

HARRY FINDLAY
 Interviewed by Klaus Hueneke
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*transcribed by
 Chris Meyer 1992
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This is an interview with Harry Findlay, down on his property at Spring Creek, near Khancoban on Monday 13th May 1985. It is a beautiful sunny day, autumn's come to Khancoban, the hills are very clear, the sky is a lovely clear transparent blue.

KH: I thought if I could ask you first when you were born?
 HF: I was born in 1909.
 KH: Where were you born?
 HF: Corryong.
 KH: Did you have any brothers and sisters?
 HF: Yes, there's 9 in my family, including 4 boys and 5 girls. I'm the third.
 KH: Are most of them still alive?
 HF: My eldest sister and the eldest brother, they're dead, and my youngest brother was killed in Malaya.
 KH: Are they all mostly around this area?
 HF: Yes, all apart from one sister's married to a school teacher at Yankoo out from Wagga.
 KH: Yes, I taught there for two years once, at Yankoo. What does he teach there?
 HF: Well I'm not sure, but I think he's at the school.
 KH: The boarding school?
 HF: Yes. I'm not sure what he teaches.
 KH: And what was the name of your parents?
 HF: My father was the same as my own, William Henry and my mother was Mary Ann. She was a sister of a chap who used to knock around the mountains, he knocked around the mountains all his life - George Finch. And I thought perhaps, a chap you mentioned in your book, by the name of Willis, might have mentioned him. I think they put in a bit of mining time together, or talk anyway.
 KH: What Lindsay Willis?
 HF: Yes. Did'nt he float a company in the Grey Mare Mine?
 KH: No, the Bells were at Grey Mare in the '30's, about '34, '35. Charlie Bell and his father. But there were some others who started the Grey Mare again in 1948, '49. I don't know who that was.
 HF: Well I thought Lindsay Willis was in that with George Finch. Because he (George Finch) came around, and he was selling shares. Some of my sisters, and my brother, they took out shares, and that's the last they've heard of him.
 (laughter) Ben's (or them?) nephew of this George Finch's who was with him so as it was engine brought in to the Grey Mare there and it's never been unpacked.

KH: Yes that's right. Its still there. When I saw it last, a lot of it was still in packing boxes. I think a lot of the wood's rotted away now. Well I think the Grey Mare's been, people have tried to restart it about three times.

HF: There used to be a chap around here by the name of Kerry Pierce, he was a brother of Johnny Pierce's of Greg Greg and Round Mountain and Kosciusko Plain, and he was a very keen miner. I remember one time being out at Wheelers Hut and Kerry and a couple of other chaps had come and stayed the night and they'd come from Grey Mare Mine. They were having a look then to see if it was worth while.

KH: I think Kerry Pierce went in with Charlie Bell's father. I can't remember his name now, but that was in '35 when they got together and floated that company. There was some thousands of pounds were involved, and they built part of the track from Farm Ridge around to Grey Mare that time. I think a lot of the money that they got from shares went into building the road, and I don't think much went into the mine itself.

HF: Well you see when John Pierce died, he left a fair bit of land and a number of cattle to Kerry. And Kerry only had that for a few years, but as you say the money could have gone into that mine, cause thats where Kerry was spending his money, was looking for gold.

KH: One of the Pierce's was involved in the cutting of the track up Hannels Spur.

HF: That was Kerry. Yes that was during the time he had the cattle in the country from the estate of John Pierce. There was Kerry Pierce and Hannel.

KH: What was his christian name?

HF: Alf.

KH: Alf Hannel. Where'd he come from?

HF: Well I think he came from Wagga to here. He has this country at one time. Then they took over John Pierce's snow lease on Kosciusko and they held that for a few years and that's why they cut that track up, they call, Hannels Spur. I think they only ever took the one lot of cattle up there, they had too much trouble. It was too steep.

KH: I thought they also used another old track up near the Barrel Creek.

HF: They did, yes.

KH: That was the one they used most commonly was it?

HF: Well I say, I think they only took one lot of cattle up there this Hannels Spur.

KH: Up, they did'nt bring any down? Suppose it'd be harder to bring them down wouldnt it?

HF: It would be because what I found about cattle in the bush it is harder to drive them down hill than it is up because they won't go down. They keep bearing around the sides.

KH: So it wasn't too bad getting them up there but when they brought them down they probably brought them down the old track, going by the Leather Barrel.

HF: Through Leather Barrel into Tom Groggin.

KH: That old track, is that similar to what the road now goes, from what you remember?

HF: I think the road is more in towards Kosciusko. I was up there about a month ago and we went looking for Rileys Hut. The road turns off, the Alpine way now, and turns more into the right. I think it may go into the right then double back, and go up the Leather Barrel.

KH: It would have been more of a ridge track, would'nt it?

HF: Yes it was. It was up a ridge.

KH: Must have been some steep pinches on that?

HF: Well it was'nt too bad, the Leather Barrel. There was another one went up to the Cascade, and that track ran out to the Tin Mines, the Ingeegoodbee. Well that was very steep, up from the river up to the Cascade Hut.

KH: So you went up the Murray further, beyond Tom Groggin, and then up onto the ridges?

HF: Yes, up on further up from Tom Groggin, you crossed over the river somewhere about Rileys Hut, into Victoria, then went on up in following the river in Victoria, crossed back into New South Wales. I've only ever been up there once with cattle. We took them from Tom Groggin and crossed onto this flat below the Cascade track, and the next morning we started up this hill and it's very steep. It's not very far, it'd only be a few miles, but it took us all day to get up there.

KH: Who was that for, when you were doing that?

HF: That was for the firm called Gippsland and Northern, and they had a client by the name of Maribel, who had brought 600 cows. He'd sent them out onto agistment out at the Tin Mines, out about the Pilot.

KH: Who had the grazing lease up there at that time?

HF: The Freebodys had country there, and then there was three fellows by the name of Benson, Balcolmn and Bentley. They were supposed to have brought it, but I don't know if it ever went through. But these are the ones that had the country there when the cattle went out.

KH: How old were you when you did that trip?

HF: That was back in .. the end of December '38. They were up there for the summer and they came out in the autumn on '39.

KH: And you helped them take them up and bring them back again?

HF: They brought them back in smaller mobs because they brought them back as they mustered them. Another young chap and I went out to Tom Groggin and met the first lot there and brought them in, and the chaps who were doing the mustering, they went back and mustered the tail enders.

KH: There were generally two musters were there, or more than two?

HF: Well there would be more than two. They'd do two and they might put in some time, months, because that country there they live out there all the winter. It is not as heavy snow there as further on towards Kosciusko and those places.

KH: Was Charlie Carter out there then?

HF: No, this is since Carter's time. The Freebody's has left there then. There was a Jack Freebody, had a place down around Gippsland at Buchan. I think he retired down there out of the mountain.

When these cattle went out was just when Jack was leaving there. I remember he was there when we went out.

KH: What would have been your first big riding trip as a boy? You would have started very early on a horse I suppose.

HF: I don't know when I first got in. My first trip out to Tom Groggin was my first trip. That was when I was about 12 year old. My father had a property out in Tom Groggin. We were going out, and at the time we were still going to school. After school we left home to go into Geehi. I know it was quite dark before we got there - my first camp-out really. Just a camp under the stars. A bit of an adventure.

KH: This was after Jack Riley had died was'nt it?

HF: Yes. Jack Riley died in 1914. My father was in the party that brought him out. Jack was a very sick man apparently. He was still working for John Pierce at Greg Greg. There was people from over at Jindabyne came in. They camped at Jack Rileys on the way to and fro at those times. They went to Greg Greg and they told Pierces that he was very sick and John Pierce sent an old chap up to look after him. He was'nt there very long before he was getting worse. There was my father and a chap named Jack Butler went in to bring him out, but he was too sick to ride. So they made a stretcher from bags or sacks and a couple of poles, and they carried him. The rivers were too high to come through Geehi, so they decided they'd come down the Victorian side. To come down (this) side, they had to get him from his hut over into Victoria at Tom Groggin. It was a swampy river at Geehi and it used to flood pretty quickly. They got him down to the Hermits Hill, as we call it. The Murray River comes down between the two gorges there. They thought that this Hermits Hill was too steep to carry him up, so they put him on a horse. The lightest of the party got on behind him and he held him on the horse, and somebody else led this horse up the hill. I've been up this track a few times, and they've got it zig zagging so as to cut the steepness out.

