

THIS IS A RECORDING OF A CHAT WITH DON LUNN AT HIS HOME AT BEROWRA HEIGHTS ON THE 15TH JUNE 1984.

(Interview commences while looking at photographs.)

D.L. It was always referred to as Adam's Hut for some time and on some maps, see it's shown as Ibis Hut.

K.H. Yes.

D.L. The Commission had a tendency to put their badge on these things. Their badge is an Ibis.

K.H. Yes.

D.L. On their crest. I did see a map recently with the Ibis hut tag on it.

K.H. Yes the maps very I think. Was it named Adam's Hut after Ray Adams?

D.L. That I don't know.

K.H. Or someone in the Commission ?

D.L. It was Adam's Hut long before the Commission had anything to do with it, to do with the region and it had been destroyed and the Commission rebuilt it in 1949-50. The purpose of rebuilding was to locate an officer there to look after the staging stations in the region. Not only in the Kosciusko region out on the lower parts too. Jindabyne, to a region a day a two day trip that you could do from there. It was pretty inaccessible in those times in winter to get there and they had a weekly run in those parts as the charts had to be changed weekly. That was his sort of tour, he'd go from Spencer's Creek which is where the hut was, down the range out to the Gungarlin, Burrungubugge.

K.H. Burrungubugge yes.

D.L. The Dalgety and that was...

K.H. As far away as that ?

D.L. Yes.

K.H. Were you stationed there some of the time ?

D.L. No I went out occasionally just to do the river gauging. There was an officer, Johnny Abbottsmith one of the officers at one time. Did you ever strike him ?

K.H. Yes I just interviewed him a couple of months ago.

D.L. Johnny was the..

K.H. Oh was he, he worked for the Commission.

D.L. Danny Collman.

K.H. Yes I've heard of him, Robbie Kilpinen knows of him.

D.L. Well, Danny was the one that finally, he was the one that was finally transferred across to the Snowy Mountains Authority. Originally employed by the Irrigation Commission and then, when they became fully operative in their river gauging they took over all of the river gauging stations. Johnny, he left the Commission before me.

K.H. He then set up a caravan park didn't he at the Creel ?

D.L. That was sometime later.

K.H. Yes.

D.L. I'm not too sure, I can't recall just what he did when he left the Commission.

K.H. Did he work for the park for a while?

D.L. Could well have done.

K.H. He said he would also, he would restock or look after huts like Pounds Creek and White's River. He did that at some stage. I don't know who that was for. Danny Collman, he's still in the area I think.

D.L. Well, the last I heard of Danny he's, his base is at Khancoban but he could have been at Shannons.

K.H. Was he on that side ?

D.L. Well, he was.

K.H. How did you get to be involved with the irrigation commission ?

D.L. After the war actually. I started off back in architecture and under the rehabilitation schemes I found that was not quite satisfactory for a young family and in fact it was only to be a temporary job this river gauging thing that I took on. So I joined in November '47.

K.H. So your family went down with you ?

D.L. Oh, no, not at this, no, my headquarters were at Sydney.

K.H. Oh, I see.

D.L. In fact the Commission operated from Sydney at that time for that area and we travelled by public transport, train and by vehicle. Away for a fortnight maybe 3 weeks for river gauging. That's the actual river gauging measurement of water. The installation of the gauging stations was a slightly different set

up. For instance the Geehi Valley we sent a party of a dozen in and camped there for just on 6 or 7 weeks and established three gauging stations. One on the Geehi Swampy Plains River, one on the Geehi Creek and one on the Bogong.

K.H. You were mainly involved with the gauging itself rather than the building of or..

D.L. No, at that time gradually with promotion beyond the installation stage to the actual measurement stage and we installed the gauging stations and then operated them as measuring purposes throughout 1953 I think. Around about then we would have ceased about then, the Snowy would have taken over it. It abandoned some of the stations.

K.H. So you kind of learned your job on the job ?

D.L. Oh yes.

K.H. You hadn't had any qualifications before, you weren't in an apprenticeship before the war?

D.L. No, not for that, although most of the people were engineers, civil engineers, cadets, the young people. They graduated and became hydrographic engineers which I did eventually through dispensation and the young cadets, some of them stayed with the commission, not too many. Some went on to the Snowy, some went overseas, some dispersed to the winds.

K.H. I think one of the photographs you sent me of Barlees Hut has got a group in front of it hasn't it ?

D.L. Yes well the two at the rear, the two gentlemen there they are both cadets, this gentlemen here Jack Edwards is now well he's probably retired now but he's my age. He went with the Commonwealth Department Of Works to New Guinea and back to Canberra. He was based in Canberra the last I heard he may still be there.

K.H. The prints you sent me were they made from negatives ?

D.L. They were made from these.

K.H. Copies of these.

