

CURRANGO HOMESTEAD RESTORATION PROGRAM 1992/93

Ted Casey (abbreviated transcript)

Interviewed at Currango 13 January 1993 by Megan Bowden & David Scott

In garden at front of homestead:

MB Can you remember the vegetable garden and the shapes and state of the garden here?

TC: It wasn't too bad ... she (Molly Taylor) used to have little flowers & that up along the side here (indicating front edge of north verandah to homestead) and around there roses (west side of homestead) not so much around the back.

MB So was this all hedge along here (fence between western gate & tennis court)?

TC: I think it was partly hedge there was more ivy - its been knocked back.

MB What about the vegetable garden? Molly talked about a heart-shaped vegetable garden outside the kiTC:hen.

TC: Mike (Sutton) might remember that. Mike, do you remember when Tom & Molly were here they had that vegetable garden; did they have an oval or heart shaped one out here, or was that a flower bed?

MS I can't remember Tom & Molly ever having a vegetable garden.

TC: They used to have a little bit in there ... where that rhubarb is back there (middle of lawn opposite kiTC:hen). I think it might only have been one or two beds; like carrots and something like that.

MS I don't remember it. There used to be a vegetable garden back here when ??????? used to manage it ... back in what - the 1930s.

TC: Tom & Molly hadn't a flower line, it was just little flowers along here (edge of north verandah to homestead)

MS Yes, just odd patches of flowers

TC: Yes, she had little plots

Overlooking the Tennis Court:

TC: the Taylors turned that into a horse paddock after the kids were reared?. They used to have horses here themselves.

MB There were two courts. Were they full size tennis courts? From the depressions they don't appear to be full size.

TC: Yes, I think they were full size courts.

MB There's one depression there and the other one is next to it

TC: Yes they probably had a centre piece (of ground) where they had the nets across and not only that, they used to have a span so like a platform and they used to sit there - so that could have been positioned there in the centre. (This appears to be a general description of a typical court layout, not specific to Currango.)

MB and that perimeter fence to stop the balls running away, where did it use to extend from?

TC: Well they did have a big high fence although I think it was only two nets high not three (implies overall height of 1.8-2.4m in lieu of more typical 3-3.6m), and made out of round poles with the wire strung through the metal (mesh) and tied to it.

TC: Well they did have a big high fence although I think it was only two nets high not three (implies overall height of 1.8-2.4m in lieu of more typical 3-3.6m), and made out of round poles with the wire strung through the metal (mesh) and tied to it.

MB Was it this shape of post (squared post with diamond head)?

TC: No, if I think I remember rightly they were just straight out round ones - bush poles. They weren't squared or anything like that.

In the later years, after Ted & Don had left the place sorta got split up a fair bit sold the stock and all that sorta thing; Tom & Molly didn't have much left. I think it (the garden) got a bit much for them and I think they just let it go.

This little fence around here (the Tennis Court) I know a couple of times I have picked up horses from here, including TS?(George) Freebody's horses. Sometimes they would drop a couple of horses in here when they were riding around, and I don't know whether you remember Alastair Howard? Many times I have pulled him out of a bog! and down at the dam (Tantangara) they had a little paddock fenced in whilst i was there, and they used to drop two or three in there whilst they were riding around, and over at the Gulf (Circuit's Hut) they had the same over there.

MB This Periwinkle, had it spread this far (all around south side of Tennis Court)?

TC: No, it was just along the fence I just call it ivy

Over the back there are the old sheep yards and that sort of thing. You go down through here, across the creek and you strike another row of pine trees on your right and you come to an old gateway; there used to be a set of sheep yards there and the holding paddock.

At the Stage & Harness Shed:

MB Do you know anything about the pulley system that Ted & Tom used to get engines out of cars?

DS there is a winch over on the back of the tree

TC: Yes, and also Tom used to have one of those big old bullock vices, with the big long handles and you used to strap them to a tree, they stood about this high (1m). They used to use them for axles on drays - putting new boxings in your wheels and that sort of thing. Its sits about that high and is worm driven like a screw jack, with the very thick thread, and with this big handle this long (600mm) that you just wind around & around. They used to peg them to a tree; they could take them out in the bush and peg them anywhere. There used to be one here strapped inside the shed on a post, 'cos Tom had an old time ... press drill and thats what this vice was stuck to

DS All of that stuff is gone from the shed now.

MB Do you know what this wheel is off (iron wheel with serrated segments of 'tread')?

TC: It looks like an old reaper & binder ... or the old horse-drawn mower ...

DS Thats what Uhe and Brian thought it was. See there is teeth inside the hub to drive something , possibly a cutter

TC: Yes, that is what it would be - a horse-drawn mower.

DS Do you know what this is (timber stumps & rails, west side of shed)? A feed trough or something else?

TC: It probably was a sort of bench at sometime. The vice on it is one used to set a saw

MB Can you recall any buildings or yards that are no longer here?

TC: Over the creek there was the killing yards (at the Slaughter Shed), and over the back here (past Pine Lodge) is the old breaking yards, stockyards and that sort of thing ... partly still there. There was another little shed in here (southwest of the S & H shed)

DS In the trees down there

TC: Is that where it was? There used to be a fowl house down there too.

DS There is the remains of a fowl house over at the back of Pine Lodge.

TC: That could be it

At the site of the Blacksmith's Shop:

TC: The wheels off an old engine here (steel wheels & axle) thats part of the old chook house there, isn't it?

