

John Rudd interview with Klaus Hueneke - 9 May 1985

K. This is an interview with John Rudd on his property at *Reynella* on Thursday 9 May 1985. *Reynella* is a few miles from Adaminaby and John spends a lot of his time now taking parties on horseback into the local area as well as into the Kosciusco National Park. I have a few questions - I thought I'd go back to the beginning when you were born. When were you born?

J. Yes. I was born at Narrabri, my father had been on the railway. I don't remember much of that at all. The first I remember is we were at Captain's Flat, during the War, is the earliest, I can recall.

K. Captain's Flat?

J. Mmm.

K. