a blackfellow go behind you, he said, because it's their hunting instinct he said, and that was all the cause of a lot of killings, it's just the mere hunting instinct.

- Q That's very interesting, is there anything else that you can think of historically wise that you'd like to tell us or do you think you've covered it fairly well?
 A There were a few places about, there was a flour mill at Coolringdon where you used to take your wheat and have it ground into flour, take your wheat and yours would be ground when you took it, and it would be bagged, the bran and the pollard and the flour.
 Q Who operated this, was it a company?
 A Mr Broadhead, one of the old men and he had another at Murlingbung on the Murlingbung Creek, it was just the same, and there was a creamery, it wasn't an actual butter factory, it was where you took your cream. That was one way, I have omitted to say, that people earned money. They didn't have separators, they just had big bowls of milk, they had a room for the purpose, what they call a dairy and they'd set the milk in big tin dishes and skim the cream off and they'd send it. There was one creamery at Middlingbank just over the road from where the little church is, somewhere along there in the timber and I can remember seeing it there, and there was a little school there not far from it. A little one room school and there was the little church and the others were on the other side of the road, but there was the flour mill, water-wheeled worked one in the Murlingbung Creek just below where the Clarke brothers had their home.

There was a flour mill at Currangan, it's not so very long since the old mill was finished, pulled down there and then there was another flour mill, Mawson's had down on the Murrumbidgee River. My father always used to take our wheat there, go down with the dray with a load of wheat. He'd have it ground each day down there, he'd

bring back the flour on the big horse and the small wagon they called a dray.

But it wasn't so popular - it was popular I mean, but it was dangerous because you had to go down a rickety field and sometimes all of thebrake...and then the next person that went up dragged a log up to the top for anyone who didn't have too much load on and the next person would use the log and come down as a brake so he didn't run into the river, because a lot of vehicles didn't have a brake on them and then that was how they'd get their flour ground. It was quite an industry old Mr Mawson had there.

Well I think the mill would still be there, part of it anyway, but the one that is absolutely finished, I think is Murlingbury. It never operated from when I was a very small child and then the one at Currangan, it operated for a long time. It was just off the side of the road where it would turn in, like going to Arable after the airport, its the road that goes into Arable, along past, that was the flour mill and there was one at Jindabyne, down Mill Creek.

Q Down at the old mill as they used to call it, the rapids used to go over the rocks?

A Yes, there was one there and they had it dammed up so it would give plenty of force to turn the mill.

Q One thing I didn't mention there, you mentioned the old mill at Jindabyne, I noticed there's a lot of rock walls well up the hill from the where the mill was, and of course it's under water now, and I heard the story it was all built by convict labour?

A It could have been too, yes. Because there were still convicts, they were free convicts, I think, no they wouldn't have been because they weren't really already emancipated until about 1860 and that one in Jindabyne was started before 1860 so it could have been convict labour, but I never knew of any other place that was built, although some said that the jail wall in Cooma was built by convicts - it could have too, because it was before that time.

PB I'd like to thank you very much Mrs Suthern, for all this information. I'm sure we can use it and if you do happen to think of anything else, if you could give me a ring, or perhaps drop us a line we'd very much appreciate it. Perhaps you could give us a lead on any other person in the District at all that might be able to give us some old historical information.

A Yes Miss Oliver would know, in Berridale, but she's a hard one to talk to, she always would say, pull down her dress and say, "Oh I don't know anything about it!" But

I've always been historically minded and I've always liked to be interested in things and I don't know of any cases of dreadfully bad behaviour amongst people. You know, no criminal offence. There was plenty of cattle duffing, I had an uncle who used to cattle duff, he was never caught! Yes, you might have heard of Barney Finn.

Q Barney Finn?

A Barney Finn, you might have heard someone mention about him.

Q I think I've heard the name mentioned.

A Yes, well he was my mother's brother. Well he lived off in the mountains and you remember Billy Naphthali, he only died just lately, he was down at Dalgety with the Melons in the last few years, he was in partners with Barney and he was living as a respectable man up at Snowy Plains on the Naphthali property and Barney used to do all the droving either down to Bairnsdale or Albury. He said he met up there an innocent, good boy, man that he was, and Barney would be getting all the blame and he'd get out of it because there'd be some Naphthali's chap in with them, you see, and he was droving. Just a mix up.

Oh there was a lot of that done in the mountains though, terrific lot of it done up there, but I'd never heard of anyone being caught, I don't think anyone was ever committed. There only one I ever heard of was the chap pinching the saddle. It was right back in my childhood and there was another one down the creek from....have you been up that way, do you know Northam? Yes, well its Northam Creek, well down the creek there were a family of Blithers lived, and one of the fellow there stole a horse and I think a saddle, and he was committed.

Well it was hushed up and he suddenly vanished and somebody said "OH, where's Edgar gone?" "Oh, he's gone away to college." He went away to college, but he was up in Maitland Gaol! But he'd gone away to college, it was always put that Edgar was at college. It was never talked about, they'd say that was when Edgar was away at college, people would say. They couldn't say he was in jail because nobody knew that he definitely was, but he was. He just did the eighteen months and somebody made it their business to get up that way and they found out that he was up there.

Q What about newspapers, did you have any sort of publicity for this sort of thing? Did you have a newspaper in the district at all?

A Yes as far back as I can remember there's been the Monaro Mercury and there was the Express.

Q I think the Express was originally the Mercury wasn't it?

A Yes, it was incorporated, there were the two papers. It was such a big town, Cooma, it had two papers. For a

very, very long time we had two papers and it was a sheet of about 12 inches x 12 inches, something like about the size of that. You would have seen it just lately, that Council Supplement, yes, it was about that size with only about five or six leaves, there would have been about six double leaves. It wouldn't have been that big, it might have been about four double leave then and they always were opposition advertising but they were always very authentic and everything, but I don't think that there was ever anything published in the paper. I never heard anything ever about any criminal offence, you know, like there are now.

Q These days you've got a lot more people too, haven't you and a lot more things that are a lot more attractive for them to take?

A Yes, I never heard of anything then published in the paper.

Retyped from foolscap
Pauline Downing
15th June 1993

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