DS We know that as the Blacksmith's Shop - thats what Tom called it. It may have been down for 50 or more years

TC: I seem to remember that there was a 6' high wire netting fence around it.

DS There is something there as well (indicating pile of iron/rubbish 25m west of Blacksmith's Shop)

TC: Well, that could have been it there

DS Its possible that they may have converted the Blacksmith's Shop to a fowl house at some stage, but that is the base of a forge that you can see there.

TC: Well there was a bellows and that up there too (indicating Stage & Harness Shed). You know one of the hand pumped bellows ... the leather type ... and this had the fire box and that built there with the ashes ... that you pump the air through

DS Trevor ThatTC:her recalls them using a hand-powered turbine at the Blacksmith's Shop during the late 1920s & early 1930s. I wonder if this bellows is later ... if Tom owned it?

TC: Well it could have been because Tom was inventing stuff all the time; making stuff up. There was part of an old 'A' model Ford - the chassis with the wheels on it from which he made a sulky. All that sort of thing ...

DS There is a cart up the back there that has a got a car axle ... but modern steel wheels; I don't think that would be part of an 'A' model Ford

TC: He had another one, a full (car) chassis with the 4 wheels on it. Looked like a small wagon you know, no canopy but with just the side boards and that. He used to park it down there under the pine trees (near Pine Lodge). And the old grader

DS Would you know how long that thats been here?

TC: Thats been here ever since I've been coming here. Old Tom used to do his own tracks around here ...plus whoever that was here and was silly enough to sit in the seat to use the handles.

MB So you think the chook yard was about here where this ruin is?

TC: Yes, this was fenced around this area - I remember that quite distinctly. I had chooks down at the dam there. Molly told me that she had seen a fox caught in the mesh once (at Curranjo).

DS: (examining pile of mesh adjacent blacksmith's shop) the mesh has been taken down.

TC: Well I know when they first started to clean this lot up here, Johnny Dick and a few of the boys over at the farm over here, pushed a hell of a lot of stuff up.

MB: Do you recall if there was any gardens down here (towards creek)? There is some medicinal sorts of plants there. do you know if there was a herb garden?

TC: I couldn't recall

MB: Was there much of a garden around the Pines?

TC: No there was very little around the Pines. Over at Daffodil, well there the was flowers and daffodils -it wasn't just at the front of the house, it was all over.

DS: There's the remains of the old dory there a little timber boat - punt.

TC: Or is it part of the flying fox that the hydrology boys used to use. Theres one over at the back of the shed there - that is off a flying fox. No this one is part of one of the old boats they used to use; used to cross the river down here. The (SMA) hydrometric? men, they used to use Currango as a depot. They used to drop all of their gear off and go out from here - all the top end (high plains), collecting data on the streams from their gauging stations. Where the main intake is up there on the Goodradigbee about one quarter of a mile upstream there is an old gauging station there. Down below the dam, about half way between the dam and the crossing up to Townsend's (Hut), there is another one there. So they were placed here, there and everywhere on the streams to see what catchment - what runoff - there was over the winter months.

DS: So do you know where this flying fox would have come from? Would they have had one of them at each of the gauging stations?

TC: No not at all of the stations. They had the one down here over the river - the Murrumbidgee where it runs into the dam there now. Before the dam was established the river used to wind across the plain they had one down there because they couldn't get on the other side, they didn't know that area at the time so they used to come in here and work out of here. Danny Coleman and them from Jindabyne, Ray Findlay?, Don Gower all those old blokes. Ray retired, I think Danny died, Don Gower now lives in Cooma. Bob Jannarda? was another one, Frank Milner another; they were some of the early crews during the very early 1950s, well before the dam even started. They was getting the in-flows?, the time of the year collecting data which they could process and say righto you can work through from the end of July through til September, or whatever But there were no flying foxes on the rivers up this way (north), just more-or-less gauging stations and they had access to them.

DS: Do you remember when Don Taylor was living here (Pine Lodge)? We believe that they did some alterations inside here. Either them or the State Park Ranger who was working with Tom - I have forgotten his name, now

TC: Hmm, who would that be; Bob Blackett? Alastair Howard?

DS: It might have been Alastair Howard - that name rings a bell, but it could be for another reason

MB: He is the Deputy Director (NPWS).

TC: Alastair is? Well blazes! Last time I pulled him out of the snow was from the Gulf Hut (Circuit's) to the top of the rocky hill to get him out - with Freebody's horses.

Bob Blackett, he was a scotsman, and I think he may have been in charge at that time. Neville Gare was in the south

DS: We know that in the early days there was a fence along here past the (north) side of the Pines, but would this have all been open here (southeast) through to the Homestead?

TC: All bar the fence that was around the cottage (indicating Pine Lodge). If I remember rightly this verandah had a railing right along it with a tiny hand gate at the end..... made out of 2" pine struts, a picket type gate.

DS: They left the railing off in the recent works because they thought that it was originally without a railing.

TC: No, it had a railing. Many times I would come over here to give Mrs Taylor a hand and she would have a blanket or a mattress hanging over it.

DS: The railing wouldn't have been put in when Don Taylor was here, would it?

TC: I don't know.

DS: Would you have any photos of this?