D.L. This gentlemen here he was a another young cadet but he finally he went to Bogong High Plains up in there somewhere as a manager of one of their chalets, ski lodges. He was that inclined he gave away his engineering.

K.H. Inspired by the mountains.

D.L. Well, I don't know, I think so, he'd have to, I think.

K.H. Are you on that ?

D.L. Yes that's me.

K.H. That's you on the right ?

D.L. With the fishing rod. That's the Barlee Roaring Waters Hut that one.

K.H. Yes I've seen it marked on the map and Elyne Mitchell in one of her books she referred to a fellow called Barlee the wallaby hunter.

D.L. Ah yes.

K.H. Did he do that? I mean, it could have been earlier in his life, I mean.

D.L. Could possibly have been. I only knew him as a yearly type person.

K.H. As a guide ?

D.L. A guide.

K.H. But he built that hut there.

D.L. So I believe.

K.H. With the Corromb Mountain hideaway or did he have stock there ?

D.L. Oh no I think it was a commercial venture. He took these people into...

K.H. And they stayed in his hut ?

D.L. Yes.

K.H. So he had bunks in there ?

D.L. Yes, there were bunks and, well, found for a price. He cooked and fed them.

K.H. And they'd go in on horseback ?

D.L. Yes, there was no other access in those days, there was no road into the Geehi.

K.H. So the iron, that was iron on the roof ?

D.L. No, bark.

K.H. Was it bark ?

D.L. That was just stripped bark.

K.H. Oh, really, so he just used materials that he had from the bush because it looks incredibly smooth.

D.L. I think that's probably got malthoid on the top.

K.H. Oh malthoid right.

D.L. It would have something like that on it.

K.H. Yes over the top.

D.L. It could even be canvas, I suspect that, that is canvas, you can see some ties down the side there, underneath would be bark stripped off a tree.

K.H. Because the canvas would only last a certain time wouldn't it ?

D.L. Yes.

K.H. I've never tried to find the hut, the site is marked on the maps so maybe the chimneys still there or something.

D.L. Well, there could be something still there, it would have well up in there somewhere. We walked, there was a fair little hike. We were camped down near the junction of the Geehi and Bogong Creek.

K.H. The Bogong Creek is that now Swampy Plains ?

D.L. No no.

K.H. Or Wilkinsons Creek.

D.L. No it is a different. See the Bogong Creek running down there and joins with the Geehi or Swampy Plains River. Actually it was the Swampy Plains River. If you go back up the river, there is the Geehi Creek comes in but the actual Swampy, the river itself swings right back up the gorge. Now that's where Barlee's Roaring Waters Plains was somewhere up in here.

K.H. But he didn't take stock in there ?

D.L. Not to my knowledge.

K.H. Was it freehold do you think ?

D.L. No I doubt it. I think it was just a hut in this valley. Whether he had a lease or a parcel of land or some tenure I really don't know. It was always referred to as Barlee's Hut or Roaring Waters, but I think Herb Barlee himself gave it the name Roaring Waters. It had some attraction, in fact the river in front of it is quite rugged.

K.H. Was it fairly cleared ?

D.L. No.

K.H. No, it was wooded then ?

D.L. Yes, you see the wood and stuff.

K.H. He would have <sup>[beep]</sup> right up the end of the river flat I suppose. After that it would just be a gorge wouldn't it ?

D.L. Yes. We went fishing there one time, fishing up the stream there and getting to a point where I was in the stream and I couldn't. The only way to get out of it was the way I came or climb up over the bluff. I was climbing up over this, I put my hand up to reach myself, to give myself a little bit of leverage on the way and it was only quite soft and when my eyes became level where my hand was there was this black snake looking and I had my hand on him.

K.H. You didn't get bitten ?

D.L. No, no ,no they're...black snakes.

K.H. You must have had a fair bit to do with snakes being on rivers most of the time ?

D.L. Oh, well, we've had occasions to see them and jump aside them at occasions. Always seen black snakes, they're pretty sleepy and not very aggressive than the browners. He'd stand up and rear up occasionally.

K.H. And there was no hut on the other side of the Geehi? Like, where the bridge is now, like, at the confluence of the Geehi Creek and the Swampy Plains River as you knew it then. There was no hut, there is a hut in there now called Dr Forbes Hut.

D.L. Yes.

K.H. Was that hut near there then ?

D.L. Yes it was a stone hut.

K.H. Yes it was a river stone hut. I haven't been there I couldn't get there, the river was in flood.

D.L. Yes.

K.H. And they also built a bit of a foot bridge, a removable foot bridge across Geehi Creek from the Geehi road.

D.L. That hut was there when we put in the gauging stations. The gauging station is immediately behind the hut.

K.H. Is there, well, how did you get there across the river, you waded the river ?