They got him up and they had to come down then into Hermits Creek. It was fairly steep down there too. They got him down to Hermits Creek - there was a hut there. They got him off the horse and into the hut, and they were lighting a fire. It was'nt burning too well. Jack took his hat off, and he always said 'see here, see here boys, blow it up!'. He just lay back and he was dead.

So then the father, he came on and went to Corryong to notify the police. One of his brothers took a buggy and a pair of horses into what they call Bunroy. Luckily there was some miners not far from Hermits Creek. They got these miners to help them carry him out to Bunroy. Then there was a buggy and a pair of horses met him at Bunroy and brought him out to Corryong where he is buried.

KH: Do you think he is the Man From Snowy River?

HF: I don't know. They claim that's who he is. It could have been anybody. I think it was just a poem written up by Banjo Patterson.

KH: You would have seen his hut then wouldn't you? His hut would have still been there.

HF: Yes, the hut was there. Part of the hut was still there in '38. We'd go past his hut taking these cattle out to Ingegoodbee.

KH: When you went back the other day..

HF: We couldn't find it. It's pretty well overgrown by blackberries in there. We are (were) asking some people who have been out there recently, and they said you wouldn't find it unless you knew exactly where it was. When I was passed it in '38, there was blackberries shooting out through the building of it.

KH: Is that when the blackberries really started to get going, about that time?

HF: Since '38 they must have got going. I suppose they would have been going before then. You could ride. There was a lot of clear country there but now you can't see anything but blackberries. I don't know how much country they'd cover.

KH: I've got photographs of the Geehi Flats, I think in the 1930's and '40's, and it's all clear. It's all come up since then.

HF: I hav'nt been on those Geehi Flats since 1939. I've been up the track. I hav'nt been over onto the Flats there, where the old track used to run down where that stone hut is there now. The track used to be on the other side of the river, and run down and cross the river, before you got back, where the Bogong Creek.

KH: Coming off Geehi Walls is it?

HF: Yes. Where that Bogong Creek runs into the Swampy, you had to cross the river 3 times, to get to there. When you've crossed the river there, you come up this Geehi Wall. Have you ever been on that Wall track?

KH: No I hav'nt. Only the bottom of it. I had a look at it, but I hav'nt walked it right through. The last time you ride through there there were no river stone huts were there?

HF: No. The men Curtis's built that. There was a few huts down along on the other side of the river from that stone hut. Doctors from Melbourne had them built.

KH: Doctor Forbes? Yes, still there, in the bush. Did you ride the Hannells Spur track at all?

HF: No.

KH: Do you remember the people who actually did the work cutting that track?

HF: ^(or Shooks) They could have been two chaps by the name of Arthur Chooks and Jack Armstrong.

KH: They were involved with Pretty Plain weren't they?

HF: Yes, they built that hut at Pretty Plain.

KH: Chooks - how do you spell that?

HF: CHOOKS I think.

KH: Just like chooks?

HF: Yes, when Pierce and Hannel had this country, they used to do fencing and that sort of work for them. I am pretty sure that's who would be involved in cutting that track.

KH: What was your first long trip on a horse like? You must have ridden across to Adaminaby to get stock?

HF: Yes, I went across there a few times with Will Wheeler. He used to go across buying cattle on the other side and bringing them over here. At the time when I started going with him, he used to Yaouk to the Cochrans. They didn't seem to handle their cattle very much. The last mob he brought over there, we went from Wheelers Hut over to Mick Russels, Mick came with us out to Yaouk. We cut out the cattle that he had brought and started them back home towards Adaminaby. The first night out, they rushed pretty well all night. The next morning there was three dead. Then we got them over to Mick Russels. We boxed them in with a mob that John Pierce had brought over there. Mick and his son Vincent, came over with them. The four of them boxed them in with about 300 others, they sorta settled down. That was the last mob that One-arm brought over there, because he got his fingers burned pretty well. With that mob, we brought them through and over to Wheelers Hut, and brought them up over Snakey Plain, down onto the Clover Flat, by the picnic ground there. The track used to come down into there. I did a few trips over there with him before that.

I think the most interesting trip I've been on.. My father guided people out through Koscuisko, way back in the 1900's.

KH: Sorry, can you just remind me of his name.

HF: My father was William Henry.

KH: What was he known as?

HF: Bill.

KH: Bill Findlay.

HF: We took a party of 32 hikers across there. We had 5 pack horses. We started off at Khancoban with them, went into Geehi the first night, then to Tom Groggin, then onto Thredbo and up onto Kosciusko, and along to, I think it was Whites Hut.

KH: Whites River Hut was it?

HF: Yes. Then we went on from Whites River down and camped out under the stars at the foot of Jargungal. And then we came down into Pretty Plain. From Pretty Plain down by Everards Hut over onto the Cabramurra Road, as it is known now. We were on that trip for about a week, and we had a few breaks.

KH: Would that be about 1920, 21?

HF: No. That was back in about 1935.

KH: You were born in 1909. It's just that I've got some information - I came across a story of some Melbourne bushwalkers, who came up to Corryong, and then went on horse back and did a very similar trip to the one you described. One of them was a man called Henderson Croll. They joined up with a lot of locals from Corryong, and they did that very similar trip. And then I've been in correspondence with Mrs Lobban, who used to be a Harris. She was about 12 in 1921, when she did a trip. I am sure there was a Findlay who was a guide. Whether

it was Bill, I am not sure. I could look it up at home. There was a whole lot of this Harris family - about 5 or 6 of them, and they did a very long trip from Corryong, first up to Yarrangobilly caves, then around to Adaminaby, Jindabyne, summit of Kosciusko, Geehi and back home again. That was 1921 when she did that. You would'nt have been on that. You would have been very young - 12.

HF: Yes. There was a Joe Evans from Kyogle. Thats just out from Corryong. He used to do those trips.

KH: What do you remember about him?

HF: Just that he used to take people out to Yarrangobilly caves on horse back. I don't ever remember my father going to the caves. I heard him say about taking people there. They used to go there because my mother has ridden there a few times. when she was a girl.

KH: The road to Yarrangobilly caves?

HF: Yes that was from Greg Greg way. There'd be a party of them.

KH: What would be the way they would go?

HF: They'd go out through Lobs Hole.

KH: Over what's called the Elliot Way now? Back of Tumberumba there?

HF: I don't know exactly which way. I've never been though there on horse back. Out through that Lobs Hole. They's nearly have to go through Kiandra a well.

KH: There was a back way up to Yarrangobilly village. There were tracks through there - there might have even been a track up the Yarrangobilly River, because Lobs Hole is on the Yarrangobilly River, so it would'nt be far then. Did you ever go through on the 15 mile Spur way - before the road?

HF: No. I've been from Wheelers Hut to Farm Ridge or from Round Mountain to Farm Ridge, and through the Boobee, over Happy Jacks, down into Jack Russels. Thats the way Wheelers used to go.

KH: Down Snowy Plain?

HF: Yes, Yes.

KH: Nimmo Hill - back of Adaminaby, across the Eucumbene?

HF: Yes.

KH: Before the dam of course.

HF: Yes.

KH: Just to tie it up, what was your first trip with Wingy^a Wheeler, across to Yaouk to buy cattle? You said you did a number of trips. Do you remember when they started?

HF: I would'nt know when he started. He probably started before ever he slept at this land at the Dargals(?). I think he might have gone across there from the time he was a boy. He has talked to me about going across there buying cattle, and bringing them over. I thing that the first trip that I'd do across there with him would be about 1930. I'll say it was across to Yaouk.

KH: Was Arthur Cochran there then? Was it Arthur Cochran that you brought them from?

KH: Arthur was the son of one of them. The chap who used to take us around would go across there - there was Billy Napthali. I don't know if he was an agent or very friendly with the Wheelers, but he used to come across here, and he used to stay at the Wheelers. He'd know where there'd be cattle for sale, and he'd take us around and he'd buy up the number he wanted to. Billy would get them together in one mob - make a start. That would be back in 1930.