TC: ... I'm currently moving house and all my stuff is in boxes. If you want some historical photos, you want to ring Jill or Julie up in Cooma at the archives, information centre(SMHEA). They have got them all from Gundagai right through the Snowy and down to Orbost. Aerial photos and everything

At the Ring Yards:

MB: Do you know the extent of these yards?

TC: All I can remember of these was just the round breaking-in yard and like a forcing-yard behind it, and then it was just a fenced-in enclosure.

DS: Did you ever see any buildings here (8m south of the ring yard)? We had an archaeologist out here and he believed he could make out the outline of some sort of stable structure or the like.

TC: No I can't recall any off-hand. All I can remember is that there was sort of a little open tin-shed and that.

DS: Well thats all it would be - a tin shed with a few bales in.

TC: Not even that. I think it was just a tin shed and they used to leave their fire buckets with the branding irons in there.

DS: Just a skillion roof?

TC: Yes, only a skillion roof

DS: And not necessarily enclosed on all sides

TC: No, no, no. In those days for branding they used to use a little rock fireplace or a 4-gallon bucket; fire bucket.

DS: Also, this pile of stones here. We believe that this was the fireplace for another hut that was here in the 1930s, although it may have been long gone by the 1940s. they called it Billy Stanfield's Hut.

TC: Billy Stanfield's Hut? well, thats something I didn't know. Billy Stanfield are they the Stanfields from Tumut? There are some Stanfields there now

MB: I don't know.

TC: I tell you someone else worth getting in touch with about your area - Yarrangobilly - is Chas Bradley. He's about 90 and getting around as well as you or me. He knows the history of the Caves from when it was first opened up he's a really interesting old gentleman to have a yarn too. And his memory is clear as a bell he's very, very good.

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DS: A very ceremonial gateway here (40m northeast of Stanfield's hut).

TC: Yes, well the other gate back up there (track heading towards Homestead), it was a double wooden gate. This gate was just one of the old boqan? gates

DS: Would that have been one with the wire joining the top of the gateposts?

TC: Yes.

At the sheep yards:

MB: Would these have been the Austalian Estate Company's yards?

TC: As far as I know, because this was sort of a ? pastoral company. This is the holding paddock here. it streTC:hes up into the timber there, and you see those two posts? Thats the remainder of the sheep yards they used to run there.

MB: How many sheep do you reckon they could hold here?

TC: Oh there would have to be 5 acres in there 3500 to 4000 comfortably, I'd say, in this holding yard. they used to do the drenching and innoculating, all that, up in the yards there - where you see the remains of it. Two strainer posts, well that was all yards in that area, and then you had a forcing race into it there

From there, there is a fenceline which runs back in that direction (west) and goes right through and comes out on the top road. You know where the ramp is out past Tom & Molly's turn-off you keep going and you come to two strainer posts, not very far ahead, well thats the boundary fence - used to run up to there.

MB: Was there a trail leading out there?

TC: I went through there once, 3 or 4 years ago. You would have to pick your way (cross-country) if you were wanting to drive because you've got two or three swamps back up in there (headwaters of Currango Ck) it would be a fair hike from the road you could do it though.

There used to be an old double gateway here (middle of SW fence to holding paddock) and there was another one over there see where the big old post is there by himself (across track outside NW corner of yards), that used to be a very tall strainer post - about 9 or 10 foot strainer post there thats the way they used to come in from their lease. I know where the old gate might be lying there, an old iron gate with the old-type iron clips on it. It had a fancy type hinges, heavy duty dual couplings and on the other end where you had your caTC:h there was a bar that stuck out above the gate and you pushed it to release the laTC:h

MB: Is it worth having a look at the old sheepyards?

TC: I think that there is just the remains of the old rails lying there

MB: Do you know if this area was cleared much?

TC: Well there was none done while I was here. Previous to that I do believe a bit was done ... up around the Pocket's area.

MB: Photographs tend to show it being much clearer up the hill there

TC: Well it could have been certainly the horse paddock may have been cleared. There's one of those old square posts

At the Office:

DS: Up behind the building you can see one of those picket gates. Do you know if that one was always there? Mike was telling us that he believes that there was a vehicular gate there.

TC: Well, Tom used to go around there somewhere with his vehicle - the old green Torana.

DS: The opening is wide enough for a vehicle at the moment because the opposite gatepost has long since gone. That hand gate is sitting there simply because it fits the hinges

TC: Unless it was a handgate with another gate with it. Which you used to see a lot of - a little hand gate plus your big gate sort-of-thing.

DS: And the slab shed there at the back (Woodstore), we have done a lot of work on that. Towards the end Tom was using it as a woodstore but do you recall it ever being used for anything else?

TC: No, it was always a woodshed, as far as I can recall.

MB: Not being used to store a sulky or such?

TC: Well he used to have that old trailer thing - that rubber-tyred sulky thing, and he used to shove that back in there but it was used as a woodshed at the same time.

Mostly this one over here (Main Storage Shed), in the back of it he would shove his old sulky. And he had a Willy's Jeep - a white one.

DS: Someone tried to tell me that there was once a garage just here (15m NE of Homestead)

TC: No, I don't recall that the only thing that was there when I first come here was that big pine tree. When it split in the fork and part of it came over onto the house, they put a big drag chain around it and Graham Links? and his crew come up here one day and got to work. Lopped it right back and ended up cutting it down. No, there was no garage that I can recall there not to say it wasn't before my time.

