

1990 Interview with Harold Hedger, Ossie (Oswald) Bolton and
Ross Bolton

Interviewer: Graham Scully

Note: The interview took place at Ross Bolton's home "Sutherwood", Berridale. The focus of the interview is Snowy Plain and gold digging around Diggers Creek.

- GS If we could start with John and Rachael. I was interested that you told me that John's wife was a Broadhead?
- HH Yes, Rachael.
- GS I wonder what relation, do you know, was she to the Broadhead that owned all those sawmills? Broadhead was the man who had the mill at Kalkite.
- OB They were sister and brother or the daughters.
- HH They were related. They were sister and brother or the daughter.
- GS This John Bolton of Kiandra. He was at Kiandra before he was married? He was a miner at Kiandra?
- OB He was a miner all of his life. He was one of the first to Kiandra. Well, Dad told me he went there in 1848.
- GS In 1872, isn't that exciting! We've got this wedding certificate Frederick Broadhead and Suzanna Peele. Who were they?
- HH Well that's his mother and father.
- GS His mother and father,
1841, where were they married?
- OB St. Pancreas, England.
- GS Oh right, County of Middlesex. Look at that Ossie?
- OS Yes that's going back a bit!
- GS What have we got, we've got the marriage certificate of John Bolton and Rachael Broadhead, 19 April 1872. John Bolton is described as a miner, usual place of residence Kiandra, and Rachael was under aged, that means she was

under 21, and usual place of residence, Kalkite.

- OB Near Jindabyne. They had the mill above Kalkite.
- GS Was she born at that Kalkite Mill?
- OB Yes.
- GS Right, because Henry Willis took me up there only a couple of months ago.
- RB There are two children buried there - did you see the graves?
- GS Are there graves at that old Mill Flat?
- RB They have no headstones but just a line of quartz rocks around them.
- GS Is it uphill from the track or downhill from the track?
- RB It's just on the bottom side of the track. Did you see the sawpit where they used to saw the timber - well its would be north from that, up, north-west from the track.
- GS There were a couple of old house sites here and a saw pit just below that and that's uphill there, and the creek's here.
- RB The graves are here, just below the track. There's rocks around.
- GS And they were two Broadhead children?
- RB They were two Broadhead children.
- GS They were born dead or something?
- RB No, one died, I think it was..... it might be in here. Here you are!
- HH Oh we've been searching for years, we got this from England we got that.
- GS Oh right, down here Harold. Its too much for me to look at just now, but I tell you, Henry Willis would be excited to learn about that.
- RB Would you like to take them and photostat them, are they any use to you?
- GS Love to, if that's alright with you. I'll take every care. Well can we run through these children of John and

Bilton

Rachael Broadhead and Suzanne Peel married on 24 August - Eliza married your Father didn't she Harold?

- HH Yes.
- GS Did Con get married?
- OB Yes. He married Grace Roberson.
- GS Did Frederick marry?
- OB No, he died, some of them were born dead, or died just after birth.
- RB No, I think he was three or three days old. Joseph died as a baby too.
- GS I remember you telling me, Harold that two of them died.
- OB Eight of them survived.
- RB James, never married. Henry married Sarah Alice Reid - 1913 Angus was married in 1912.
- OB Dad was married in 1912. 'Cause I went to the CPS (Clerk of Petty Sessions) Cooma and found out not long ago, told me his age and everything.
- GS Thomas married Mary Eliza Crowe.
- OB Thomas married Mary Eliza Crowe.
- GS Susie?
- RB Susie never married until late in life. She married Charlie Kelly. She died 20-21 years back. She was deaf, she was born deaf.
- GS So Ross, which of these children.....How many children did they have?
- RB Four, one dead.
- GS Who was the first born?
- RB Kathleen, Helen, Louis, Henry, Harry, everybody knew him as Harry.
- GS Have any of these other children got any family records that you can get copies of?

- RB No. I've only got this and the photostat of these other two, I don't think I've got any.
- GS Where is Louis?
- RB He died on the Burma Railway.
- HH During the war.
- GS So Kath and Jean are still alive are they?
- RB Yes, they're in Cooma. Cath's Mrs Huggett now, Bill Huggett.
- GS Would they have any old photos or anything of your Dad?
- RB They'd have some photos of Dad, I had photos and they all got burnt, his gold watch, sovereign case, sovereigns and everything else. They'd have one of Dad.
- GS If they would let me copy one of those photos, I could then get some prints run off for you, and you'd get them back again.
- RB They are quite willing if you go and see them.
- GS You were involved in building Bolton's Hut in 1941.
- RB He built the old original Reid's Hut on the Back River in 1904..... or what turned out to be his father in law, he wasn't at the time, he turned out to be his father in law.
- HH The Finns River Hut!
- RB Finns River Hut and Tolbar Hut he built it - he built these for Harry Reid in 1932.
- GS This is an amazing family, the Bolton family!
- RB And I cut the slabs for it and I was only seven. I cut all the timber for it, I was only seven years.
- GS That's the Bolton Hut on the Finns River just below Green Knob.
- RB Tolbar Hut, its burned down now, was built in 1932 in the height of the Depression.
- GS Do you know who built that?
- RB Dad built it. I'd hate to tell you what he built it for, for Harry Reid - 20 quid.

- GS And this is Reid's Hut marked on the Burrungubuggee?
- RB That's the original one Dad built in 1904. And the chimney was standing there without a stone out of place and the Park Trust dozed it down.
- HH It should have been left there.
- RB There wasn't one rock missing and they dozed it down.
- GS Did they really?
- RB They buried it ! There wasn't one rock missing! And they dozed it down!
- GS 'Cause its right next to this track, isn't it?
- OB That happened in Kiandra too. There were buildings in Kiandra in perfect condition and the people that owned them came up to have their holidays and the buildings were gone!
- RB That was a magnificent chimney there - Dad built it out of granite rocks.
- GS I have seen it - it is lovely blue granite, real dark granite, and some of the timber is still there.
- GS Can you tell me about the one called Oliver's Hut?
- RB That's up the river on this side - that's on the Back River as well. That's on the same side as Reid's old hut.
- GS No-one can find any stones or anything left of Oliver's Hut.
- RB It was carted from a house on the Snowy Plains. Oliver's Hut was one room of Harold Hedger's father's place. Ray Oliver bought it and took it down there and put it up, but never put a fireplace in and never finished it.
- GS That's why we can't find anything. You can usually find where fireplace stones have been. Trying to work out which was Hedgers old hut, I think this one isn't it?
- OB Con Bolton lived there somewhere too, didn't he?
- RB He lived somewhere in between. Well, Daveys, you're thinking....
- GS That's Davey's.
- RB Uncle Con lived up in the outpaddock, up Diggers Creek,

where's Diggers Creek?