KH: You said the last one was in about 1938?

HF: Yes, I think it would be about then - back before the war, because he didn't go back after the war.

KH: Wingy Wheeler didn't?

HF: No.

KH: He'd be getting on in years would'nt he, by then? How old was he when you were with him?

HF: He died in February 1955, and he was 84.

KH: So he was born in 1870, 71?

HF: Yes.

KH: By the time you knew him in the 30's, he was in his 60's then?

HF: He would be, yes.

KH: He was an amazing old man was'nt he?

HF: Well he was. To see him, he was a fellow who was very short, pretty well as broad as he was long. (looking at a photo) Yes, that's him. He's got the cigar in the mouth there has he? He used to smoke cigars. He always wore the waistcoat and he'd have his daily supply of cigars (5 or 6) stuck in the top pocket of the waistcoat. He'd be riding along, and he'd pull one of these cigars out, and you'd see him chewing away biting the end off it. He'd fish in another pocket, he'd bring out the match, and he'd stick them up... Some people said he had his arm off right at the shoulder joint, but he didn't. He had a little stump about 3 to 4 inches long, and he'd stick the box of matches under there. He'd strike it and light up.

KH: Were they big cigars that he smoked?

HF: The big fat fellas. About that long and about as thick as my thumb.

KH: That'd take a half hour or more to smoke would'nt it?

HF: They probably would, but he'd smoke it right out. As I say, he'd always carry the five or six. That's be his day's smoking.

KH: For the day?!

HF: Oh yes. He'd smoke five or six a day.

KH: Five or six a day, and he lived to be 84?!

HF: He knocked off smoking fifteen years before he died.

KH: But then he was practically in his 70's.

HF: Well he would be 70 when he knocked off.

KH: When you knew him, when you used to ride across the mountains, he always had his supply of cigars.

HF: Yes, he did. When he left home, there'd be a box of 50 cigars put in a pack.

KH: That'd be for the trip across to Yaouk?

HF: Yes. It'd have to do him until he got home. There was one trip he was telling me he was on - he'd brought cattle around Adaminaby, and he had a chap by the name of Barney Finn with him. Before they started they were getting their supply ready to cross the mountain. He gave Barney \$2 - 2 pounds at that time - to go and buy some meat. Barney could'nt get any meat, so he came back with 2 pounds worth of sardines in small tins. He said we had sardines for breakfast, dinner and tea. And then he said the dog got one tin a day after that. He said he was really sick of sardines by the time he got home.

KH: How long would it take you to ride across to Yaouk?

HF: We did it in 2 days. We'd go generally from (he lived in Towong (pronounced Talong) which is just down the river here a bit), and go out to his hut. From his hut he always went to Mick Russel's. That's how come I got to know the bit about the family.

KH: He had property at Towong did he? Across the river?

HF: Yes, on the Victorian side.

KH: That was the home property was it?

HF: Yes

KH: So a day to Wheeler's Hut, and then another day across to Mick Russel's. What was the name of that property - Russels?

HF: No I don't know if I ever heard of it.

KH: Then you go across to Yaouk. A lot of those cattle would come from out west, or up Dubbo way, because Arthur Cochran used to do long overland trips.

HF: No, not the ones he brought. When he knocked off buying cattle over there Arthur (Cochran?) thought, Wheeler could make something out of buying cattle over here and taking them back over there, he reckoned he could, so he started. He did alright while they were bringing his own cattle, but then he started to go out up north to Dubbo and those places - buying and bringing them across. The fellows over here, they didn't like the cattle he was bringing as well as the old cattle. Anyway he knocked off.

KH: Wingy, or One-Arm or Bill, Will, he would go across to Yaouk and buy cattle over there. He'd keep them up on the land at Wheeler's for a while?

HF: No. He'd never keep them there, because he said they'd always go back home. Cattle would always make back to where they were reared.

KH: So you would take different cattle into there?

HF: He'd always take his own cattle from Towong into there. He had this 640 acres fenced in there. He might have kept them there for a few days to do a spell or something, but said he wouldn't keep them there because if any got out, they'd make straight back. But they will do that. Cattle I don't think are as bad as horses. A horse, if they got out of the paddock, they'd be home next morning.

KH: Even with hobbles on I believe.

HF: Yes. I did a trip one time with my father, and we had five horsemen. They went from Bringenbrong. There was one chap by the name of Robertson, and a chap by the name of Ryan, and

Whiteroof, and I don't know, but we left Bringenbrong, and we went into Geehi, and from Geehi to Groggin. from Groggin to Thredbo, then we went up onto Kosciusko and put in a bit of time there. We were making for Whites River but didn't get that far. We camped on *Pound's* Creek. That's between Whites River and Kosciusko. During the night, the horses were hobbled out on the rough creek, but anyway some of them got across. Before daylight the next morning, I got out to see where the horses were, but I couldn't see any about. It was pretty foggy. It was lucky, I got onto the tracks of them, and I followed them right back into the saddle at Kosciusko. There was one of them had been on this Hannells Spur track. It was trying to get out onto this track, but there was a big snow drift. They couldn't manage to get across this snow drift with hobbles on - they kept bogging too deep for them. Lucky in a way that that blocked them. I caught them there, and took them back. I left before it was daylight and it was about 2 o'clock when I got back to where we'd camped. I hadn't had anything to eat since the night before. I can tell you, I was pretty jolly hungry.

KH: Do you remember what year that was?
 HF: That was about '33. That trip was written up in some of those bushwalkers journals. One of the chaps sent us one of the journals. I think my father had given it to Tom Mitchell. I just can't trace where it got to, but that trip was written up.
 KH: So what did you do - you got your horses back and what did you do then? You went on?
 HF: We went on to Whites River. Then the next morning we went to Jargungal, the foot of it, where we camped with these hikers another time. We went from there to Round Mountain, and from Round Mountain down back to Pretty Plain and home that way.
 KH: Why did you do that?
 HF: Well they wanted to see that path of it.
 KH: These other people?
 HF: Yes.
 KH: 1933 that was. There were about 5 of you?
 HF: There was about five of them and two of us.
 KH: And who was the other one of you?
 HF: My father.
 KH: Your father and yourself, and these other five. 1933.
 HF: Well I think it was somewhere about 1933. I am pretty sure it was '33.
 KH: Do you remember the name of the person who wrote the article?
 HF: I think it might have been Ted Ryan. I'm not sure about that.
 KH: They were out there walking were they?
 HF: No, they rode.
 KH: Bushwalkers on horseback?
 HF: I'm not sure. It was written up in some of those journals. I forget now what they called it.
 KH: Did you do the ride with Will, did you do that every year, across to Yaouk to buy cattle?
 HF: No, he was knocking off before I started. I think I was only over about three times. Before that he used to go pretty well every year. Well as I say, the last time when we got these and the there's three died the first night and then the bottom had fallen out of the fat market by the time he got home, and he lost money on them.
 KH: You were working for Wheeler then were you?
 HF: I wasn't really working, I was just sort of in the party. How it came to be, they had this freehold country there, and the father used to send a few, probably, well the first year started to send cattle out with them. They only had about 25. One year there was a bushfire went through here in '39, and we had about 100 out there. I used to work in with these cattle. I got a price of adjustment and that, just for the, more or less, hobby I suppose.
 KH: To get to Wheelers hut... when you first went up there, Wheelers (Hut) would have been at the old location would'nt it?