DS: They said Tom's old Chrysler used to sit in it

TC: No. Teddy has got that and its still out at Blowering ... a Dodge Chrysler, big V-shaped bonnet his wife Helen, is a McAllister

At the Slaughter Shed:

TC: Here they had a holding yard and a forcing yard, and then the other yard was for the killing-house ... i'm not sure if this was a concrete one or not. So when they got them into the yard and they opened up the doors, the one big door at the front, there used to be a stand around inside the building and as the beast come in they would close the door to keep him in there. So you're up in the stand there with a spear - bang through the back of the neck.

MB: Would they hang them up here or over in the cool house?

TC: I think they hung them over in the cool house

MB: That's a lot of carrying to cart a beast over there

TC: I think they would hang it up here overnight, then they would cut them down and quarter them and then take them over there so they could cut them up and hang them. the longer you hang a beast - let it stretch - then the better the meat is, better cured.

DS: How long would it take to drain the blood? Its likely thats simply what this building was mainly for ... they had a race feeding in here to wash blood away.

TC: Well, a lot of them (slaughter sheds) had a little channel in the concrete with a pipe going out, and there they would have a container in a well. They would have water trickling all of the time, washing the concrete as its bleeding ... you might get 4-5 gallons of blood with the water. I don't know what they did with the blood then ... whether they saved it for anything ...

DS: The Taylors said that they always used this as the milking yard.

TC: Oh yes ... classed as the milking yard. Well you see that little paddock that used to be fenced in there ... they probably used to run their old cow in there and use this as a milking yard.

Molly was a very keen horsewoman in her younger days; Tom he used to do a lot of riding. She used to get out and loved mustering and that sort of thing. She never lost touch with it ... kept up with her milking cows when she retired.

MB: You remember talking with Molly about using the bales in the Stage & Harness Shed for milking?

TC: Yes, we used to reminisce alot.

DS: It looked as though it had been used as a dairy although some people recalled it being used as a stable.

TC: No.

DS: Do you recall what the long shed beside it was used for? At one stage Tom had his Willy's parked in the end of it

TC: Well he had all his old batteries and old motors, all that sort of thing stored in there. Old tyres, bits and pieces of machinery. That second section was where he had all this (HFI) stuff locked up.

DS: The front room in the vertical slab section has got some rabbit skins in it and smells of wool fleece

TC: Well Tom used to do his own shearing over where the Engine Room and that is, Chap by the name of Bill Rowley from Yaouk used to come over. Tom would have probably 80-100 sheep to shear; it used to take him a week to shear it because Tom would get some plonk out, and the other guy liked his wine, and of course they wouldn't start 'til about 9 o'clock in the morning. Tom would have a few drinks around about 11, and then they would have lunch, so on... so it used to take them a week to shear 100 sheep!

DS: They would not have been shearing here though would they?

TC: Yes, yes!

DS: So Tom was running his own stock here?

TC: Oh yes, he used to have his own few head at that time before the Park took over (from the Lands Dept). A few head of sheep and a few head of cows, a few horses because his grandchildren used to come up and ride on holidays.

DS: Do you recall anything about the Hayshed or Shearing shed that was down here on the plain?

TC: No, I don't at all. Only the sheds down there with the two old engines in

DS: When the Australian Estates Co left they were just starting to construct a big set of yards just here (west). Dug the holes and put a few posts in but never connected any wire

TC: ... oh ... well over the other side here where that creek runs down. Back up to your left there used to be another set of sheepyards there. There is still a few bits & pieces there, infact the old horse drawn chaff cutter on the ground where you fit the horse and whhhttt! round & round you go

that was sitting there for ages, but whether it is still there I don't know.

MB: I went over there with Ted Taylor but we couldn't find it.

DS: Would that have been the sort of thing that you could put in the back of a car or ute?

TC: Oh gee, you would be battling ... its all cast (iron). It would be very, very heavy. You would nearly have to dismantle it to put it into a ute or something like that ... unless you have a box trailer and you can up-end it and winch it on or something ... I know where there is another one, but I don't know if Eucumbene Dam will ever be down low enough to get it!

At the Howard Florey Institute building:

MB: Where did they have their enclosures?

TC: They did have one lot of enclosures behind this, they had rows of them one on top of the other, where they inoculated them or treated them with different types of stuff. It was all labelled. Over in Tom's shed where the old stables is they had boxes and boxes of different tubes, special scales for weighing, lot of liquid stuff in various containers - what it consisted of i don't know.

DS: We always have referred to this as the Howard Florey Institute Building. Its obviously the same crowd for they were doing experiments on rabbits. They may have been working with CSIRO. (TC: always referred to the "rabbit blokes from CSIRO")

TC: There used to be a lot of cages stacked here also; wire ones & everything. Unless they might have come back and got them

DS: They never came back. Tom was most upset that they left all their junk here. He had to cart boxes of chemicals and syringes over to his shed where he could lock them up.

TC: Yes there was syringes ... and boxes of stuff. I arrived when he was two-thirds through carrying it all ... gave him a hand with the rest.

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DS: The SMA put this road in along the top of the ridge up to Gurrangorambla Ck; that would have been very early in the piece? When they were doing the aqueduct?

TC: Yes. They put that in to use when they carted the pipes in for the aqueduct line.

DS: So whenever you would be coming to Currango you would be coming that way or via the old road along the plain ...?