D.L. Yes, waded the river on horseback. See we backed into the Geehi and set up a camp. Kept the horses there and when we went to the Geehi Creek area we rode back and forwards every day to do this job.

K.H. But that hut was already there then.

D.L. Yes the hut was there then.

K.H. I wonder who had it then. Was it called Dr Forbes then ?

D.L. I think it might have been, I'm not sure. You couldn't get..?

K.H. No, I couldn't get there last time I tried. It was Easter time and the river was in flood. It was last Easter.

D.L. You mentioned Geehi Hut. That's, I don't know what that one would be.

K.H. That's the one on the end of the airstrip I think.

D.L. Doctor's, that's the one supposedly at Geehi Creek, Dr Forbes ?

K.H. Dr Forbes is the one on Geehi Creek.

D.L. I suspect the Doctor's is the one just around the bend from this hut.

K.H. Yes but on the other side. Yes on the same side of the river but in the trees now.

D.L. Yes.

K.H. It's semi collapsed. Then across on the other side is Nankervis's or Round Flat Hut ?

D.L. No, this is now, what is that flat called? Just off hand I couldn't remember.

K.H. Okay so you know all five that's good.

D.L. In fact, when we couldn't get, there is a crossing just up stream from this hut that took you on to that Nankervis's flat. It wasn't a real good crossing if the river was high. So what we would do is on horseback was to go around this bluff here. Come down the ridge behind there to where this Doctor's Hut is. There is another crossing across the river there and there is a better crossing to get across the water wasn't as quite, a fraction deeper but not quite as fast. We were able to get across there to get to the Geehi Creek gauging station.

K.H. Now which of those huts, those 5 huts, was there when you got there in '48? Were they all there then?

D.L. This Geehi hut I don't recognize.

K.H. Well that's the one at the end of the airstrip the big one with the verandah. It's the one where people picnic and camp now, it's next to the old slab hut. You would have known a slab hut there at the end of the airstrip at the end of Geehi flat.

D.L. There was no airstrip there in my time.

K.H. No okay, how can I describe it. So that, I think, wasn't built until possibly 1952 or something like that. That hut that is known as Geehi in there. I've got photos of that elsewhere. When was the last one built ?

D.L. My first association with the Geehi Valley except for a trip later, ended in '51. They put the roof on, the hut was built in 1949, 1948 sorry. '49 I was there. What we used to do to get the range of measurements required. The party would go down 2 or 3 people to the measure the flow during the thaw. I was there in the '48 thaw and the '49 thaw and the '50 thaw. What would happen then, of course, the rivers would be high and you just sat around waiting for the thaw and measured it when it came up and when it was on the way down so we got a range of flow measurements. I don't associate this Geehi, this Geehi hut.

K.H. Well there was certainly a slab hut very close to that site and it's , you know where the big flat begins, you know the next flat after Nankervis's flat on the other side of the river, big wide flat. Now it's used for camping and other things, well, the airstrip was on that and the slab hut was sort of at the down stream end of that flat....Keebles, that's Nankervis's.

D.L. It's 35 or 40 years ago now.

K.H. And they used riverstone because as a requirement by the park trust. Not because I might have thought that it was already a tradition using riverstone, but the other ones. And because there was already a man around like Don Benson who knew how to use this stuff.

D.L. Well, that's right, the Commission hut would have been the third one. All the other ones were slab huts. I could be quite wrong there but my understanding was this was a requirement ?

K.H. No, no one's told me.

D.L. The material was there.

K.H. Yes that's right another very logical reason. Apparently they had to get the stones from under the water, they didn't get slimy ones. Did they use a scoop and a horse or something.

D.L. I think they just hand picked them.

K.H. Hand picked them ?

D.L. Yes. I had some of the stones..

K.H. Well that's a lot of river stones to man handle.

D.L. Yes, I think the mattresses, I think they were a requirement.

K.H. Yes, that's amazing. I mean you've got buckley's of building

one now out of the bush. We've got a lot of problems even convincing them restoring the huts.

D.L. I think there a requirement, a necessity. People go out in to that country at the wrong time of the year and find themselves in all sorts of difficulty when they camp.

K.H. That's right.

D.L. Originally this hut had a malypoid roof you can see the battens holding the malypoid down. Eventually iron was put on it. I'm painting the iron there see. The iron as you can see was about 2 foot 6, 3 feet. To get it in, it was folded.

K.H. On a horseback of course ?

D.L. Yes then sown on both sides of the pack saddle and it stated just behind the horses jaw and practically to his rump. Imagine he couldn't when he went to turn the only thing he could turn was his eye, his head could hardly turn. Coming down the Geehi wall it was quite an effort.

K.H. Did you lose any horses coming down the Geehi wall ?

D.L. Some fall yes.