HF: Yes. That hut was built there in 1903 or 04. There was a chap by the name of Bill Draper from Corryong was the builder. Then there was another one, Martin Peterson, who made most of that furniture that's out there. Apart from that 'rickety chair', as you described it as, well yours truly made that.
 (laughter)
 KH: Maybe its got more rickety over the years. Maybe it was quite solid when you made it.
 HF: I don't know, but I was very suprised to see it when I went back Easter 12 months ago.
 KH: So its been there for more than 40 years, or something?
 HF: That's been there since about the middle '30's I suppose.
 KH: That's amazing! It should go in a museum maybe.
 HF: Then there was a fellow by the name of Gough Griffiths, was the Bullocky. His name was Neil, but they called him Gough.
 KH: Gough, like Gough Whitlam, but said GOW.
 HF: They might have meant Gow, but his proper name was Neil. They called him Gow. He was the bullocky, and he may have been the main axeman, splitting the slabs. He was supposed to have been very good with timber.
 KH: Sorry, this is for the original hut, at the first location?
 HF: Yes. There was four main rooms and a verandah on the front, like the hut now. Instead of where the hut is now there's two main rooms and a sort of skillion on the back with the end and the side done in, and the other one open. (looking at a photo) To start with, it had a shingle roof on it, and the roof started to leak.
 KH: Were the shingles made of alpine ash?
 KF: Yes, and the posts, the uprights, they were rotting off. So then when they decided to build another hut, and I think that was in '33,
 KH: When it was relocated?
 HF: Yes. And the reason why it was shifted from the original site to where it is now, was water supply, and reckoned it would be warmer. Where the old hut was, it was sitting out on a rocky knob, right out in the middle of nowhere.
 KH: Yes, I had a look at it over Easter. There's still a bit of metal lying there, and there's stones from the old fireplace. It was a good spot. It was very prominent.
 HF: It was, yes. Then they had it fenced in. The fence was uprights, and they had split like the shingles on the roof of the hut, and they had those right around it.
 KH: Paling fence. You can still see a bit of it down there. (looking at a photo)
 HF: Yes, yes, yes. They shifted it back up, with the water supply there - had a ditch, and a race (line). They brought it out from where the hut is now, it used to come around, and had to come down and across a sort of a gully where drops of water ran down. The cattle used to walk in it and break the banks down. There was yabbies there, and they used to dig. We'd often used to go out and there'd be no water. You'd have to

walk a couple of hundred yards to a creek to get water. When they shifted the hut up, it cut out taking the race across this other creek. You had a good water supply there. I don't ever remember being out of water from there. It was a bit closer to firewood. We used to take the bullock team out and take horse feed (about 3 to 4 bags of oats and a few bags of chaff). Every summer that went out - and a ton of cattle salt. While we were out there we used to cart down enough wood to see the year out.

KH: It's a good water supply now - it runs all the time. Do you have any idea when the hut was first built at the first place?

HF: I know Wheelers were first living in it in 1905. This Charlie Wheeler, he'd be about 82 now if he was alive, was four year old and he was living out there with them. How I know about that, I heard one arm saying it that this Johnny Pierce and his wife Allard(?), they had a son about the same age. He died and somebody went out to tell the Wheelers. I know One-arm said that Charlie was about four year old then.

KH: So that was probably when it was built do you think?

HF: It was built before then. It would'nt be very long before then.

KH: Would they have built it about the time when they bought the land?

HF: It would be. They had to live on it to qualify for the rights to select it. I suppose he'd selected. They did ease the conditions a bit. He did'nt have to live there in the winter.

KH: I said somewhere in my article, I don't know who I got the information from, that Mr and Mrs Wheeler probably took turns at living there to meet the requirements.

HF: I did hear him say they did ease the regulations, so they did'nt have to live there in the winter.

KH: So it was alright to live there in the summer. And then after so many years they could buy it.

HF: They had to live there for so many years before.

KH: Do you remember how many years they had to live there.

HF: No I don't. I don't think it could have been very long.

KH: So if Charlie Wheeler was 82 now, and he was four..

HF: He was four in about 1907.(thought time)

KH: Did you think it was earlier than that when it was built? You mentioned 1904 I think you said.

HF: I think it was built before then.

KH: Would there be anyone around that would have any records of that?

HF: Not that I know of. No.

KH: Anyway the huts 80 years old, practically, isn't it - most of the hut?

HF: Yes, those slabs.

KH: The slabs, yes.

HF: When it was rebuilt, and up there the only thing they put in were the uprights.

KH: I also heard that it was Wingy's wish to be able to see Jargungal from the front verandah. That was another reason for relocating the hut.

HF: Well it wasn't only from the front verandah, but he could see it out through his bedroom window. (laughter)

KH: You must have had mattresses out there, and beds and things.

HF: Yes. I was a bit disappointed. I know I had read your book before I'd gone back out there. It said that there wasn't much left there. It was very comfortable. There was a double bed there and a mattress. We always used to put a rope around the mattress and hang it up to the top of the ceiling so the rats could'nt get at it. Then there was another little bunk in underneath near the window. In the corner there was a red oak, by the look of it, or red cedar, round table.

KH: That's not there any more.

HF: No. In the living, dining room/kitchen, whatever you'd like to call it, there was a table and four chairs. Well the table's still there. And then there was a sideboard there. I was very disappointed when I saw it gone because every time we left there I used to write the date when I left for the year on this sideboard. But the sideboard and the dates were gone. I think this Martin Peterson made it when they first built the old first hut. He was a carpenter and a cabinet maker. He also made that meat safe that is out the back there.

KH: Yes its nicely made. What about the big water tank, that big steel thing.

HF: That was where we used to keep our horse feed. It was rat proof.

KH: How did that get in there? Who brought that in there.

HF: I don't know whether Wheelers took it in or whether some of the miners took it in. It was in there for some time. I was a bit amazed with that old cattle trough, salt trough, that's out by the side there. Well that was there, brought up from the old hut. That'd be going on for 75 to 80 years old. I think the salt must have preserved the wood in it, would it? Cause otherwise, it's only mountain ash, it would have been just rotted away.

KH: It's deteriorated a lot in the last 10 years. It's starting to split open now, I noticed. I was there at Easter time. There's grass growing up, its starting to sink in. Maybe we should do something to preserve it. Put some oil into it. Was Martin Peterson also good with a broadaxe, was he?

HF: No I wouldn't say that. I'd say this Griffiths fellow would be good with the broadaxe.

KH: And he was involved with the first hut.

HF: Yes, and he also was the bullock driver.

KH: So he would have been the main builder?

HF: Yes, although, this Draper, he was a carpenter. Draper would do the main carpentry work, and after Griffiths had broadaxed the slabs.

KH: Draper put it together?

HF: Yes.

KH: But it was mainly those three?

HF: Yes, there was Martin Peterson, Bill Draper, Neil Griffiths (or Gow), and One-arm was the cook.

KH: One-arm Will was the cook?

HF: Yes. They always gloated about being out there with the fresh air, and good water and his cooking. Some of them were sure to have twins. Mrs Draper, she did have twins, so One-arm was very delighted about that. He reckoned it stemmed back to his cooking.

KH: He used to tell that to fishermen too I believe.

HF: Yes. He would have. He reckoned that out there with that fresh air and the water, anything could happen. He tells a yarn of being out there with some old chap, and he was having a drink of water, and he said would you like a drop of scotch in it. He said no, you'd never spoil this water with that stuff.

KH: Do you remember who was involved in the relocating of the hut?

HF: My brother was the chief builder there.

KH: Not Charles?

HF: No, Johnny Findlay. Charles (Charlie) was Wheeler.

KH: No, but you've got a brother Charles?

HF: No, a nephew.

KH: The one who's a school teacher, and lives at Corryong?

HF: His father's a school teacher. Colin.

KH: Colin's got a son, Charles.

HF: Colin's the fisherman. Then there was Bill Turner. He was good with timber, although they only had to do the side of the posts to fit the slabs. They did a fair bit of fencing while they were there. They fenced a small paddock in around to hold the horses and the cattle. They put up those yards.

KH: They used to have a cow out there did they, for milking?

HF: Yes, they did have a cow now and again but not very often. We didn't when we went out mustering the cattle, we didn't bother because we didn't bother with milk nor sugar. Just had tea. There was a bail there to hold the cow in and a pen to put the calf in, but it was very rarely used. At that time, Charlie was the Bullocky. Then there was Charlie's father in law, Ernie Whitehead. George was Lila's father. He was there. There was another chap there by the name of Charlie Goldspink. He's the chap who went out there in the summer and did a bit of prospecting. I don't know whether he ever got much. I think he got enough to buy a bit of food.

KH: Was he a bit of a hermit?

HF: Yes.

KH: Was he an old man when you knew him?

HF: Yes. He'd be about the same age as One-arm.

KH: Did he live out at the hut? Wheelers hut?

HF: Yes.

KH: What did he do in the winter time?

HF: No he came in and lived around about different places. He went into Tumberumba a fair bit. Before he was there (you've got a photo of him there with Erroll Scammell and Dick Fisher) I think he must have died before I started to go out there. I've never seen him out there. Although, when I first went there, I know Charlie Wheeler had a horse which that old chap had given him. One-arm told me a yarn about that fellow.

He said, you know Will, he said I was riding along here one day, and he said, and I looked back, he said, the fog was that thick, he said I could see the break I'd made in the fog. It must have been thick that day.

KH: It wasn't a break in his cigar smoke was it? (laughter) Do you remember any other humorous bits about Will? Did he play any jokes on people?

HF: No, I think going out with the bullock team was rather amusing at times. We went out one time, there was a fellow with us who was wanting to go out for a trip and do a bit of fishing. He landed at the Wheelers house at Towong, and he has whatever he was taking. Including in that were 2 half gallons of wine. They placed this wine very carefully in the middle of the bullock dray and packed the salt around it so it could't move. We went very well until we got up to the river at Toolong. We used to camp there. Next morning we yoked the bullocks and there was a pretty well very steep wall, it'd be about a half a mile up. We yoked the bullocks up and they weren't going too well up this. Charlie used to get a bit excited. He started to tune the bullocks up a bit. The leaders ran away around from him. This bullock dray had turned a complete - the wheels were sitting up in the air. And of course, this chap Drummond was his name, his concern was about his wine. Before we shifted the dray, we pulled the salt out and these two bottles were still in tact. How they were, I wouldn't know. (Harry seems to be talking about a photo next). This thing went right over, and the wheels were sitting up. We pulled these out and the tuckerbox, and then had to hook the chain onto one of the wheels and pulled it over and uprighted it again.

KH: It must have been a bit difficult at times crossing the river I suppose? You had to cross the Tooma River, didn't you?

HF: Yes. It was always summer time when they took the bullocks out. One time we were going out and we got as far as old Toolong. The huts not there, I believe it was burnt down a few years back. That was the one where there was supposed to be an old dingo trapper burned in there. We camped there and it rained very heavily. The river was too high to take the bullocks across, so, we had a pack horse, and we took the blankets and the food over to Wheelers hut. We were going back when the river got a bit lower. When we went to find the horses, they'd gone - got out of the paddock. We decided - there was three of us, Charlie Wheeler and myself and one of Neil's sons was with us. We decided we'd walk back from Wheelers hut over to old Toolong. But when we got down to the river it was running fairly strong. We sat on the bank for a while deciding whether we'd cross or not. Eventually we stripped off (I rolled my shirt and my jumper up around my chest, hold my strides mid air) we walked across. I looked like a cooked crayfish, I was red from the cold water. Anyway, we got across and we borrowed a horse from the fellow at old Toolong. We found the horses, they were out on the Inkbottle. We found a break in the fence and they had gone out on this Inkbottle, a way out. We got the bullocks and brought the dray over. We had a bit of trouble in the river - it was a bit too high then for them. That was the worst time. One-arm said that you don't put bullocks into water that's too deep. He said that they pull with their heads down.

KH: If they've got their heads up, they don't do any pulling.

HF: They can't pull if they've got their heads up, because the yo. is sitting on the back of the ...

KH: What was the name of that dingo trapper that lived in that hut.

HF: I don't know, but there was a chap by the name of Sammy Thomas out there, and he was a dingo trapper. If it was Sammy I don't know.

KH: Have you got any photos of Wheelers hut?

HF: Only what I took - they don't really belong to me.

KH: From the earlier days?

HF: No. I never thought of anything like that in those times. I often wish I had of. (Harry gets some photographs) (Looking at photos)

HF: There's the fisherman.

KH: That's your brother, Colin.

HF: Yes.

KH: His son looks like him doesn't he.

HF: He was Charlie, yes.

KH: Did you ever have a bath in the old bath?

HF: Yes. We used to get a tin of water. That was a kerosine tin, a four gallon tin, fill it up with water and boil it on the fire, and pour that in. Get some more cold and put it in the bath. There's my chair.

KH: Yes. I suppose it used to be more comfortable when you made it. It's got a sort of bar across the back there.

HF: Somebody else might have put that there. I didn't have very much material to choose from. That's the fish. That's Colin, my wife and my niece.

KH: I'm glad you all went out there again.

HF: Another one of Colin again. That one was taken from the top of the ridge after you come up from Smokey Plain, looking down towards Black Jack. Down there somewhere is where Southern Cloud was found.

KH: Have you got the negatives of these?

HF: No I hav'nt. You can get it taken off those can't you.

KH: One of your families would have these I suppose?

HF: I think they probably would. It was Colin's daughter who took that lot.

KH: I wouldn't mind a print of that one.

HF: Someone else has got the whole party lined up against the end of the hut there.

KH: Maybe if I send some money over, could I have some prints?

HF: Well if I can get them.

KH: Or I can contact the people who have got the negatives.

(tape 2 side 1)

HF: If you've got one like that you can take one off that can you?

KH: Yes I can, but it's better to have the negative in the first place. I'll just ask you a few more questions. Were there any other long journeys that you can remember, like apart from going over to Yaouk? You described that other journey with that group of people where you went to White's River. Was it mostly in the 30's when you did the trips into the mountains?

HF: With those parties, and going over to Monaro, Adaminaby, Yaouk, those places. Did'nt do any of those after the war. I did take a couple of mobs of cattle from here over to Cooma at one time.

KH: Which way did you go?

HF: There was two mobs. There was a mob of cattle of about close on 300, and there was a chap got the job of taking them over and he got sick and could'nt take them. He asked me if I'd take them. I took them, and he sent another chap with me. We went by Walumba, up through Yellow Bog, out to Round Mountain, across to Farm Ridge, from Farm Ridge to the Boobee, across to Jack Russell's on the Eucumbene River and then across to out on to the Adaminaby-Kiandra road. I just got back from taking that lot over, and there's another mob, the same owner's and the same fellow had the job again. He was still ill, so I took them. With that lot we went up to over Bradleys Gap and up Everards Spur to Pretty Plain. From Pretty Plain across to Farm Ridge that way.

KH: What time were these trips, before the war too?

HF: Yes.

KH: In the '30's?

HF: Yes.

KH: So you did quite a lot of trips in your 20's.

HF: Yes. One-arm was getting older. Having just that one arm he was disadvantaged a fair bit. He did'nt do much after there. He used to go in the summer time out to the hut.

KH: Still in horse-back?

HF: Yes.

KH: So that was a very favourite part of the country for him.

HF: He thought of nothing else than the mountains, he used to call them.

KH: Did he recite or write any poetry?

HF: No. It was all Dutch with him. (laughter)

KH: Was there anyone else around who was making up poetry?

HF: There was a fellow who wrote a poem about a fellow who used to work in Groggin. I did have it. I don't know what's become of it. It went:

Behold I'm cyclone Robert
Better known as drover Bob
I'm working up in Groggin
Which I tell you is no treat
When you have to chance a flogging
For a piece of fatty meat
One day I asked old Jimmy
For a piece of meat to boil
The murderous look he gave me

See
corrected
version in
'People'
book

Would make most men recoil
I asked him to (persil?)
And not to raise my eye
For when I'm in action
I'm like a dog on wire
Still he quite ignored me
Threw off his coat and at me
As I donged him on the jaw
The old man knew I hit it too
And fought me fairly clean
But of course he did'nt have a chance
When appeared Tommy Green.

I don't know any more, and that goes on and on.

He punched him to the Serpentine
And punched him back again
He punched his belly back and side
He punched him every stride
And just then young Ted and Pat
Arrived upon the scene.
They asked him what had happened
I told them what had been
I told them if they felt that way inclined
I'd quickly run them through
Ted said, no thank you Robert
You're far too fast and furious
For such as Pat and me

And then he switches over onto the other old fellow and he asked him to dig his grave extra deep and roll in lots of stones so the dingoes and crows wouldn't mollest him.

If I can get a copy.. I know of another fellow who might have it. I could send you that across.

KH: Yes, I'd be interested in that. Did anyone compose any tunes, or anything like that?

HF: No. That's the only one I know that concerns the bush.

KH: Did anyone play a tin whistle at all?