TC: Actually the Snowy very seldom used the River road, as they called it, because it was only the Hydrometric boys that used to come in here - they would either have a jeep or come by horseback until that road was pushed in over the hill. of course the other way they used to come in from Bugtown, across Nungar, down pass Townsend's (Hut), down pass Payten's (Ck) and pick there way out down pass the Goodradigbee Camp.

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TC: We used to take the snocat out pass Nungar Camp, or go out pass Traces Hut and Nungar Ck and go across country, come out at Bullock's Hill. Then we would truck it back to Cabramurra.

Knowing the country in the winter months is a lot different from what it is now ... its very deceiving, the drifts and that. Sometimes you get sort of a coastal fog in, a big black fog that starts rolling and you can drive around in circles.

DS: It would have been pretty nasty living at Nungar Camp during the winter ...?

TC: Oh no. When the contractor was here they had to keep the road open on account of the tunnel entrance at the dam, and also at the face at Providence too.

Old Tom used to like going out in it - the snocat. He loved it. Used to get across country which he could never get to in the jeep or whatever ...

DS: Did they give you a four-wheel drive while you were at the house?

TC: Yes I had a four-wheel drive all the time ... with a winch.

DS: Did you ever get stuck coming back from Adaminaby?

TC: No. A few times I had to walk in ... and walk out. Because coming up over the divide there, thats the worst stretch of this road for snow. And from the old Gang Gang Camp up to the top of the divide it would be up to the headlights - pushing all the way!

Conversation between Mike Sutton & Ted Casey:

MS: the hut on the other side (of the Murrumbidgee), thats the one that got burnt. They called it Jezellases?

Bill Osmond he had it (lease) for a good many years. He sold it to these other people and they built this little bit of a hut there - thats the one they call "The Love Nest in the Sallee". Old whats-is-name used to bring his girlfriend up there ... old Oldfield. I never found out who the girlfriend was; Molly knew, but she would never tell me.

Whats-is-name built that hut, that old fellow who used to walk up there ... Chalker!

TC: Granville?

MS: No ... that was Granville Oldfield. Not Earnie ... not Percy ...

TC: I can even picture him ...

MS: I can too! Hobbling along, he used to walk the same ... just as fast, just as many miles. He used to muster all that country on foot! Up the top of the hill here (east of Currango), drive them down to Yaouk on foot, bring them back on foot ...

TC: Bill and he, they put the track in.

MS: They did! Bill and couldn't think of my own dogs name yesterday!

He was a great old drover this old fellow. Droving along and he would come to the foot of a hill, "oh, think we'll have a cup of tea here, let them walk up to the top of the hill". By the time you'd had your drink of tea they were over the top of the hill. On to the next hill, "oh, we'll boil the billy here, they'll be over the hill by the time we have a cup of tea ..."

TC: He had it worked out ...

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MS: When did you come to Adaminaby to live?

TC: I think it was about 1949, but we were coming here previous to that. Then I went out share-farming and then I came back - started with old Claude Locker ... and Mick McMahon. Grubbing briars out at Freebody's. And you, your old man and Lenny were building the stockyard there.

MS: That was 1946. I can tell you that!

TC: 1946! Well thats when it was!

MS: My dad was just out of the Army. We built the stockyards ... we built a set for Freebody's and George Mervin? had a look at it and said "I'll get you to build a set over here".

TC: Was that little hut there at Freebody's, on top of the knob? Little tiny red hut there?

MS: Oh yes, just beside where you go in on the right hand side?

TC: Yes, thats where the four of us used to camp, in that.

MS: She had a great old fireplace - that little stove in the corner there! You'd sit your billies out in the sun ... one on the stove and one in the sun to see which would boil first!

TC: Well we grubbed all that place of briars ...

MS: And that was hacked for 2 bob an acre. Back in the Depression days blokes used to go in to get the dole and they'd say "no, there is plenty of work out at Freebody's". They used to have to go out there, and it was hacked off for 2 bob an acre. Poor buggers ...

Mick McMahon used to say "when we used to go out there to get a sheep off it at night time, there was always someone else looking for one too"! And so they should too! If he wouldn't pay them a decent wage, they're entitled to a bit of meat.

TC: Well we did a bit of work there, then Skinny McMahon and me decided to go do a bit of fencing up at Cole's, up the back of Tolbar there. Used to go up the old dirt road that turned off at Hughes' Creek, back up in there. I'll never forget that. Got in three parts of the hill, couldn't go any further so we turned around and went back to old Adaminaby.

MS: What did Skinny have then? What sort of vehicle?

TC: Oh, an old Chevrolet ...

MS: A Chev utility? A little brown one? I remember her, we collected her and went out to Bugtown to do a bit of trapping once. Got as far as Middle? Creek and broke down!

TC: Whats-is-name was carting logs at the time ... that Lance Collins. To the sawmill from out of there. He had one of those Reo Speedwagons - you need a stepladder to get up into the cabin!

MS: He had another bloke with him too - Toddy Clarke. He give Sonny Vaughn a tip under the ear ...

TC: I never forget Bobby McMahon and Noel? Singleton having a fight down Stuarts Lane there. He was managing Bolairo ...?

MS: No, no ... Freebody's. Little Fred's. thats when they took Fred away to a home. He was there when we built the yards.

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TC: We used to have dances. Out to Berridale in that old yellow "Inter" of Hep and Delaneys ...