K.H. It's a wonder you couldn't roll it in. It was too stiff to roll it in to a roll.

D.L. Yes.

K.H. Because they use to carry corrugated iron on the side of the horses too.

D.L. For some reason it used to be flat iron I can't understand why it was flat iron. Because iron at that time was very, very difficult to obtain for any purpose.

K.H. Because this is just 3 years after the war.

D.L. Very difficult.

K.H. Don Benson, how old was Don Benson by then ? In his 30's 40's?

D.L. Yes at a rough guess I would say middle 30's.

K.H. Was he a quiet sort of guy ?

D.L. Yes. A very good horsemen.

K.H. I've got some of photos of him in the book bringing in the bark to Cascades Hut. He was involved in that too and I think he was involved in another hut somewhere else. So it wasn't just the river stone huts he was involved with. He would have been the sort of foremen like that would he or did he actually do most of

the work.

D.L. He did the work.

K.H. Did he <sup>[do]</sup> the whole thing ?

D.L. Whether he had anybody down there helping him I'm unaware of.

K.H. Was it mainly done by eye I mean ?

D.L. Yes.

K.H. Did he have any levels a bit of string around ?

D.L. I would think so because the way the windows are put in and things like that. They were axed, adzed.

K.H. The frames ?

D.L. Yes it's bush timber adzed.

K.H. Must have a close look at next time.

D.L. Then the louvers were of course metal framed. All that frame, the door frame that was a bush timber adzed, there is a square section.

K.H. Have you been up the Kiewa Valley in that area?

D.L. Only once or twice.

K.H. Someone said to me that there were some river stone huts over that way. I've never followed it up. I mean it's a very unusual way of building. I haven't come across it anywhere in Australia.

D.L. No.

K.H. Yet there are rivers elsewhere, and there are river stones elsewhere. So I'm intrigued as to how it started, why ?

D.L. In all my travels in N.S.W, I've lived on the north coast, I've never seen huts of this nature. Not even on the Maclay River and there were stones as big as .... and I didn't see any huts there.

K.H. And this is very long lasting no termites, well you've got to bring cement in that's true.

D.L. The floor is cement, the floor is a poured cement floor.

K.H. Is it, they brought enough cement in for that on horseback ?

D.L. Yes.

K.H. That would be quite a lot of cement. They must have had a whole string of pack horses bringing in cement. And I imagine the cement that holds the cement together would be pretty high mix, I mean the mix.

D.L. I think it was just plain sand cement mix it wasn't a water type mix.

K.H. Because the only one that's partly fallen down is the Doctor's one on the other side of the river there. All the other stone huts are still in tact of the 5 stone huts.

D.L. For a long time in this hut there was a visitors book that has probably long disappeared now. I can remember being there when it was placed in the hut, my name appeared as one of the first 2 or 3 in it. I went back in there in 1988 I think. All I was doing was travelling from Khancoban to the upper Murray side to do some river gauging on that side. I took the opportunity to stay overnight in this hut and the book was still there then. I don't know if it's locked now.

K.H. No it's not locked now, the youth hostels had it for a while, but then the Parks sort of clamped down on that and now it's just an open shelter hut. It's still very comfortable, the mattresses and things are still there. A lot of cutlery and stuff. It's sort of first come first served now. Apart from Don Benson did you ever meet any of the other mountain people coming in with their cattle ?

D.L. No not really. The people I got to know were the people around the Khancoban area, they were associated with getting us in. First of all they sent in 4 or 5 vanguard down to set up the camp and the rest of us arrived. So there were 12 people at the one time. So they had to be sort of fed and looked after and Bill McLachlan was responsible for that. He used the additional horses and what have you through Barlee and Benson and probably Berryman, he had a property further down the river. He was a farmer from Khancoban Creek. In later times after the road was put in sources of fresh milk. The road of course was one of those things that they just developed. Someone said I think it would be a good idea instead of all those pack horses going back and forth. We didn't go up the Wall to the bridle track, the pack horse track winds up back to the left of that.

K.H. So you just tracked virgin bush.

D.L. Yes, it wasn't that scrubby in there, a few trees. Took sight on top of people's heads. They engaged these earth moving people from Albury to push this road in. Probably made a slight mistake because when the road actually reaches a point on the way up it is above the level of the bridle track it has to go down to meet the level of the old bridle track. A big s-bend was put in it. That's <sup>got</sup> rid of the horseback and the pack horse. In my view it was much better with the horses, it was much more pleasing I thought, the riding, than it was to be on a landrover or a jeep.

K.H. A bit more romance in it too ?

D.L. Yes I got more satisfaction out of the packhorses, personal satisfaction than out of the back of a jeep.

K.H. Did you meet Major Clews ?