GS Just here, that's his hut.

OB Well where's Dad's Father and Mother's place? There, not the one where them fruit trees are, we seen the other day.

GS It's around here, round there somewhere in the corner of this block. Oliver's Hut was taken along this track was it? This is a route that goes here - to Oliver's Hut site. What was his name Ross?

RB Ray.

GS Ray Oliver and he didn't get round to putting a chimney in?

RB Old Bill Scarlett, Ernie Scarlett, took it out on the truck - it was bad going. They pulled it down in fairly big sections.

OB I suppose it shook to pieces by the time....

RB Ray was going to do it up and make it good but he never even got the chimney out. Then the wombats dug and lived under it and it fell down.

GS So Reid's Hut was built by Harry Bolton in, when, 1904 for Reid. Did Reid own this land on the Tolbar too?

RB They had freehold but this was only leased on the Tolbar.

GS And the land on which the current Bolton's Hut is built....do you know where it went to?

RB Freehold. It was originally selected by Mum's father,

GS By one of the Broadheads?

RB No, no, Reid.

GS Originally selected by your mother's father?

RB He gave it to Mum after she married Dad.

GS Do you remember how many acres it was?

RB Probably 60.

GS Did it go down to the Finns River?

RB Yes, it went over the Finns, Oh well the fence did. The fence might have been the river frontage, but we had some

over the river. It might have only been river frontage and give and take sort of thing.

GS Did it go up as far as Tin Hut?

RB No, it went down nearly to the fall of Island Bend on top of the hill, it was all the good country.

GS Oh right, before it dropped deeply into the valley of the Snowy?

RB If you went over the hill when it got steep that was the boundary. Sugarloaf we called it.

GS It was called the Bar Ridge. Did you know it as that?

RB No, it was the Farm Ridge, in my day. There used to be two Farm Ridges and there was two Tolbar Ridges, and the next one was Tolbar Ridge, we used to call it....and there was another Tolbar.

GS Up to the north. Its got 'Bar' ridge, "Tol" might be missing from that actually.

OB Oh well they've got Tolbar Creek.

GS It's got 'Bar' I think there's room in there for 'Tol'. somehow they've missed out. That's the Tolbar River.

RB Unless they've just drew to distinguish between the other two, they might have just called this the Bar Ridge.

GS Yes, Yes. So this 1,200 acres was selected by your grandfather on your mother's side, and when your mum got married he gave the land to her, so how long did Harry Bolton have it then?

RB Oh well I think that it was four or five years after they were married before he gave it to her. In 1915. We had it until the Park bought it.

GS So it was just in the Bolton family all the time, it was never a snow lease that particular area.

RB No, no always freehold.

GS So you had it all the time until 1958-59, and then you had to move out.

RB About 58 or 59.

GS And then you had to move out?

We'll have a look at the history of mining in the Bolton

- family is interesting. John Bolton was a miner in Kiandra?
- OB Yes.
- GS Do you know when he moved from Kiandra to the Snowy Plain?
- RB Well, what year did Kiandra more or less peter out.. was the rush over?
- HH It was about '62, 1862. 1860 was the big rush, and it petered out about two years after that.
- RB He came to Snowy Plain just after it petered out, the worst rush was over....
- HH The big rush!
- RB ...was over
- GS He was married in 1872 so he must have hung on at Kiandra for a long time, more than most of them.
- OB There was a lot of mining going on in 1924, and my Father was running the Kiandra mail, there was still a lot of mining, bits and pieces going on then.
- GS Snowy Plains, he built that house didn't he?
- OB Don't ask me because....
- RB Well work back, how old would your father be now Ossie?
- OB He'd be just about a hundred.
- RB !!!
- OB Why, he was 48 when he got killed, and that was 1929.
- GS He'd be nearly 110 now.
- RB That's better. Dad would be 112!
- OB Well he must be more than that!
- RB And Tom was older than Dad.
- OB Yes well my Dad was older than yours, well I was just mixed up there a bit.
- RB John Bolton born 1.3.1873
Frederick Bolton born 8.11.74 - Died in infancy
Joseph Bolton 28.3.76 - Died in infancy

- James Bolton 19.8.77 at Snowy Plain
Henry Bolton born 26.11.79 at Snowy Plain
Bolton born 18.2.81, at Snowy Plain
Emma Jane Bolton born 8.10.83
Bolton born 10.3.91 - Snowy Plain
Eliza Bolton born 13.12.86 - Snowy Plain
Bolton 20.3.89 - Snowy Plain
- RB Oh well I don't know. We used to get mixed up. A lady in Canberra and I were doing all of this, and our communications used to break down occasionally.
- GS It could have been around 1875 or something that he built that house there.
- RB Joseph, he was born on 28.3.76, and he died in infancy, and they were still at Kiandra then in '76.
- GS Oh! Does it say that there?
- RB No it doesn't say it but that's my Well then see James Bolton was born in 1877 at Snowy Plains, so you see there in '76 in Kiandra and in '77 one was born at Snowy Plains.
- GS There you are Ossie, we know right to the year when that house was built.
- OB Ross seems to know more about it than I would, because most of it is in my head. Mum didn't seem to tell you much for years and years after Dad died, or before, never told me much about anything! Otherwise I would have gone back to Snowy Plain and had a look around long before I did! I only went back these last few years. I would have gone back when I was only young when I come to think about it now.
- RB We used to go to Snowy riding over the mountains and we'd be going for seven or eight hours, Dad was hard a fellow to start, but once you got him going!
- OB I was more interested in the Kiandra area. You see Dad was the mailman at Kiandra, at the back of Kiandra, and that, and I was only 13 or 14 years of age then. And he got killed ordering wire for that snow lease, and I was associated with Kiandra and that lease since 19.... since I was 14.
- GS 1929 on?
- OB Yes, 1930 - 31.