MS: Not the black Ford they pinched in Cooma. He had a brother who had a black Ford. They went to Cooma, had a bit of a spree, and pulled up at the Royal Hotel - which is still there on the way out. When the pub shut they hopped in the car and drove home. Albert and the brother got up in the morning and said "what colour is your car?"

His friend said "black".

He said "well there's a green one out here!"

"You know mine's black!"

"This one's green! Jesus!"

Back to Cooma. Out the back of the hotel theirs is still sitting where they parked it. They went up to old ? , the policeman, and he laughed.

When they had gone to start the car on the next morning, to take it back, the keys fit the ignition but they couldn't get it going - had to hotwire it! When they were drunk they just put it in and she turned over!

TC: Probably Stuart O'Laughlin?

MS: They nearly shit themselves! They thought they were going to get 12 months in jail by the time they got back!

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TC: (early snow in 1964 necessitated a rescue trip in snocat, at Coolamine) ... we give them a lot of tucker and one thing or another, horse feed and all that we took in with us. I asked him if he wanted some lights and he said he'd got a generator, a 32 volt.

MS: Yes, I bought it new and when they put the power on (at Adaminaby) I then sold it to them - Rury and Les.

TC: Then we came out back via the old fellow up in Cooinbil. He had his horse inside the hut. He had a loaf of bread left

MS: What was the old fellow's name?

TC: Old Ted oh dear

MS: Horse and sulky?

TC: Yes. The old grey horse, the sulky and a couple of dogs. Anyhow, we took him out with us and the E.C. they put the horse in the sled (towed by the snocat) and we took the sulky. We followed them because the sled packed the snow down. We were pulling the sulky in the other snocat, it broke through certainly - but it wasn't sinking down to the axles! We took them out to where the cottages were at Rules Point, and he stopped there for two or three days, got a few decent feeds into him, and then when they got up one morning he was gone - the horse, sulky and the lot!

MS: Didn't you say he hadn't eaten properly for a week?

TC: Yes. He had only had one spud left and half a loaf of bread. He'd been breaking bits of bread off to give to the horse inside the hut. It was a heavy winter that year ... '64.

MS: There was a lot more snow in 1964 than there was in 1946 - up in the hills ...

TC: More than 1956! It was very windy here ... on top of Sawyers Hill they measured 21 foot drifts that year, and the blanket snow was 8 feet.

1956, was that the year they had snow on Christmas Day in old Adaminaby? There was a foot or 15 inches down the main street ... ?

MS: Couldn't tell you, Ted

TC: Remember R.J. had to clear the road out to Cooma and half the way out towards Nimmitabel? With the old Matador ... the old snow plough.

MS: They done that in 1946 too, with the old Matador! By jeez it done a good job back in those days. In 1946 they used to clear it for as far as they could, then go back the next morning and it had all blown in so they had to start again!

TC: You see Jimmy Pattinson he used to ski through with the mail ... they used to meet him somewhere about Alpine Creek, I suppose ... and then he used to take the mail back to Kiandra.

MS: Ronny Cracky? used to always ski in with the mail during the winter ...

TC: What about old Harry Yule? ... he worked the Tumut end. And Dudley Bolton had it after him in the old brown Erskine.

MS: I know Dudley and Ossie used to have the Yaouk mail ...

TC: He had that one, I know. They would come as far as Rules Point, Harry Yule, then they would come from there down to old Adaminaby with Dudley Bolton.

MS: Oh Dudley from Kiandra to Adaminaby? Yes Dudley had it! I thought you meant from Tumut to Adaminaby.

TC: Oh no that was Harry Yule. Harry Yule, afterwards he used to come right through ... in the summer months. It wasn't long after that they sort of closed everything down, Rules Point ...

MS: Buster Day was the last fellow who had the mail run remember old Duncan that used to be at Rules Point? Tobacco was short so they sent him up some of this ready-rub stuff, fine cut. So Buster rides up with the mail, Duncan met him and got the mail and says "when you next come up, bring me some decent tobacco to will you? Look at this bloody stuff, just look at it! You wouldn't even set bloody fowls in it!"

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MS: Pether's Hut. Do you ever remember that hut standing? Harry Pether's Hut, on the edge of the timberline just over the head of the Murrumbidgee there ... Snow once told me that he slept in it, but he must have got mixed up with the one over the other side (back of Warigong on Clifford's place).

TC: I know the one you mean. I don't ever remember it standing.

MS: I don't remember it being there, but I've seen the remains of it ...

TC: This one down here, Smith's Hut. I can just barely remember it standing.

MS: I spent many a cold night in her!

TC: All that's left is the remains of a chimney there now ...

MS: Yes ... Rowleys, they were the last ones to have the lease. I dare say they would have bought it. In those days, whoever picked up the lease had to pay for the improvements.

TC: What about Trace's, can you remember it standing?

MS: Yes, but pretty dilapidated. Whats-is-name used to have it - Paddy Spelman. He would have been the last to have it to ... theres only odd posts laying around there now

DS: What did you call this place over here on the Port Philip Trail? Where the old track comes from Old Currango?