HF: No. Where the Toolong hut was and Paton's hut, they'd be a couple of miles apart (I wouldn't be sure of the distance), there was somebody got an old bullocks horn and cut the pointed piece off it and they'd make a sound so you could hear from one hut to the other with it.

KH: I'm very curious about that because I wonder what people did for entertainment at night - sitting around the log fire in the open.

HF: With us, there was only Charlie Wheeler and myself there. Once we read a few Deadwood Dicks, I suppose. I dozed off to sleep in my easy chair. (laughter)

(tape 3 side 1)

KH: Can you just tell me when that photo was taken again? That's the photo of the jeep at Wheelers Hut - Tom Mitchell's jeep.

HF: In February 1949.

KH: Who's the fellow on that?

HF: I think it must be a chap by the name of Hamilton. There was a chap Hamilton and Charlie Wheeler were out there when Tom Mitchell came there. He got stuck in the Boardway Creek. Charlie yoked up four bullocks and went over and pulled him up out of the creek. Then when Tom left there, he came out over, as we say it, over Snakey Plain and down to Clover Flat. That was the first time that that track had had a motor vehicle on it.

KH: Was that put in with a bulldozer, that track, at that time?

HF: No, no. The bulldozers didn't get about here until after the war. Of course this was after the war.

KH: 1949. That's the track that goes through the alpine ash isn't it, that you follow now?

HF: Yes. That's the way we went in Easter 12 months ago with the four wheel drives. We went down over Snakey Plain.

KH: Would the Snowy have put that bulldozer in there?

HF: Yes, I'd say.

KH: It wasn't a made track in the earlier days?

HF: No. We didn't follow that track from where it turns off the Khancoban - Cabramurra Road. We turned off down by Clover Flat, down on the creek there. There's a creek runs down into Clover Flat there. We went up that creek and went up a spur, and we came out onto Snakey Plain, but we weren't as high up as the track there now.

KH: You didn't go over Jagumba - over the top of that big mountain?

HF: No we didn't go over that. We went up and we cut across and we missed that and went out through a gap onto the - down onto Snakey Plain.

KH: Snakey Plain is a gap in itself isn't? Just above Snakey Plain it drops down doesn't it.

HF: Yes, that's right. And then down into that, what we call the Deep Creek there - Elfs(?).... and up then down to Wheelers Hut.

KH: You went down that creek onto the open country. You didn't go down through the alpine ash?

HF: From Snakey Plain we did. After we left Snakey Plain we went down into a fairly deep creek - down, but it's not so bad going out. We went out down around the side and then dropped into Wheelers Hut there, off the side of the Dargals more or less.

KH: Do you remember a man called Alf Hewitt, who was a dingo trapper?

HF: Yes. He was a chap who lived at Towong. There's three or four of the young Hewitts around here now - in Corryong and Towong.

KH: Was there something significant about Alf Hewitt?

HF: No, I only just knew him, but I didn't know anything of his doings, apart from he broke in horses. What would you want to know about him?

KH: I just can't remember why someone mentioned him. Whether I read about him - I just made a note of his name. Someone else must have told me about him, but I can't remember off hand. Sometimes these old guys had their particular sort of characteristics - Wingy Wheeler was outstanding - he smoked a cigar and he had one arm. They all sort of had their own...I mean they weren't necessarily famous for it, but you'd say 'well he was such and such'.

HF: Well I suppose there was a chap from out that way ... came from Tumut - Bung Harris.

KH: You knew Bung did you?

HF: I didn't know him, but he used to bring cattle across here to Corryong sales. I think he might have brought most of Arthur Cochran's cattle across.

KH: Did he bring them across the mountains?

HF: Yes. He'd bring them across from Adaminaby to out over the Happy Jack's, and through the Boobee Farm Ridge and across to Pretty Plain.

KH: What do you remember about Bung Harris?

HF: Well nothing, only that he was a drover.

KH: He seems to be quite a flamboyant character by the sound of it, because every one seemed to know him.

HF: Perhaps too he was a rodeo man too. They used to run rodeos in Corryong at one time.

KH: Yes, in the war apparently. Ozzie Wellsmore was telling me that a very large party of them came across in 1943 during the war to a rodeo in Corryong. They all rode across the mountains from Jindabyne and Berridale way.

HF: The Corryong rodeo, they had the famous Johnny Pierce who held the top rodeo rider for the year at one time.

KH: The same one who was involved with Hannels Spur?

HF: No, no. In fact, he lived just up the road here past where you went today.

KH: Is there anything in particular that you remember about Ernie Boardman?

HF: Well the only thing I know about Ernie, he came across here, I'm pretty sure he came from Tumut during the Depression. They had chaps doing road-work out to the mountains. Ernie was in charge of the party. They had one party going up the Yellow Bog, and another party going up what we call Bradleys Gap, over into Everards Hut. Ernie used to ride across the bush from one party to the other. He was the supervisor. And then he brought this place at Khancoban where his daughter, who is now Mrs Joan Blyton, lives. And I believe he was a very good rider. He had a son who was a top rodeo rider too. There was someone told One-arm Wheeler he had a bad horse, that Ernie Boardman would ride it. He was such a good rider.

KH: Did you do much burning off of the country when you were, like in the autumn when you came back down again. Would you burn some of that country around Wheelers.

HF: Generally burnt around the huts in case of a fire in the summer. We didn't burn much of the... might burn a bit here and there. The worst fire that went through there that I know of was in '39.

KH: It missed the hut - probably because you burnt it off.

HF: It went more out Round Mountain way. 'Cause there was about..out in a gully at Round Mountain there was about 30 of cattle smothered there. Apparently they get down in the gullies and the smoke was that thick and they suffocate. They weren't burnt at all, they were just suffocated. That was out toward the Round Mountain. They belonged to a fellow by the name of Whitehead, over at a place called Warbrook.

KH: Is it a Bill Whitehead?

HF: Arnold Whitehead. He has a son Tom out at Wolumba there now.

KH: I imagine the country was more open then.

HF: Yes, well I got a bit of a surprise to see the young trees that are growing up, especially between, looking out from Wheelers Hut towards the Broadway. All that was on - the Dargals Creek there, from Wheelers there, there wasn't hardly a tree on that it was all open.

KH: It was all grass I suppose, wasn't it?

HF: Yes.

KH: So it must have been the burning that kept it back perhaps - the burning and the grazing.

HF: It wouldn't be burnt because I never remember that clear country being burnt, especially on that part. I'd say it must have been the cattle that kept the young trees down. I suppose, fossicking around for grass, nipped the young saplings off.

KH: Do you think there was any over-grazing at that time, like in the 30's - like further up, like towards Jargungal, or on the Toolong Range? Do you think there was any over-grazing? Any abuse of that country at that time?

HF: No. I was out here on a place today, out the other side of Corryong, where they are running a lot of sheep. I was amazed at where they go - they seem to follow the one track mostly. Then the water gets in and that does. But with cattle, I don't think cattle would cause erosion, but I dare say what I saw today, that sheep would, because as I say, they follow the one track. Around Wheelers there, there was never any sheep on that block(?). But over on old Toolong, and the Farm Ridge, and the Boobee, I suppose Happy Jacks, there were pretty well all sheep. But getting into that, the Dargals and Pretty Plain, well the Plain itself would be alright, but getting back into the bush, and back up in behind, between Pretty Plain and Geehi, in that country, it was all too rough for sheep. It might not be too rough for the sheep, but it would be too rough to look after them, to get them out of it.

KH: Do you remember the building of Pretty Plain hut?

HF: Yes, that was, well I don't know what year, but I think

it was '35.

KH: Yes, I think it was '35.

HF: There was Armstrong and Chooks, they were out there and built it.

KH: Arthur Chooks and Jack Armstrong?

HF: Yes.

KH: Any others? Who was the bullocky for the...