- GS So that kept you in the Kiandra end of the Park?
- OB Yes, I was up and down there all the time, either taking sheep up or bringing them back, or cattle, or going up and looking after them. When I was young I never thought anything like this would want to be recorded. Otherwise I could have run out a bit of a diary as time went on, but that never dawned on me, you know some people keep a bit of a diary, but I never seemed to, never even struck me.
- RB Oh well, I've got two diaries of Dad's, one was dated back to 1902.
- OB Harold Hedger's got a diary of his father's, a bit of a one, and he showed it to me the other day, and it showed me how many acres Dad had at Snowy Plain, somewhere about 600 acres, which were two different blocks, on this diary and map that's he's got, there's two different blocks at Snowy Plain.
- RB One of these diaries of Dad's covered about nine years. He didn't go day to day, only put the important things in.
- OB That's better than nothing, that will give you the real clues.
- RB Then he had another one from when he came to Sutherwood, that dated from 1911.
- GS He (John Bolton) came to Snowy Plain between 1876 and 1877 and that's where he built this house up on Diggers Creek. Did he start the gold there, did he start mining straight away?
- RB Oh yes he was straight into it at Diggers Creek.
- GS Where's that, you had that Application for Water Rights?
- RB Oh yes I put that away.
- GS Do you remember what year that was Ross?
- RB 1887.
- GS He built the house in say, 1877, so he might have just done it in a little way, perhaps for the first 10 years.
- RB He mightn't have had water rights.
- GS No.
- RB He might have been doing it illegal!

- OB There was no one around to know any difference in them days.
- RB No. I suppose then the rush came, I suppose they had to have those sort of rights.
- OB Yes because one would be fighting with the other for the water.
- HH Yes but did he put in some time between Kiandra and Snowy Plains? What do they call Boltons Hill somewhere?
- HH The burnt hut. John Bolton is supposed to have built it, and it's on the Gungarlin.
- OB Well, there's a Bolton Hut and a Bolton Hill somewhere around there because I've got a book with a map in it.
- RB That would be something to do with Grandfather because I don't think there was any other Boltons.
- GS Do you know if there was ever gold found up there?
- OB I don't know.
- GS It's actually not too far from the Nine Mile Diggings, that Bolton Hill area, so he might have pushed on a bit further.
- OB Well after the Kiandra rush they all went to this Nine Mile Diggings. I've got a book in there that said that they finished up at Kiandra and went out to the Nine Mile and the Four Mile. Because the Four Mile and Nine Mile is all along that area.
- GS Oh yes, down towards Tabletop.
- OB Yes, and they pushed onto Nine Mile after the rush at Kiandra dispersed.
- RB Oh well, that Grey Mare see had a go.
- OB Oh, yes I remember when Charlie Bell and his father and that all went in there. Dad was running the Kiandra mail, 1924-28.
- RB Dad ran the mail from Snowy Plains to Grey Mare while ever it was going.
- GS Well I think one of the Boltons built the Grey Mare, here we are, Jack and Jim. In 1949 by Jack and Jim, this is the current one not the original one.

- HH Burnt Hut, it was never standing in my time, but the remains are still there and according to Jack Bolton, it was Johnny Bolton that built it.
- GS Diggers Creek, Johnny Bolton moved here about 1877, he applied for water rights in 1887, that means he must have built a dam, a header dam upstream I suppose.
- RB Yes, up on Turkey Flat, near Dead Turkey Flat.
- RB They built it by wheel barrows - they carted all the dirt up to the wall.
- OB What else would they have?
- GS So it was just the Bolton family who did that?
- RB Yes, as far as I know, there could have been more in it.
- GS Were other families working Diggers Creek or did the Boltons have it to themselves?
- RB Oh yes there was.....
- End of side one

Side two

- RB Oh yes there was a lot working on Diggers Creek, after, later on.
- GS Yes but initially it was just the Boltons, was it?
- RB I'd say the Boltons started it.
- GS So John Bolton had a lot of young strong boys didn't he, so they would have all worked?
- RB Yes they used to work in the diggings. Grandfather used to be at Jindabyne.
- RB Yes, he'd go with the gold to Berridale, sell it and then stay at the pub and drink it out, and come home with no tucker.
- He'd be away for a week perhaps, and come back with nothing. He was supposed to bring the groceries back.
- HH I often heard Mum talking about that, and she had a hell of a set on him for that.

- RB Drink and fight, he was never beaten on the Monaro in a fist fight, never ever.
- OB Good fighter.
- RB Cleaned everybody up here he took on, and if there was a strange fellow come to Jindabyne he'd pester him until he had a go at him.
(laughter)
- RB Years ago at Adaminaby, the old Adaminaby, every Saturday evening, if there wasn't a fight with ^{McMahon} and Crowes there was something wrong, every Saturday evening. You could bet on it, there'd be a fight, if there wasn't there was something bloody radically wrong.
(laughter)
- GS Did your Dad ever get into fights, Harold?
- HH Dad, you couldn't torment him. You couldn't make him fight. He was the most peaceful bloke.
- OB Yes well Dad was like that. Cause Merle Mills at Middlebank often tells Dudley now, cause they join there, she said, "If you take after your father", she said "You'll be a very peaceful man." She said. "I know him real well." That's Merle.
- RB I'll tell you something about Finns River Hut, the old original, the one that got burnt. Ray Adams used to look after this for Sid and help him mustering out on the Kerries. I suppose I best not say, he wasn't that good, he was a bit of a rogue.
- OB And who ain't bloody rogues!
- RB And yet to miss sheep, they'd most of the big mob, and then Ray'd go back and he'd get so much per head for stragglers, see. And he used to run a mob away.
- OB That's a bloody good idea!
- RB And that was in....Oh I don't know what year it was, about 36, '37. He went out locally here and found a mob of sheep and brought it down across Finns River and it started to snow. And he brought them up to our hut on Finns River and he shut them in our hut.
- GS Oh yes?
- RB And he came home for ten days - they were shut in the hut.