D.L. Oh yes had a couple of occasions with Major Clews. In 1949 I put a gauging station in at Tumut Pond and that was ...

K.H. That was typical Geehi country, it could be up stream from the bridge or something.

D.L. My first reaction to it was almost in front of the hut a lot of those places were very similar.

K.H. It's a very popular place now, you go there at Easter time and there are tents and campervans everywhere.

D.L. We had a party of about 6 or 7 people that went in and put this gauging station in and we were sort of the first people in there and they bulldozed a rough track to the top of the ridge. It was very steep from then on down to the river and we had 2 landrovers. It was easy to drive down and leave one at the top with a tow line to drag the other one up.

K.H. Where is this, this is at Tumut ?

D.P. This was at Tumut Pond. Now we hadn't been there very long when a group of surveyors arrived from the Snowy Mountains Authority and Major Clews was the officer in charge of the party. The Major was regarded as an elderly man then.

K.H. Apparently he was in retirement when they recalled him.

D.L. I don't know what age he would have been. So they were camped just near where we were. I think they were doing a capacity survey of the proposed dam, but I'm not to sure what survey work they were doing. The occasion arose that we had a deflatable dinghy and the Major came to us one day and he wondered if the creek was in flood and it wasn't a very wide creek of course. He asked could he borrow this inflatable dinghy, by all means. It was pretty unstable there it wasn't long before the Major wasn't in the dinghy they were in the creek. They had to be fished out of there. On one other occasion the Major was looking after a party at Lobs Hole on the Tumut and the track down to Lobs Hole was a jig track, and we went across this creek about 13 or 14 times.

K.H. Is that down to Sue City?

D.L. No, Lobs Hole you come in from Talbingo Mountain. We'd been in there another chap and myself gauging the stream and coming back we got hung up on a boulder in the middle of the creek, the landrover jammed under a boulder. We couldn't get it out and we walked back to Major Clews, no trouble boys we'll get you out.

But first of all you'll have to join me in a run and then you have to eat with me. After a couple of runs it was quite welcome, cold and had a meal with him. I think probably at about 9pm that evening here we were pulling this landrover out of this creek. The Major of course eventually finished on the Khancoban side and retired on the ride into the Geehi.

K.H. Yes I walked into there a couple of years ago. Was it there when you went there a couple of years ago ? Had he started there ?

D.L. Yes only just. That time I didn't see him then people had told me that's where he was living. Back creek area I think.

K.H. Maybe, I know there's a break in the fire trails there one goes onto Geehi and the other one goes, heads east across to the.....

(end of side.1 )

K.H. Even the Settler's, there's those records by the settlers about the Snowy Mountains, have you seen those, a group of folk singers. And there's a song they sing which mentions Major Clews.

D.L. I recall his bottle of rum being part of the equipment.

K.H. Because he was in his late 80s or perhaps 90s when he died. So he must have been in his 60s then or his late 50s.

D.L. Yes I think the bottle of rum was in everyone's equipment. We first went in and we didn't have a bottle of Murphy's rum, Murphys was a store in Cooma and you had to take some of that if you ever went to Spencer's Creek, up to the Chalet.

K.H. Getting bogged must have been pretty common to I think ?

D.L. I would say it was almost one a trip.

K.H. So in that sense horses were a lot better too ?

D.L. Oh yes.

K.H. Why didn't they keep on the horses ?

D.L. See most of the times you need a ringer to look after them. The costs: you had to have somewhere to stable them and in Geehi on that flat before you get to Round Flat there were a few fences across there that were always. What we had to do was prop the posts up and tighten the wires and we had a corral there that we could keep the horses in. The same thing the hut was built on, Round Flat a fence was put up to keep the horses in. It was quite unusual to find their way out sometimes, fortunately not all of them would go home.

K.H. Did you hobble them as well ?

D.L. No.

K.H. The tracking parties that take people in on horseback now they hobble the leaders.

D.L. No we didn't bother to hobble them. Most times you know the feed was pretty good in the valley and some of the horses had homing instincts.

K.H. What was the fishing like ?

D.L. In the Geehi, good. Because in the 40s it was a fly strain. You could only fish with a fly for trout. There may have been some native trout, some brown or rainbow trout. Because being isolated they didn't get the flogging, there were only these people, the Khancoban people, the Doctor's syndicate and the Waterfall Farm syndicate that really fished it. The fish must have wondered what happened when we walked in the...

K.H. The Doctor's were mainly from Melbourne weren't they ?

D.L. The syndicate people, Waterfall Farm they were certainly a syndicate. Others, I can recall them as being members of the Waterfall Farm syndicate. The Doctor's syndicate I had no association with, they had their own hut and I don't even know who took them in. Maybe Don Benson took them in or Herb Barlee might have packed them in. Then again it could have been Bill McLachlan.