MS: On the old track where you turn in at Feint's there? That was Skinny Blake's Hut, thats Feint's (lease). It was a log hut that was. I come through there a good many years ago when I was little and old Reg Kenny? brought horses up to Old Currango for Harcourt Reid and aunty Vera. I come up on holidays for she was having a baby and he was taking the furniture and her back. We pulled in there; Skinny was camped there trapping rabbits. We pulled in and he had curried turkey on for dinner, old Reg Kenny and I we had a great tuck-in. I remember Reg saying "where'd you get the turkey?" Skinny said "well, I pinched it!" Of course me, only being a 6-7 year old, I bloody believed him! Not a thing to do, pinch a turkey he got it off Mrs Harcourt

Yes, I used to ride that old track. Many a time we used to go through there to pick the mail up from Rules Point.

DS: Megan said that she had walked a short way up from the Old Currango side and found an old tip by it.

MS: Yes, that would be the tip for Old Currango. There's a cow yard just up along side it too. When aunty Vera used to go and get the bucket to milk the cows, all us kids used to get a pint. She milked about 2 bloody cows before she would get anything in the bucket - we used to get all the fresh milk!

We used to sit on that verandah over there, and the amount of kangaroos that are around here now ... we used to sit there and you would be lucky to see 2 or 3 kangaroos hopping across the plain. we'd sit there and waTC:h them for hours ... thats how much they've built up over the years

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TC: Its called Gang Gang Creek nowadays. I always remember the copper, Earl Neill. They reckoned some blokes flogged the safe out of one of the Snowy Camps and they had come across this old Plymouth that was bashed and dented, knocked about - nothing but a shell. He's standing there with the rifle in his hand indicating that this was the vehicle that they got away in & then had blown up! The bloody thing was there when we first moved into the camp! It belonged to one of the boys - Syd Everett's? old V8 Pilot! The shell is still parked up there above the old transmission line ... at Gang Gang Camp. You know where the milk can is there on the top side, well thats where the camp was. On the opposite side was the workshops and the transport and what have you.

DS: Did you ever get up to that hut on Tantangara Mountain? Harveys?

MS: Why ever they call that Harvey's I'm buggered if I know! Wally Reid built that!

TC: There's a lot of confusion there to you see: Tantangara & Blackfellow's and that.

MS: Its Tantangara now, but that was always Governor's (Hill).

TC: But on the other end of it, what they call Blackfellow's, its still the same range! was you up there when they put the ski run in?

MS: No, no

TC: Jacky Sutton and Lloyd? ... and Roy was there too. I'll never forget that. You know that snow lasts 6 weeks longer than what it does at Selwyn, down that range on that side.

MS: I wouldn't be surprised. You get all the snow off Kiandra Plain blowing over the top of that hill, down into that gully. There's feet & feet of it! Thats where they should have a ski tow!

TC: Yes. Old Colligan wanted to kick that off you know. Him and Geoff Fox and there was a couple of yankee blokes ... they were going to build a tower and everything up the top there. I think they were negotiating with the Park. But it was going to be a fire tower and an observatory ...

DS: Where abouts was the ski tow going to be? Did they ever finish it?

TC: It was a one-rope tow. Lloyd and them put it in ...

MS: Yes, it was only a rope tow. Thats when whats-is-name started off - old Myers.

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TC: Well we did undertake several runs in the snocat. Come out here in the snocat and go up to the aqueduct. Then it was no longer needed at the dam ... there was an agreement between Tom & myself - he would ride up on horseback and check the aqueduct for me, and I could get this far up the lake and feTC:h him some tucker and that sort of thing.

DS: What you be doing at the aqueduct?

TC: Cleaning the trash-racks and checking the main intakes. We scour them out to stop all the silt and leaves going through into the dam.

DS: That run in 1964, was that because the snow had come early?

TC: That was the year that old Mrs Cochrane and her cattle come through. They got there and it just snowed in overnight. I was the only one who knew the area at the time so I had to go out with them in the snocat.

DS: What time of year was it? Was it the heart of winter?

TC: Yes ...

DS: What? They had people out at Cooinbil & Coolamine through the winter?

TC: Well these people were coming through from Tumut, taking there stock back. Well they had the planes, Air Force Caribous, dropping hay to them, and everything for weeks.

An old John Dowling, he broke through. He come right through from Brindabella, over Peppercorn and right across (Long Plain). Done a damn good job, the old fella

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DS: There used to be a little fence around this place (Daffodil Cottage) ...

TC: Yes, a fence around this place and another little paddock out here (west) an overnight horse yard sort of thing.

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TAPE 1:

TC: same at the dam when it was down low, I got to work and pulled all of the old fencelines out. The old stockyard posts down at the old crossing, there still there, and there's two lumps of concrete with two lengths of pipe sticking out - there about the only snags left in the dam.

MB: When you first came to Currango, Tom & Molly were here then?

TC: Yes. I was camped at Gang Gang (SMA Camp); that would have been about 1954. Teddy (Taylor) was working on the roads in the construction days, and we used to come up here with Teddy.

MB: You were telling me on the way up how the snow cut you off when you were living at Tantangara Dam, you used to boat up supplies to Tom & Molly ...

TC: Yes. Molly would ring up Mrs Ford in Cooma or one of her relations in Tumut and they used to ring the store at Adaminaby and put an order through. Molly couldn't get through because the (party) line was only connected to Rules Point (Guest House). Old Tom had to follow the line across; find wombats had been chewing through it where it was on the ground.

I used to pick up their order and feTC:h it up to them. When the lake was too rough, Tom used to ride down on horseback with a pack horse and bring it back on that.

DS: When you first came here was that prior to the construction of the dam?