HH They'd lose a bit of weight.

RB It was lined with wool bags, the hut, and they eat the bloody wool packs as far as they could reach up, and they eat our mattresses, and we went back in the spring.

OB Were they still alive?

RB No, well Ray went back and got them, and Dad knows the day we rode up there we just rode out to do the fences, and you know your mattresses are always there - and we had bloody nothing. And the smell of the sheep in the hut, we had to dig, there was only a dirt floor in the hut, we had to dig it up and cart it away and get new dirt, and Dad said "That bloody Ray Adams...." And he got it out of him too, by Gee Dad was wild about that.

GS This is not the Ray Adams that you do work for is it?

HH Yes, his son.

GS Oh Ray's the one who had the dog team?

OB Was that Bruce's son?

I knew Ray, I knew him pretty well, Ray Adams.

RB I think that was the wildest I've ever seen Dad. When we rode up to that hut and we had nothing, you know riding from here out there, thirty odd mile, and just the pack horses, because mattresses are hard to get out there.

GS Yes.

RB We had to go and cut heather and put on the bunks.

OB Did you use bushes or something did you?

RB And you couldn't get the smell of the sheep out.

OB Oh that'd be like a shearing shed that is shut up and never cleaned out..... would be worse than that.

RB Ten years after on a wet day and when you lit the fire....because it'd bring out the moisture in the slabs.

OB It would be just like sleeping in a shearing shed. Just picture that.

RB It would be worse than sleeping in a shearing shed.

OB Oh Jesus yes!

RB And that was the wildest I've ever seen my father I reckon.

OB It would be something to get wild over, wouldn't it?

RB Oh jees I'll tell you we were disgusted.

GS Did Grandfather John Bolton get all his boys to work the gold with him, did he?

RB Yes, yes.

GS Did they go to school, did he send them to school?

RB Yes Dad had two days at school.

GS Which school was it?

RB Kalkite - he used to ride down there. It was too far he reckons and he wasn't going to ride any further.

GS What about your Dad, did he have many days at school, Ossie?

OB Well that's something I can't answer.

GS They would have worked the diggings until they married or something?

OB On no, they woke up to themselves. They were working their guts out there and he was taking all the gold, see, and not bringing anything back. Then they woke up to themselves.

GS Oh right!

OB You don't get my gold, see!

GS So they were keeping their own for themselves?

OB Yes.

GS I think you said your father saved enough money to buy this property here?

RB Yes, he started up here with 500 acres in 1911.

GS Your father bought the land on the Snowy Plain with gold money?

OB Oh, he probably did, I don't know. I can't tell you the truth about that. I don't exactly know where he got his start or where he got his money or.... Were these leases

at Snowy Plain...were they freehold or leasehold.
Position purchase?

RB No selected.

OB Yes, but how much would you pay for them in them days...
2/6 an acre?

RB No not that much I don't think.

OB 2/6 was hard to find.

RB I remember after the Depression I found out that the banks took a lot of blokes' country around the Monaro and the banks re-sold it again for 2/6. That was when the last big Depression was 1930. But they wanted to get rid of it, the banks, they didn't want the land they only wanted the money. They sold it for 2/6 an acre. Blokes told me that down from Numeralla and them and them places.

OB Down here there were 680 maybe acres. In 1912 old Ted O'Brien in Berridale had it mortgaged. 680 acres, four rooms a nice home on it, orchard and everything.

RB Dad was offered "Sutherwood" for eighty quid and speak your own terms.

GS Yes.

OB Full price? Eighty quid?

RB Eighty quid and speak your own terms. And Dad had just bought Sutherwood. Dad said he wasn't satisfied with ten quid down and ten quid a year. He was sorry, two years after.

GS Yes, yes.

RB But he had no experience with rabbits, and it was lousy with rabbits, and no fences.

OB A lot of people in them days when they did get a place like that and it was lousy with rabbits they made a lot of money out of the rabbits.

RB Dad made his money and bought all the other land out of rabbits.

HH I made a lot of money out of rabbit skins in the early days.

RB We are getting away from Diggers Creek again.

GS Diggers Creek! There is the ruins of a house site up there and at the back there is an old shed that the Italians used to use. Who built that, who actually lived on Diggers Creek?

RB Con Bolton. Con Bolton built that.

GS Con Bolton, did he live there with Grace Roberson?

RB Yes.

GS Did they have children?

RB I don't recollect any being born there but I'll soon tell you.

OB They didn't stay there that long I don't think.

RB Well there's Jack Bolton, he's one of their kids. You know Jack is at Gunnedah now?

GS Oh Jack is one of the children of Con and Grace, is he?

RB Yes, yes. He was the only boy.

Woman

Jack Bolton, he's not really a Bolton is he?

OB Oh I don't know, was he born out of wedlock or what?

RB Oh yes.

HH Don't ask me?

OB He wasn't married?

HH Oh I don't know.

RB It's a lot easier to find a minister today than it was in those days probably.

OB Well they don't bother because de facto today.

GS Anyway, so Con Bolton built that place?

RB Yes, Con built that, and the Dagos built the one at the back.

GS It wasn't already there?

RB No, the Dagos built it - Italians. They were gold digging there.

GS I think you said it was around World War II wasn't it?

RB They found a very rich seam that came out at Diggers Creek, going straight towards the Back Gully. You remember that gully? They brought the water out of Back Gully around about the Six Mile as high up into the hill as they could to work this seam. They worked this seam up until they run out of water. They couldn't get the water any higher. There were seven of them working there, and they decided to go away and work somewhere and buy a big pump and they were going to pump it from the Gungarlin. All of them were from Newcastle, was working in the coal mines, and three of them got killed in the coal mines, one boy. Would you ever remember Johnny Piazza who was at Kossi?

HH Oh he only died here not long ago.

RB Oh that's a very rich seam.

GS Could you find it if you went back to find it?

RB Oh 'cause I could, I could find it in the dark!

GS Could you really?

RB It was only a seam ten yards wide I suppose, went straight through, was heading for the Back Gully, and we helped those Italians shift a big rock, I can show you the rock, that eight foot high round granite rock. We rolled it over in the workings there and they got seven and a half ounces out of one little pocket under the rock.