HF: Well the bullocky was a chap by the name of Phil Clipall. When they took the .. Khancoban, you passed Khancoban Station there today, you came from Khancoban, and you take a sharp bend, well that's the Khancoban Station in along there. The bullocks they always ran down on the Plain country there, on the flat country, and when they decide they were going to build a hut and take the bullock team out, the old hand said that they won't get the bullocks out there, it'd be too soft. Anyway, there's Phil Clipall and Jack Armstrong they went with the team, and then there was Charlie Wheeler and his team, and there was Tom Paton and he had a team. Well you see the three of them, they met up over Wolumba, and they went up through Yellow Bog. When they got going up the Yellow Bog Mountain, say, Charlie would unhook his team and hook them onto the front of Clipalls team, and they'd go up the mountain. One team would come back and the and the next fellow would... and that's the way they would go up this Yellow Bog. Before John Pierce died, there was Charlie Wheeler and the Greg Greg was the name of the Pierces?? place, and the Greg Greg team always went together, so as one team would pull the other out where ever they got stuck. And after John Pierce died, Tom Paton he built that hut out there and then he used to take a team out with Charlie, and he used to go out together.

KH: Where did they get the logs from for Pretty Plain?

HF: I think they got them around down there in the bush. There are a lot of logs further up the creek from there, and out on the left side there. There's a lot of mountain ash in there. There used to be another hut up in there about a mile above the.. you've seen that one have you?

KH: Yes.

HF: A pretty rough sort of..

KH: Desalis or someone had it.

HF: Sasellas they built that. I've put up a few nights in that one too.

KH: It would have been in better condition then I would think.

HF: Well, it wasn't too good then. I think if I remember rightly it was all bark roof. The walls were bark, and of course the bark would crack and the breezes would come through. The only thing about it, there was a lot of wood around there. You could put on a good fire.

KH: You could burn the place down easily too I suppose.

HF: I don't know whether (there are) any remains of it there or not.

KH: Who was the main architect of Pretty Plain? Who was the

main person who had the knowledge of notching the logs together and doing it in that particular way?

HF: I think that would be Jack Armstrong.

KH: Because there weren't many log cabin huts around were there?

HF: No, no.

KH: They were mostly slab huts or iron huts.

HF: Yes, that one was pretty well built. Of course, when you get out in there there's wonderful timber for that sort of thing.

KH: It's a wonder they didn't build Wheelers Hut out of logs like that, you know, in the same sort of style.

HF: Yes, although perhaps, when Wheelers hut was first built they might have thought there was, there wouldn't be as much work in that I suppose, as there would be splitting those slabs. It'd take a lot of broad-axing and that.

KH: The logs - the biggest work is in getting them there, and then putting it all together.

HF: Yes, I suppose you'd have to be pretty strong fellows to lift those logs that are in Chisolms hut, or the Pretty Plain hut up. I suppose the walls would be about 7 or 8 feet high would'nt they.

KH: And then the ones that are in the roof? There's some very big logs in the roof too. I don't know how they did all that.

HF: Yes. These two fellows, Armstrong and Chooks, they were pretty powerful men.

KH: Apparently there was a reference to a Bill Whitehead's hut near Bogong Swamp. Have you heard of a Bill Whiteheads hut up in there anywhere?

HF: No the only Whitehead - Bill Whitehead I suppose it could have been - Bill Whitehead lived just back up here about a mile, he'd be out on your left as you came out there today, after you turned down this road. Well his son, well he had two sons, there was his son that lives there now, and another son that lived at Khancoban before the Snowy came in there, they used to take cattle out there, and they built a hut there, and they might have called it Bill Whiteheads hut. See Bill Whitehead was the father, so I suppose... It was out - it'd be between Pretty Plain and the Bogong Swamp wouldn't it?

KH: Well there is one at Puxgilistic Point. There's a creek comes down, which is still close to the Tooma River. There's just the four posts and the roof there now.

HF: Yes, I think that that'd be it.

KH: Yes that could be. That's just known as Puxgilistic hut now.

HF: There wouldn't be much of it left there would there?

KH: No, just the roof and the four posts - the corner posts.

HF: I've never been to it, but I know, as I say, the fellows

just up here and another one at Khancoban, when they were out there mustering, they used to come down to Wheelers, when we were there because their cattle might be down on Wheelers country and some of Wheelers cattle might be up on their country and of course, they'd swap over.

KH: Were you ever involved in any cattle getting snowed in?

HF: No we never had any. We've been out there as late as July, and that'd only be an odd year. We were out there in June 1944 and there was a couple of chaps landed out at the hut one morning about 7 o'clock to tell Charlie that his mother was seriously ill. He came in straight away, but she'd died in the mean-time - that was June '44. That'd be a late year for us. We were never there ... we generally started about the middle of April and came out before the end of May.

KH: Yes, July would be very late would'nt it.

HF: Yes, still there was very little snow there. What was there was very hard. The horses used to break through it. You'd be riding along, and the horse'd break through. Anyway, as I say, there wasn't too much of it there. There was only patches of it. But it was a bad year - a dry year here. There was very little feed, and they were still doing all right out there - left them out as long as I could. There was one year. I think it was in 1925, before I started to go out to the mountains, there was cattle snowed in on Kosciusko, belonging to John Pierce of Greg Greg. I don't know how many they lost there. They got chaps by the name of Westons I think it was, from Jindabyne or over that way, to come in on skis to muster.

KH: Which way did they bring them out?

HF: They must have brought most of them out, down over Thredbo.

KH: Down to Dead Horse Gap, or down to Friday Flat?

HF: Yes through that way. I don't know exactly where on Kosciusko the worst place was, or where they lost most of them.

KH: Quite a few perished I suppose.

HF: Perished and starved. I have heard of cattle - it wasn't that lot, other times, where cattle had been 'snowed up', is what they usually say, and they walked around and around, and people had found them and they've had all their hair chewed out of their tail. The other cattle had eaten the tails off the ones in front of them to get something to eat. (laughing) They'd eaten all the scrub and the hop scrub and that down. I've heard of horses in the spring-time, being up in the fork of a tree well off the ground. They say they were walking along the top of the snow and got caught in the treetops.

KH: I see, the skeletons were there.

HF: The skeletons were hanging up there.

KH: Did you ever see that?

HF: No, I never seen that.

KH: Were you ever involved in a search for anyone who was lost? Or you were called out to try and find someone who was in trouble.

HF: No. We were out there one time, we were out at Wheelers hut, and there was another party at the Yellow Bog, and there was a young kid there about fourteen year old I suppose. They were mustering cattle around Yellow Bog and he put an I-10(?) out, they were out searching for him, but he turned up before we got there.

KH: The naming of Everards Spur and Everards Flat, would that be a name just after the family name in general?

HF: There was a chap by the name of Bill Everard living in there.

KH: At Everards Flat, at the hut there.

HF: Yes, there was a hut there.

KH: So the hut came first.

HF: Yes, the hut was there and Everard built the hut, and he was prospecting in there. Really, he lived up this valley here, like his family lived here and further back out there was a place between here and the Yellow Bog called Cooninni, and Everards lived there - they selected land in there. They built a hut, they used to live there. The last I was out there there was a few old fruit trees - pear trees and apple trees there.

KH: So Bill Everard built a hut at Everards Flat.

HF: Yes. Well that's how it come to the get the name Everards hut and then Everards Spur, and then there's the Wong(?) Spur there.

KH: What about Findlays lookout? Was that named after a particular Findlay?

HF: I don't know if it was any particular one but I think it was just Findlays lookout - they'd get out there and they would lookout right over the Findlay country.

KH: Would this go back to your grandfather?

HF: It would I think, yes.

KH: What was his name.

HF: James.

KH: This is your father's father. James Findlay. Would he have been the first one up here?

HF: He was the first Findlay up here, yes. He and two brothers came out from Scotland. He had this country over here with Tom Mitchell. Then he died and the eldest son he became the - one of these wills that left it to the eldest son - got the property, and was handed down to the eldest son, no matter which way it went. Anyway the eldest son, when he got possession of it, he sold it to Tom Mitchell's father.

KH: What about the Dargals, do you remember how that name ..

HF: No I don't know how the Dargals got it.

KH: Probably an aboriginal name I would think.

HF: Yes well it could have been. The Dargals and Jagumba, that sounds another aboriginal name. I believe the Yellow Bog, until the Snowy came in there, I always knew it as the Yellow Boy. They say it was named after a Chinaman. Out here, before you get to the Yellow Bog, out from Cooninne, there's a place called Shanty Creek. Chinamen used to be going from Beechworth to Wheelers. There was diggings there out through that country to Kiandra, there was a wine shanty out here on this Shanty Creek. I dunno where they got their wine from, or how they got it in there, but they say there was this wine shanty in there.