TC: Yes. We were putting the transmission lines in and that sort of thing, from what they call the TLC on the back of Denison's Hill to Burnside. You turn off at Angler's Reach, where the pines are - what they call Mars Lane. and come in there.

DS: And you were living at the camp at the dam?

TC: No, there was no camp there at the dam, not at all. Just an odd building, like 'smoko' sheds. Nungar was the camp. The only other camp up here was Goodradigbee (Old Camp).

DS: Was that camp specifically for the construction of the aqueduct?

TC: More or less, but for the road construction too.

DS: Did they do the work on Pocket's airstrip then too?

TC: Yes. And I used to mow that by hand! ... 38.7 miles with a push mower too! 18.5 hours. I had it registered as an emergency airstrip. Canberra used to use it; they would do a lot of training up there.

DS: The Air Force? From Fairbairn?

TC: Yes. With their choppers they used to come up there and do a lot of instruction work and so on.

DS: I have heard of the Caribous using the strips in the Park ...

TC: Yes, they used to use it and the Snowy they used to use the Beavers. They used to land there when they would be dropping personnel or spare parts, links for the aqueducts, valves and that sort of thing.

DS: Someone had told me that the SMA airfields were only used to fly the top brass in to inspect the works, but they used it for more routine tasks.

TC: No, it was used for general purposes.

And same for the airstrip that was over here. It would be underwater now. Well the yanks used to use it for their brass and one thing or another, but mostly it was used for personnel, spare parts and so on ...

DS: Whereabouts was this strip? There was one down at the dam was there?

TC: No not at the dam. You know where I pointed out Smith's Hut was on that point, well its down the trail from that. It was quite a good strip. They originally had one down closer to the dam, but they had to do away with that due to the construction work and blasting.

Where they moved it up to was better. Where Kelly's Creek comes down and Nungar Creek on the other side of the spur, and then you got the Murrumbidgee coming in. So they decided to put it there on the ridge; flattened it out and put a bit of gravel on it.

DS: Did you ever here of another airstrip up here? Early in the century a guy from Canberra, Andy Campbell, used to fly his biplane over this way. I don't know whether he just put down in a paddock.

TC: Well there could have been, because the Authority had emergency airstrips right through the mountains. At the back of Kiandra there you have got one at Tabletop, you got one on the Pinnacles at the back of Grey Mare, ... They had them at different points they were around, they had them Khancoban through to Talbingo, in a line they had these emergency strips where if they had any trouble they could put their planes down. The one at the back of Tabletop, its still marked. They're still marked ...

DS: Is that one right up on the ridgeline at Tabletop?

TC: Yes. You go around the back of Tabletop from Kiandra and as you come out in the open its on the right hand side. You'll see some old tree stumps sticking up, its to the right of that, and you see the old rubber tyres and that ...

DS: I have seen an old tyre hanging in a tree there. Thats marking the airstrip?

TC: Yes.

DS: Well the airstrip up here would have been a long time before the Snowy came here. The 1920s ...

TC: No I haven't heard of another one here. The Snowy had another one over at Peppercorn, and another one down at Brindabella - Dowling who had Brindabella Station - the Snowy used to use that also because they had a camp there for powerline and road construction. They were doing it for the EPT, an Italian mob.

DS: Back down at the dam here The main road in to this area, do you remember if it originally went through the gorge? Where the dam is?

TC: Yes, it used to go down along the river bed there. Where those willow trees are - it used to cross about there. Then you had one track that used to lead over towards the Gulf, thats where the PMG line used to run through there, right up through here right up to Pocket's (Hut), that was a telephone line - a party line - right back to Adaminaby.

DS: Was there a bridge over the river at the crossing?

TC: No, I think it was just a ford. It was a fairly wide sort of thing.

DS: I always wondered with having a road through the gorge whether it would just get flooded out.

TC: I think in bad weather conditions Tom & Molly used to go back out through Pocket Saddle to Rules Point. Rules Point was in full swing in those days, you had the guest house. The mailman used to call in there as he went from Tumut through to Cooma.

DS: There was a bridge over here near the causeway in the early days wasn't there?

TC: Over Currango Creek? Yes.

DS: Mike talks about a hut down on Kelly's Plain that must have been within sight of the dam ...

TC: Well that would be Smith's. You had the old Bag Hut down here on the left. Whats-is-name was baiting his pigs, we got talking about the Bag Hut and he said "where is it?" , and he was only about 100 yards off it! He found it in the end Greg Sturgess.
.....
(plane crash at Geehi)... he got knocked about a little bit. The pilot was alright but they got the old stockyards. To get into that strip you got to circle around and keep coming down and down, and then you have to make your run he clipped the yards or something

BR: They used to use the Beavers alot in those days ...

TC: They were all Beavers, they had three Beavers. Then they went to "the pig", the old Piaggio(?), with the motors back-to-front on them. Then they had two Beechcraft, then they went to the Commander and then they had the AeroCommander. Then they got the Biratti Pilus(?), thats the one that Jack Howard crashed.

BR: Was that a Pilus(?) was it? Clipped the top of the air mast in Cooma? This bloke had been flying for the Snowy for how many years

TC: 10-15 years, he was an ex-fighter pilot.

BR: He was from Talbingo wasn't he?

TC: No Jindabyne. He picked up those 2-3 girls that got killed; the lot of them got killed.

BR: Flying into Cooma, in the fog. He'd flown it that often and he's clipped a few feet off the mast, the radio mast ...