GS How far from the ruins of Con Bolton's hut is that site?

RB Oh it'd be 20 or 30 yards.

GS Is it uphill further?

RB No straight south. You'll see the cutting there running up the hill.

GS Yes, yes.

RB And that seam's there and its real!

GS Right.

RB The further it went the richer it got.

OB There might still be some gold there.

RB Oh yes.

GS Couldn't wonder some amateur fossickers aren't going up there now?

RB That's if they were going to do something they would want a lot of piping and a big pump so they can pump it from the Gungarlin, wouldn't be five mile of piping.

GS Yes.

Woman

Father had all the scales, the dish and the whole lot of it. Is that burnt?

OB Pick and shovel is the only way to get it.

Woman

Yes, but the scales are gold scales.

GS Oh right!

RB But Dad always said that Diggers Creek, he always wanted where it run into the Gungarlin, there was a bar of rocks there about ten or fifteen yards wide right across the mouth of Diggers Creek, Dad was going to get somebody to blast that rock out so he would get about a three foot fall, then he could wash Diggers Creek out right up to our hut, see, about three mile and get all the gold. We found straight over from our hut, we found a patch there. You see New Chums used to have the tail races too steep or too much water and they used to wash everything away, instead of the gold staying on the bottom, it would wash away. Well we found a patch in Diggers Creek over from the hut, just above our.....

End of Side One

Side two

RB He reckoned instead of getting colours in that dish you just pick it out. He reckoned that all that gold on the Snowy Plains came from the Diorite Reef and it would be solid gold. And he dug holes everywhere up there.....but old Charlie, he could cure anything.

GS Are you talking about Charlie Carter?

RB Yes Charlie Carter.

RB He could cure TB, cure cancer, he nearly killed, Oh! one of the Willis boys I think it was. Oh no, it mightn't have been a Willis, but Charlie was camped in our hut and this Willis boy had a cough, you know, and he reckoned he had consumption. He said to him, "You've got consumption, I'll mix up this dose for you." Charlie

went and mixed it up and this bloke, I think it was a Willis, bloody near killed him.

OB What was it made out of?

HH It was Blue Stone.

OB Oh Jesus that's poisonous!

RB Oh I don't know whether he cured the consumption or not.

GS Did Charlie Carter work Diggers Creek as well?

RB No he just dug holes all over the back gully, and he was just looking for the Diorite Reef, and if he found it, well he'd.....

OB Are any of the holes still there?

RB Oh some of the holes are still there.

HH It would be like a Lassiters Reef, it can't be found.

RB But he went right down the back gullies nearly to the Back River digging holes. Oh he was there for years. He wasn't really you know?

OB He was a shingle short.

HH He was only about ten bob in the quid wasn't he?

?? Yes.

OB Well everyone in them days had pans - I know Dad had a couple of pans, you know gold pans. We used to wash our face in them. When we went to Adaminaby we were living on the Plain that's what I used to wash my face and hands in this gold dish Dad had. Now he must have done a fair bit of gold mining prospecting in his day, when he had all these things. He had the proper pick and the proper shovels and everything like that.

RB Oh yes.

OB He most probably bought them all from Snowy Plain.

HH Oh that was their life.

OB That was their life, and everything was sold. Junk, everything was classed as junk in them days.

GS Well onto Diggers Creek now....

RB A real rich seam went out of Diggers Creek and it was

only about four feet deep and about five or six yards wide, and it went out of the creek, and the further it went, the further up it came. It run right out onto the flat there, and the gold was hidden in grass roots. And Dad could never understand where that gold came from, how it got so shallow, and the gold was in the grass roots.

OB In the early days gold at Kiandra was picked up on top of the ground.

HH Nuggets.

OB Picked up on top of the ground, big as hen's eggs.

RB Uncle Jim Bolton found one in front of our hut on Snowy Plain that was chucked out with a sluice fork, with the stones. It was nine and a half ounces - and they chucked it out with the rocks!

HH Oh we found two, forty or fifty years later.

OB Jim Leader up there at Kiandra, an old plain shearer, he went looking for his horse there at Kiandra one day, and going over the old diggings, and here was a bloody great nugget he found bigger than a hen egg. He picked it up. The dirt was washed off it, it was left there!

RB Old Dad always said there was more gold left on Snowy Plain than was taken out.

OB I suppose that probably applied to Kiandra.

HH Oh yes.

OB There's still a lot of gold around Kiandra but there's too much dirt with it.

RB But they were New Chums, see, down on Botheram Plain there, that little creek that comes down across Botheram Plains.

HH Oh yes.

RB That's New Chums Creek.

OB That's why they call it Kiandra New Chums Hill, because there was three blokes went up there looking for gold, and they didn't know nothing about gold, and these blokes sent them over this hill, and they went over there and

they struck it rich, and they called it New Chum Hill. then, because these blokes didn't know nothing about gold....it just goes to show.

GS I didn't know there was gold at Botheram Plain as well.

HH Oh yes. All that country there is subject to gold.

GS Whereabouts on Botheram?

RB Oh well there's a creek come down on the Botheram Plain, about the middle, that's New Chum Creek. On this side of the river.

GS Going downstream is it on your left is it?

OB Going down the river.

GS Down close to that old sheep bridge?

RB Below it, back towards Jindabyne, a bit further.

GS Below that? Ah!

RB That's New Chum Creek. Then over in Jumpers Creek there was good gold there too in Davey's paddock there. Do you know it as Jumpers Creek?

HH Jumpers Creek, yes.

RB Good gold there, very rich.

HH Tell me this, was there ever a bit of a hut built there at Jumpers Hill?

RB Oh yes!

HH That's the hut we've been looking for then! Who built it? Do you recollect?

RB Now you're pushing me.

HH Someone was supposed to build a hut there for Blewitt, where the devil is it then?

RBthey owned that country.

GS Who Blewitt?

RB No he was only the manager. There was a big fire on Kalkite Mountain there, and Bill come up, I think the four boys went down. They fought the fire there for two days and two nights and never went to bed on Kalkite Mountain. Bill was the manager at Kalkite, and he gave them a fat wether. That was their payment!