K.H. Did you ever meet any of the Pearce's or anyone like that ?

D.L. Pearce's ?

K.H. Apparently they used Hannel Spur. They took stock up really high.

D.L. The only stock I ever saw was in the Nankervis's area in those flats there, I think they might have been the only people that had stock in that area at that time.

K.H. Do you remember any dramatic moments in your river gauging, people falling in or being half suspended over a raging torrent. I don't know what you got up to.

D.L. I can remember one on the Providence Plain before Eucumbene Dam we had a gauging station.

K.H. Providence Plain ?

D.L. Not far from where the portal comes out, actually there were two gauging stations one above the old road crossing which was the Adaminaby Kiandra road, the old road not the new one. A further gauge about another mile and a half up stream. I had a young cadet, two young cadets and we couldn't gauge it at the upstream gauging station, the stream was too fast and the

equipment wouldn't stay in the water. We went down to where the stream was wider and naturally slower, I could probably gauge it of the bed but the young cadet says, he says he thinks he could walk across with a pair of waders on, because it's easier to gauge once you're in the water. He got half way across and tripped because the water had spread outside of the bed and was on to some of the grassy bank and tripped over a tussock of grass and then disappeared from site and swept down into a channel. I couldn't get through the Tea Tree, so following down I had to go down to the back of this tea tree and come out the back down back around to where the bridge was. When I got down there, there was no sign of this chap and I thought my goodness.

So we had to search and find him, I walked down away back up the end of a stream through the tea trees and on the other side hanging on to the branch of a tea tree, soaking. Mind you this was almost the middle of Winter, in July sometime. I got him to walk up the other side because I couldn't reach the stream. We had what was known as a traveller type arrangement which had a winch on it and the wire across the stream. You got hold of this side of the winding across the stream. He took his clothes off, which didn't help as he just got colder. Fortunately there was one of the huts not far away, an abandoned hut. We finally got this lad across by this time he was blue and shivering. We were able to get a fire going and it was probably the biggest fire that was ever lit in this hut and he spent the next twenty minutes huddled around this fire. It was quite alarming at the time and everything turned out alright.

K.H. Because you see some photos of some guys standing with waders on, water around them a bit of ice and snow all around and I wonder to what extent some of those shots were set up for the Australian News or whatever it was at the time and how many times they actually did that sort of thing or how many accidents they had along the way ?

D.L. No, not a great many. Most times the gauging was taken at a site where the velocity wasn't that high that you couldn't move a boat across it or walk across it. Getting higher than 3 or 4 foot a second you couldn't stand up in it then naturally.

K.H. So there must have been a lot places where you couldn't gauge ?

D.L. Actually we only gauged them where we had gauging stations and the gauging stations were selected on the basis on the site and the gauging ability to control. Control being that point where the water level is maintained by a rock bar or a gravel bar that was fairly stable and doesn't get washed out to make the discharge height relationship vary too much.

K.H. That's right, you need a fairly stable bed.

D.L. Stable control, that's what it is.

K.H. A lot of places they put little concrete weirs. Did you do



that too ?

D.L. Yes we did some of those.

K.H. Because the S.M.A. seemed to have those everywhere.

D.L. Yes, the idea of those was, See, you can have a gauging station to record the run off say from a catchment, now if you're not in a great hurry to get this run off information you can run it for 10 or 20 years. Engage it once every 2 or 3 months and get the information satisfactory, but when you want the information in 5 to 10 years you've got to start stabilizing things so they built these controls. They're not cheap to build. I think there were several built on the little creek like Piper's Creek.

K.H. There's was 1 on Perisher Creek too. I've found them in all sorts of places in the bush.

D.L. Well see the beauty of those was you could extend the rating curve mathematically without further measurements because the profile of the stream..

K.H. Was always stable.

D.L. Well stable and it was a regular shape like a rectangular notch, where in a natural situation like this here that could even be a control. It could have a gauge here that controls the pool level but because of the little depressions and fissures in the rock.

K.H. Because you've got to calculate that profile haven't you, the size of that, yes I'm with you.

D.L. It can be done with a degree of accuracy but in this situation it can't be. The Snowy had to get their information pretty quickly and of course they had much more money to spend on that type of operation.

K.H. Where you involved in any of the sort of issues, well I don't know if they were controversial or not at the time but the sort of issues of, you know, protecting the catchment as much as possible. So that the quality of the water coming down was good ?

D.L. No it didn't enter into our work very much at all.

K.H. I suppose by the time you came along they had already made the big decisions with regard to the declaration of the national park, with regards to the Snowy scheme was all in train wasn't it ?

D.L. Well, yes, the Snowy, 1949 I think the Bill was brought down.

K.H. Yes I think so.