KH: Were you alive when your grandfather was around.

HF: No, no. He was either 42 or 44 when he got married. He married a youngish woman - I think she was 18. And they had 11 children. He didn't do too badly.

KH: So he had all his children in his 40's and 50's.

HF: He would, yes.

KH: What about Will Wheeler's wife, Annie is it?

HF: Anne.

KH: What do you remember about her - was she a colourful person like her husband or was she fairly quiet?

HF: She was more quiet. Both One-arm and his son Charles, they used to get very excited very quickly. They'd get very excited this minute, and the next minute that's be all over. They wouldn't let it worry them for some time before they started to speak or something like that.

KH: Apparently there was a place on the river where she used to have a swim or something?

HF: Out at the Wheelers?

KH: Yes.

HF: Yes, after you go from Wheelers hut out over the Broadway going up to Pretty Plain, the track goes from Wheelers over the Broadway down onto the river, then you follow the river up for about a mile, and then it goes up over a hill and drops down again onto the river, when you follow the river up there there is a big (I suppose it'd be 50 yards or more across) its a fairly big pool. One-arm used to say Mrs Wheeler would go up there to have a swim, and he said I'd be the cockatoo he said, I'd be up on the ridge up there he said, let her know if there's anybody coming. (laughter)

KH: That was known as Mrs Wheeler's hole or something wasn't it?

HF: Yes, they call it Mrs Wheelers hole.

KH: You would have met *Lila*. (Harry pronounces this *Lyla*), Charle's wife?

HF: Yes.

KH: She used to go out there too didn't she?

HF: Yes

KH: She used to make plum pudding she told me, for the men to take up there.

HF: I don't think there's quite as many about as what she said there were. I'd never seen them hanging around the walls (laughter). We'd generally have a plum pudding though. Something like that. The only time I've ever went out when she was out there, rabbit skins were a pretty good price and there was a lot of rabbits out there at the time, Charlie and a chap he had, used to work from Towong, they'd decide they'd go out and do a bit of trapping there. So they packed up a couple of hundred traps and set off out. We went out up passed this Everards hut and out onto the Ink Bottle. And one of the horses knocked up - the one had all these traps on. They'd be pretty heavy. We had to pull the traps off it and leave there and went on into the hut and came back the next day and picked up the traps and went back in. I came home - I didn't stay, but there was Charlie and this other chap who was with him and Leela, she was doing the cooking while the fellows were catching the rabbits. Going out over Everards hut onto the Ink Bottle, there was one time I was saying I put in a few nights up in Sasellas hut above Pretty Plain there, well I was out there mustering cattle with these, Sasellas used to have this Bringenbrong down here, and we'd finished the mustering out there and I came in with the cattle and when I got in they told me Charlie, and a cousin, had gone out. They were starting the muster on Wheelers. So the next day I set off - well I had a couple of horses to shoe, and anyway it was a bit late when I got away. I

decided I'd go out and go up a spur from Everards hut onto the Ink Bottle. Well as I was getting out to around Everards hut it was getting dark. There was a good moon - there was a full moon and so I started off. I turned, left the track, and started off up this spur, going up onto the Ink Bottle. I didn't get far in - it was jolly scrubby and a lot of logs, I didn't get far in and all of a sudden it got dark. And blowed me, if there wasn't an eclipse of the moon. It was quite dark. I couldn't see well enough to go on, so, I had blankets and food with me, so I decided I'd camp for the night. I just got unpacked and got into the blankets, and all of a sudden you could see the moon starting to show. Anyway I waited a bit longer and it cleared off. So I packed up again and set off. I got into Wheelers hut about midnight. Of course Charlie and this other chap they were wondering what the dogs were barking at that time of the night. (laughter)

KH: What were the main things you ate when you were out there?

HF: Well we generally lived on grilled meats.

KH: What did you have for breakfast?

HF: Generally chops or steak and toast. Of course lunch we'd cut that and we'd have saddle bags on the side of the saddle, and a quart pot on the other side. Whenever we felt like it we'd.. generally we were together, but often we used to sort of split - one follow would go one way and the other one would go another way and meet somewhere else. We used to pull up and we'd boil the quart pot and have lunch. When we got home, if we didn't have chops we'd grab a sheep it didn't matter what part of the sheep it was we'd cut it so we could grill it. We always had grilled what ever it was. Even with fish, we'd grill it. I remember one time we went out and got 16 ducks - shot them out on Greg Greg. We'd cleaned these ducks and taken them out and we used to have, for tea, we generally had a duck a piece grilled.

KH: A duck a piece?

HF: Yes! (laughter)

KH: I see. You're living it up! Did you take the odd bottle of whisky or something with you as well?

HF: Generally rum.

KH: Any particular kind of rum?

HF: Whenever we'd get it, it'd be Blackboy. Its a wonder there's not a few bottles lying around there, but I suppose the labels would have gone off them anyway. We always had a bottle of rum in the back. Generally have a nip when we came in at night time.

KH: Do you ever remember being bitten by a snake?

HF: Not out there, no. They say those snakes out there are harmless. I don't think I'd trust them anyway.

KH: Yes, there are copper-heads aren't there.

HF: Yes.

KH: Did anyone else take photos out there that you remember. I got a few photos from Lila. Would there be anyone else that'd have photos of stock going out there, or the hut? What about this fellow who's doing the family history?

HF: No he has'nt got any because he was looking for some too. There are a few photos around of some of the family being in Tom Groggin country there.

KH: Any photos of you going out there or going into the hills?

HF: There's a photo of my father and his brother, and Colin and another young fellow out there at the hut at Tom Groggin cleaning fish. They'd been caught. We used to have a photo of (I think you've got it in your book) Jack Riley and his hut.

KH: No, I've got another one. No I did'nt use that in the book.

HF: It might be in another book of a Victorian side here written by...

KH: Harry Stephenson?

HF: Yes.

KH: Yes he's got some of Jack Riley's in.

HF: My father had that photo, and he gave all those sort of things to Tom Mitchell.

KH: Your father did?

HF: Yes, well you see we had that one of (tape 3 side 2) Riley's hut. Then he had this journal, I think this Ryan had written a piece in it about the trip on the horse trip through there. And then he had another one of one of the last black-gins around here, Black Magg, climbing a big gum tree.

KH: They went to Tom Mitchell?

HF: Tom got... I dunno, he was interested in them, and them of course he is a mover in the antique centre in Corryong.

KH: The museum?

HF: The museum.

KH: Well that might just about do us I think. It's been a very productive session.

HF: Yes well I don't know..

KH: I think that will do, unless you can think of anything else. I think I've covered all the long journeys that you could tell me about. We've got more of the history of Wheelers hut now. It's a good history now of Wheelers hut.

HF: Well apart from the second, when they removed the hut, I was'nt too sure, but I reckoned, it was. It'd be either '33 or '34, well, Charlie Wheeler's daughter, she died about six months ago, she said she reckoned it was '34 - well it'd be early in January / February '34.

KH: Is this the lady who lives in Queensland or something?

HF: Yes.

KH: She died did she?

HF: Yes.

KH: That'd be L L a's daughter.

HF: She was only - she'd be young but she died of cancer.

KH: Yes, I think L L a lives in Albury now.

HF: Yes, she does. I saw her - it'd be six months ago I suppose. There was a wife with a chap who brought Brongenbrong from Sasellas - Bringenbrong's just back down the road here. She was leaving. The husband died, and she's got our life interest in the place, but she thought she'd get out and she was going to live in Corryong. They were giving her a bit of a farewell and L L a was friendly with her, and she was up there. I met her down there - that's the first time I met her since I don't know when - since about 1949.

KH: Because Charlie died early too did'nt he?

HF: Yes. He had a heart complaint.

KH: Yes, I interviewed L L a in Cooma, when she was still in Cooma.

HF: She was a - I don't know whether the husband'd be working now - I don't suppose he would be - I suppose they'd be living in retirement more or less.

KH: OK tape that's it!