GS Lets look at some of these other places. You told me that Jack Bolton, does he live at Inverell and sometimes come to Cooma.

OB No not Inverell, Gunnedah! Probably if you got a phone book in that area you'd find out his address, he's got the phone on. Mrs Jack Howley from Tumut, she knows all about him, she's had a lot of talks with him. She'd have his address.

GS 'Cause Jack Bolton built... 1942, Cecil O'Brien and Jack Bolton built Cesjacks Hut.

OB That would be in the book there.

GS Like, if he stays with George Freebody, I wonder if you ever hear of Jack Bolton coming back to Cooma, could you let me know and I'll come down and talk with him.

OB I don't seem to get on too much with Jack.

GS I'm trying to work out, Jack and Jim Bolton, are they brothers?

RB Yes.

GS And who were their parents?

RB No, No!

OB Jack Bolton wasn't a brother to Jim, he was Uncle Con's son.

GS Jack is the son of Con Bolton and he's still living - and Jim Bolton....

RB Was never married.

OB He's dead years ago, he died in 1950 something.

GS Whose father was he?

RB No he had no children, not married, Jimmy Bolton.

OB His father was John Bolton.

RB Jimmy Bolton was my father's brother.

GS I've got you! So Jim was a lot older than Jack.

RB Oh yes Jim was Jack's uncle.

GS When Jim Bolton built Grey Mare in 1949 he would have been a pretty old fellow then wouldn't he? Forty nine plus forty nine plus twenty, sixty nine, plus three, seventy two.

- OB He was only seventy odd when he died!
- RB That was just before he died.
- OB We went out not so long ago and refaced the headstone. Like wrote on it.
- RB Best axeman in the mountains.
- GS Known as the best axeman in the mountains?
- RB And if you picked his axe up you weren't game to touch it, even pick it up. It was like a razor!
- HH They were all great axemen.
- OB A bit like me, cause I never liked anyone else touching it! If anyone touched it and gapped it or anything.....!
- RB Jimmy Bolton could fall a tree, if he was clearing a line for a fence, and there was a tree leaning over the fence, where the fenceline was gonna go, Jimmy Bolton could pull it that way or he could pull it that way!
- GS Jimmy Bolton could cut a tree and it wouldn't fall over the fence, it would just go to one side.
- RB He'd pull it! Well I can pull them too, but not like Jimmy! Left handed too!
- GS So he must have been about seventy - That's not bad for a seventy year old building a hut in the mountains in 1949.
- RB He was only a little man and he was one of the strongest men I've ever seen.
- OB I only remember seeing him only once!
- RB This fenceline over here, I was carting the timber for that I was only a bit of a boy and he was helping me. We were coming down with a tip dray with a load of posts on and I looked around and Jimmy's got this bloody great rooty log, you know about, I don't know how he got it on his shoulder. I thought, "What the hell you gonna do with that!" and he carried it right down the ridge there where there was a bloody great ants nest and he dropped it on the ants nest!
- GS Tin Hut was built 1926 by Con Bolton for Dr Schlink and the Ski Club of Australia.
- HH the Litchfields then when it was first built.
- RB It was their land.

- GS The Litchfields land?
- RB Wasn't there a second Tin Hut?
- HH I don't know Ross.
- GS I think there was a Litchfields Hut there, then they gave permission for a hut to be built especially for the Ski Club.
- RB There was only a little old one there, Harold and then they built that Tin Hut.
- HH The original one was on the ridge along there on the Porcupine. That's the original one.
- GS It says the new hut is only a couple of hundred yards away from where the other one was. So what sort of a fellow was Con Bolton? He was the eldest child, wasn't he, of John and Rachael?
- HH He was a good trapper, Con Bolton.
- RB Jack Bolton was a good dingo trapper.
- HH That was his top trick, he made a lot of money out of that.
- RB When Dad came to Sutherwood first, he used to set his line of traps. There was no fences, only brush fences, timber stacked on top of one another. And the rabbits were that thick, he'd run his traps sometimes, he'd take a rabbit out of here, go up there about twenty or thirty yards, take another one out and you'd hear another get in the trap you just come from!
- OB They reckon that was around the Eucumbene Lake, around Old Adaminaby. You know there was that many rabbits there, that the rabbits eat them out and they went broke! They finished up with no stock cause the rabbits eat all the grass.
- RB There was one sheep on 500 acres when Dad came to Sutherwood and it was nearly dead!
- OB Must have been pretty bare here!
- RB The old house was up here the old slab house, Herb Weston lived in and the day Dad rode up and looked at it, he expected the house go down the flat, he reckoned there were enough rabbits in it and went under it, carry it away.
- OB What was the price of rabbit skins in them days?

RB Threepence, penny halfpenny. Dad, the first winter he was here at Sutherwood, he sent three wool bales of rabbit skins to Sydney, and that was a lot of rabbit skins in a wool bale.

OB Wilcox Moffit used to buy the rabbit skins.

RB Three bales!

(General discussion on money and prices)

OB If you got two quid a week you were well off!

RB I used to cut a load of wood for old Clarkey, still in Berridale then when I left school, a 15 foot tabletop truck and I used to cut it for four bob a load with the axe and I used to help him load a lot of the time!

(General discussion about skiing)

OB Dad had three pair of skis, but we sold them.

GS How did he make these skis?

OB Made out of Mountain Ash ...

RB Dad split these out there and he'd split one off there then split the next one and keep the p.... mark them so he had them identical and the grain would run dead true, with the grain, but don't turn them around because then one ski would run one way and one the other!

GS Right! So he got the Ash from up towards Sawyers Hill?

OB He bought them from Wilson and Yans, the blokes at Kiandra, 'cause they used to make them up there out of Mountain Ash.

RB He'd turn the points, boil them, boil them for thirty hours!

OB Hot water and weight.

RB In a bucket, and put weights on them.

GS Put a bit of weight on them!

RB And they'd stay forever, these have still got the points. Years ago when I was only.....I can just remember it. We went to Kossie to the ski races there at the old pub. Dad went in a ski race, Dad was old, and he got these skis out, these ones up here, and I was standing away a bit and there was a mob of these city blokes. "Look at

that silly old bugger with those bloody skis, is he gunna ride them?" and they were laughing, thought it was a huge joke, and he beat the bloody lot of them!