D.L. The, obviously the intention of the work of the Snowy was

commenced quite some time before because otherwise the gauging stations we are putting in 1947 that was 2 years before. We put the gauging stations in the Snowy region but Spencer's Creek, Snowy River and those places and the Chalet long before there was any Snowy Mountains Authority.

K.H. When did that start in the early 40s or after the war ?

D.L. Mostly after the war in that region, there was ample. The Snowy River at Island Bend was in March 1948 that was put in. Tooma we've got 1949, Tumut we've got Lobs Hole 1949 and Thredbo River 1948, Eucumbene River '47. Kiandra and Providence Plain 1947, Gungahlin and Snowy Plain 1945... so you can see that the information that was starting to be collected then, this in that time was on behalf of the Electricity Commission of N.S.W.

K.H. For the Electricity Commission and even when the S.M.A. started you kind of had a dual system almost.

D.L. Well of course they had to recruit staff and they couldn't, nothing today and Snowy Mountains tomorrow. So it took them a while to recruit their staff and the commission, the Irrigation Commission, continued to even install some gauges up until early 50's, '53 maybe when the Snowy were in a position to take over the whole operation.

K.H. They took over your records and..

D.L. No, no we maintained our records, they had access. The original records such as record charts I think would be still in the archives of the now Water Resources Commission.

K.H. In a sense it was the Irrigation Commission which kind of put in some of the very first tracks, in some cases which followed some of the old bridle tracks or created new ones.

D.L. Yes.

K.H. Which were then in turn followed by the S.M.A. and others.

D.L. Oh yes for sure no doubt about it.

K.H. Did you have anything, was there anything put in up at Thredbo up the Crackenback from Jindabyne in that early time ?

D.L. Yes we put a gauging station at Bullocks Hut.

K.H. You went as far as that ?

D.L. Yes we put a gauging station not far from where the Little Thredbo comes in.

K.H. There was no track into there, the landrover track ?

D.L. Yes.

K.H. But nothing right through to what is now the Alpine Way. That was S.M.A. then that was 1956. What about that where you go to Nimmo Hill, where you go across the Eucumbene well down to where the dam is now, you go up to Nimmo Hill into the Gungarlin. It's a very old stock route I think. Was there any connection to what is now the Powerline Road that connects back through to the Burrungubugge and Providence Portal?

D.L. It probably zig zags. Our track, well, the access to the Gungarlin in dry weather you could go in a two wheel drive vehicle. Beyond that it got a bit rugged from the Gungarlin back to the Burrungubugge. Now we had a gauging station on the Snowy Plain on the Gungarlin and one on the Burrungubugge at Constance's Hut. That was put in by the Commission now it was just a blazed track. We actually had some jam tin lids painted yellow tacked to the trees so when there was a bit of snow on the road you could find your ways between the trees and not run into a bog or rock. That was that. In 1949, here is an example, the Gungarlin gauging station was put in on Snowy Plain in 1945 and the actual gauge was read by Laurie Fletcher.

K.H. Yes, I've met Fred Fletcher and I've met Morris Fletcher. I don't think I've met Laurie.

D.L. Laurie would be Morris's brother and I did the last gauging for the commission in 1953, October '53. Around about then the Snowy were taking over.

K.H. Largely taking over ?

D.L. Yes they would be taking it over. After 1953...

K.H. So it acted there from '43 to '53.

D.L. '45 yes the Gungarlin.

K.H. Yes to '53.

D.L. The Constance Hut that was put in in 1948, I was involved in the actual installation of that gauge and the last gauge in there was in 1953 by the commission that is. So there was quite a lot of activity in 1947 installing gauging stations.

K.H. I've just got down here, apparently you put a telephone line in to the Commission hut did you ?

D.L. Yes.

K.H. From Khancoban to Waterfall Farm. I think I've seen bits of that. I walked in there with a friend and I said there's either been electricity or something into this place. Every so often right up in a tree a couple of insulators and a bit of line still hanging around.

D.L. I've never really worked out how far we walked doing that. We started off, it was an ill-conceived idea in the first place.

The idea being the people that were down there were marooned at Geehi Hut gauging had no communication to the outside world. The gentlemen in charge at the time of the hydrographic branch commission decided that there should be a telephone line and this ex-army came. It was Burgess on drums and we started off, there was 3 of us started off from Waterfall Farm and walked except that we had a pack horse. We mounted 2 drums of this cable on a bar and hitched an end a wire to the single bar on the horse and he dragged this wire out and one person remained with the drums to make sure that the drum was.... Because sometimes this wire was broken because it was ex-army wire not new wire. He let a shout go if something would happen, so having got the wire out then carried a ladder that had reach up a tree and an insulator which you would probably still see some of, with a 6 inch nail through the insulator into the tree and tied the wire.

K.H. That's just what it looks like.