RB The Grey Mare Mine, you'd have seen those trees out there Harold, cut off up ten foot, up on the hill at the back of the Grey Mare?

HH I've never ever been at the Grey Mare Hut. Been all round it.

RB See when they were working it, they used to go up on the hill at the back, they'd cut a tree down, stick it on their shoulder and ski down to the hut. You'd go down in the summer time and the trees were cut off over ten foot up, you'd think there were bloody giants there!

OB At Kiandra years ago that how you used to find out how deep the snow was, see the tree was ringbarked so far off the ground, the rabbits were doing it.

HH I never been in Grey Mare Hut, I've been to Strumbo there and Pretty Plain but I never been right down to Grey Mare.

GS I just wanted to finalise things about Bolton's Hut, it was originally built, the original one was built for Reid wasn't it?

RB Grandfather Reid.

GS Grandfather Reid and then I think you said it got burnt down in the bad bushfires of 1939 was that right?

RB Our hut on Finns River got burnt down.

GS Oh on Finns River?

RB Is that the one you're talking about? Well it got burnt in the '39 fire.

GS So it was a couple of years later that

RBthat we built the other one.

GS It wasn't exactly the next year was it?

RB No it was '39 '40 '41 I'd say. It burnt all the country there, we lost over 900 sheep in the fire. And to tell you the heat of it, outside we used to take kerosine

bottles with us on the pack horse, and we used to chuck the bottle out beside the fireplace, and after the '39 fire I bet I can still find those bottles just run into a molten mass. The whole lot had melted, that's how hot it was.

GS Original hut was a slab hut with a dirt floor, so the new one you built was also a slab hut with a dirt floor, so did you build it the same size as the other one?

RB No it was smaller, about 14 x 12 I think.

GS Why did you build it smaller, Ross?

RB Oh there was a bit of a talk about this, you know the Park coming up?

GS Oh yes!

RB and well we had to pack everything in, I had to pack the iron in on a horse from Snowy Plain and I carried the ridge capping on my shoulder. Have you ever tried packing ten foot iron on a pack horse?

OB You'd have to have a good horse! I've seen photos of that in books in there! I buy all these books.

RB You couldn't look round. I don't know when these were taken. I tell you where you can get a negative for that, McDonalds in the Chemist shop, had a close up of it on the wall and he gave me the name of the chap that he got it from, and I lost it and I never ever asked him since. But that photo's gone now.

GS So you don't have a photo of that hut? I'll get that for you.

PB Can you get one, I'd like to go there actually.

HH That would be in the fire that swept through Kossie. I wasn't about here then.

GS One of the things the Huts Association tries to do is to get the original families involved in looking after the hut, so next time there's a caretaker party.....

RB Walk from Island Bend is as close as you can get. You'd never get there!

PB How many huts did the Boltons build?

RB One, two, three, four.....four, five.

GS Cesjacks, Grey Mare, Boltons, Tin, Daveys. That's five huts that are still standing, and then there's the old Bolton Homestead site and the Diggers Creek one that's seven. I don't think there'd be another family that would have as many

RB No, I don't think you'd find another family that built that many.

GS No I don't think there would! So, Boltons, what part of year did you and your Dad build this hut?

RB Summer time.

GS Summer time, after Christmas?

RB Oh yes, would be. It would be, see we'd take the sheep up no we split the slabs the previous year, we split them down overlooking Island Bend - Mountain Ash.

OB Let them dry out.

GS Overlooking Island Bend, still on your property?

RB No it was just outside the boundary, and I dragged them up, I used to drag two at a time it was terrible bloody steep and rough. The old horse could only pull two up the hill and I drag them up onto the flat at the top and then I'd cast them over the side.

GS The Alpine Ash would come on a very steep bit.

RB It would only grow at a certain height, and its directly above Island Bend.

GS So the horse could only drag two up at a time, then you made a pile there and a slide and carried them the rest of the way. You were only eighteen at the time, what's your date of birth?

RB '24. Eleventh of the second '24. No I'd be getting up around twenty!

GS You were only seventeen then.

RB I started working when I was fourteen, up in the mountains when I was fourteen.

GSliving on Snowy Plain, which house was it in?

RB The one below the Dago's on Diggers Creek.

GS So Con Bolton built that place, but then he only stayed there for a little while.

- RB Then Dad bought the land.
- GS And your Dad bought that place! So how long did Harry Bolton have that land there?
- RB Not long after, it would be, only a year I reckon.
- GS So I know where the slabs came from and you packed up the sheets of iron, they were ten foot sheets were they?
- RB I think they were ten.
- GS On a pack horse.
- RB Filled bags with heather, he couldn't look around.
- GS You carried the ridge cap on your shoulder. What leading the horse?
- RB On my shoulder, leading the pack horse.
- GS I bet it got sore!
- RB Twelve miles, thirteen miles!
- GS How many days would it take you to build a hut?
- RB We'll likely come home. We stayed six weeks in 1940, fencing, we lived in a tent, six weeks, we never come home, we had no radio, we didn't know what day of the week...daylight to dark, we'd be over on the fenceline, have the fire made and be ready to boil the billy for morning tea before daylight. Dad used to cook the bread, kill a sheep.
- GS Any visitors to that hut?
- RB No!! You could stay there for six months and never get anybody on.... Finns River was on that side and the Snowy was on that side, it was a sort of dead end. It was quiet.
- In 1904, Reid's, Harry Reid, Mum's brother, put all the timber on the fence line to fence the bullocks, and he lost a beautiful drag chain, we call it the Sugarloaf, up on the top of..
- GS This Green/Nob thing.
- RB He lost it up there, and he could never find it, and I found it in 1940 and I sold it back to him for five quid!
- (laughter)

- OB It would be all rusted up would it!
- RB No it was still good! Oh well he gave me five quid for it, it was a beautiful chain, I'll bet its still at Merrivale. Beautiful bullock chain, long.....
- (General discussion)
- OB Ross I want to ask you something. The hut on the Snowy Plain, called Daveys Hut, I wonder why didn't call it Bolton's instead of Daveys Hut, because Davey was there the longest I suppose was he?
- RB No I think just to distinguish between our hut and Daveys Hut.
- OB Yes well I suppose there was two Bolton Huts and they couldn't call the both the two Boltons Huts!
- OB The surveyors used to call it Boltons Hut, Daveys Hut, early in the Snowy, '48, '49 and I didn't know what they were talking about. But I found out after that that was the one they were referring to, the one on the edge of the timberline. Snowy Plains.
- RB I think when Davey bought it they changed it.
- OB Well its on the map as Daveys Hut. You see I was wondering why they ever changed it from Boltons Hut to Daveys Hut, but you just said that, you just gave me the point, because there's too many other Boltons Huts!
- RB Well I think that's why they called it Daveys.
- OB So you know which is which!
- GS Do you fellows know anything about there's a hut on Happy Jacks?
- OB There's a Montagues Hut there.
- HH Montagues.
- GS Just below Arsenic Ridge, there's a Brooks Hut there too, but this one you're thinking of is different from Brooks. So Montagues might be it?
- RB Dad and I went out there once, we spent a fortnight and we went right out to the Cup and Saucer and rode around that for a fortnight.
- OB Well I didn't know much about any of the mountains...
- RB Then I took a party of two fellas from Sydney, the

biggest I ever got, two bloody newchums (laughing)
 Good god there was only half a day gone and one bloke, I
 looked around and he's walking. I said "What the
 hell!!!"
 "Oh, I'm that bloody sore!" he said, and he was walking,
 leading the horse. He was fairly fat and soft in the
 skin.

OB If you're not used to riding a horse....

RB I forget where we were going to stay that night and he
 kept saying "How much further, how much bloody further?"
 Anyway I looked back once and he's sitting on a log, and
 I said "Come on!" and he said "No bugger it, I'm staying
 the night!" and next morning he came out and he was
 walking I said, "Get on and gallop down the flat
 there and rub the soreness out of you!" and he wouldn't
 get on, I had to fight with him to get him on, he nearly
 died on us, my gawd he did. He wanted me to leave him, I
 don't know where we were at the time, but he wanted me to
 leave him, right or wrong, and pick him up

on the way back. By God, he was crook! He only died a
 few years back.

HH You know you said that Uncle Harry said he knew where
 Dick was buried? Do you recollect whether it was that big
 rock, back of Napthali's? That's where that depression
 is.

GS Dick Eames?

HH Who's the bloke near Daveys Hut where there's a big
 stone?

RB I don't know who he is, but there's two pickle bottles of
 gold buried just not far from there.

OB And no one knows where they are.

GS Who buried them?

OB Dick.

GS Was he a miner? They guy that got buried at Daveys.

OB So its Dick that's buried at Daveys? Well who's buried
 at the back of Napthali's?

RB No Dick's buried at Napthali's. Dad never ever knew who
 that was, and there's another one over, another grave
 near the old Bolton house and about due south on our
 paddock on the fault of Diggers Creek there's a grave
 there.

(General Discussion)

RB Dick Eames always had a good garden, used to have a
 beautiful garden, and he cut up onions, parsnips,
 turnips. He'd cook it in his camp oven, and the camp oven
 had a piece out of the lid and in the summer time the
 blow flies used to go in put a bit of 'rice' in with his
 possum, he'd leave it hanging there and then he'd go out
 when he wanted a feed, and he'd light the fire up again
 heat the lot up again and have a feed. Dad reckoned
 towards the end it was more rice than anything else. And
 he reckoned "That's what grog will do to you," he said,
 "don't take to grog!"

GS Dick Eames used to hit the grog did he?

RB He was Postmaster of the GPO (General Post Office) in
 Sydney.

GS Before he came here?

RB Did you ever see his hut, he dug it out of the creek.

OB He used to live in under the bank.

RB Put a roof on it, dug in under....

OB It was only just big enough to crawl in just sleep in it.

(General discussion)

RB You know old Bert Jamieson, you know him? They had the
 lease joining us out in the mountains, and the flies were
 a bit niggly. And Bert and I, this is going back when
 Bert was good, you know, he was one of the top shearers
 you know, he said I'm not taking any fresh meat, it will
 only go rotten you know on packhorse. He used to sit up
 with these tinned sausages and Irish Stew and he'd heat
 her up and we'd be up the back of Finns River, and I'd
 see which way the wind was blowing and I'd get so the
 wind wouldn't blow off his tucker onto me, and Oh the
 smell of it!! I said to him one day "You'll get bloody
 caught eating that stuff!" "Oh no its good!" Anyway
 we're out there on the Back River, I could show you the
 exact spot today, and we're sitting there, he opened up
 Irish Stew, and presently I seen him, he said "The dirty
 Bastards!" and I said "What did you find?" he said
 "You have a look at that!". He brought it over and it
 was half a pizzle off a bloody old wether with a big
 piece of wool and he dropped the plate, and I bet I could
 find the plate today. He never eat any more tin stuff.
 It was just a great big piece of pizzle, cut fair down
 the middle with a big piece of wool hanging to it.

OB Oh well that would be just as good as the maggots!

RB Well I suppose it would be. What the eye doesn't see the heart doesn't grieve.

HH Yeah this tin stuff, I don't like it.

Woman I don't like it, its bad for you!

RB I had a cousin that worked for Gartrell White, years ago she was a decorator, and when it came morning tea they were allowed to eat all the broken cakes, they'd have a great feed. And she was never allowed in the cookhouse, anyway this day the boss came and said "Oh so and so's sick, would you come out into the cookhouse?" She went out and there was this dirty looking old Chinaman there and he had this great big mixing bowl and he was up to his armpits in it, next thing, he's mixing this cake up to the bloody armpits you know and a big piece fell out onto the floor and he'd bend down and pick it up and chuck it back in the cake. Then she heard him say "Jesus Christ!" and she looked over and he's shaking his hand like this and she said "What's up?" He'd scraped the dough down off his hand and he had this great big maggoty sore on his hand, she screamed, because it went back in the cake again.

OB Unless you worked in these factories you wouldn't know what goes on.

(end of tape)

Transcribed by Pauline Downing
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