D.L. The insulator of course you had to be very careful because with the 6 inch nail through the insulator if you struck the nail and the vibration shattered the insulator. So you had to hold the insulator in such a fashion that the nail was not touching the side of the insulator. When you hammered it into the tree they had a small haversack with nails and porcelain insulators and you can imagine, so you walked down the wire, climbed and walked back up the ladder and you pulled out the wire again. So we did this all the way from Waterfall Farm to the Geehi Hut. Took us about three weeks I think. Then we reached the point of no return which was of course half way, when we couldn't get back to Waterfall and do a day's work and get back to Waterfall Farm in a reasonable. So we camped out in this track on the track 2 or 3 nights I think, very little. We just had some canned soup, rolled oats which we cooked in a billy, because there was no other way of doing it. This is before the road of course.

Anyhow, it worked and we made a few calls to Khancoban and everybody was very happy about it so we packed up and returned to Sydney. I think it was about a week later they had one of the biggest snowfalls in the area. I don't think the snow brought the lines down, the limb falling of the tree fell across the wires. It was such a mess no attempt was ever made to re-establish the line. I don't know what the people thought when they went into the Geehi hut and saw the handset there.

K.H. A bit swanky. Civilization coming into the Geehi. What about fishing inspectors, did Charlie Bell ever come into the Geehi ?

D.L. He probably did but I had no contact with him. In fact in all my fishing career I preferred the fly fishing to, other from of fishing. I had never see a fishing inspector in all my time.

K.H. I think in your letter you mentioned something about someone hanging from a cable over Spencer's Creek.

D.L. Yes, just on Adam's hut, Spencer's Creek a cable..

K.H. A flying fox

D.L. Yes.

K.H. I've been on the one, there is a little one that is still functional on the creek past Guthega, Farm Creek going up the Snowy to Pounds Creek up to Illawong hut.

D.L. Basically what it was, an A-frame situation like that with a cable across it and a wedge where there was a car that had a travelling wire, and you travelled this thing out and lowered the instrument. The instrument was attached to a small winch that had a lead weight on it. Now the lead weight was bullet-shaped in a fin like that on it, a bar through it and the instrument sat there like that as a propeller. They put a fin on it, wires connected back up to a battery that operated a counter counting the revolutions of this propeller which directly related to the speed of the water. So what you did was measure the depth at a point and you measured the velocity at certain points on that vertical where you had taken the depth. So you went your way across.

K.H. What about the Toolong Hut, what sort of structure was that, that was built?

D.L. Oh weatherboard.

K.H. Weatherboard, I think it's gone. I think it must have been removed.

D.L. I think it was 2 rooms, well made constructed by the Bannon Glenn earth moving people. It had a 4 bed type dormitory, I think it even had a sink in it. That was just as you came out of the treeline coming down on to.

K.H. Well the Tooma River or Toolong.

D.L. No well before you got there, well not long before you got there.

K.H. From the Khancoban side or from the Cabramurra side.

D.L. Over on the Tooma side. You came up the Yellowbog Ridge.

K.H. And then there's Wolsley's Gap at the top.

D.L. Yes, before you got to Round Mountain on the other side. We came up this Welumba Hill. Tooma up this track here. The hut would have been somewhere in that area there.

K.H. Right that's Wolsley's Gap.

D.L. You came out of the treeline and there's a little creek that runs down into the Tooma River and that was called the Toolong at that level. The track went down around to the Toolong Crossing across the Tooma River.

K.H. That's all flooded down below.

D.L. It was only really used while we put that gauging station and we went on and did the one on Ogilvey's Creek at Round Mountain Crossing. The crossing was a very, very steep little section of road. Ogilvey's Creek came down in there somewhere. So after that it didn't get a great deal of use at all because the track was there at that time we had landrovers and jeeps, so there was no reason for people to even stay there for river gauging purposes. We had an office in Albury and that was a very simple matter to travel from Albury to do this gauging and back out in a day. I don't think the hut would have stayed there for any length of time.

K.H. So you had about 5 or 6 years in that area on and off from 1948 to about '53.

D.L. Really you could say to the end of the '60s because in 1957 we established an office in Tumut, so I transferred into there so I was still travelling into there to the area in '57, but not doing too much of the mountain type work. Jindabyne just on the fringes, Dalgety. But the actual Snowy mountain stream would have been done by the Authority. We still went on the other side occasionally to the gauging stations on the fringe. Moorannah Creek and Places like that.

K.H. Yes, still it seems like a significant time in terms of your memory of it.

D.L. Ah yes very significant. The commission even went outside the states boundaries in a couple of places like the Delegate River which is in Victoria, all tied up with this investigation of electricity, hydroelectricity. We maintained gauging stations on the River Murray for the R.M.C., River Murray Commission.

K.H. Good.

(interview terminated)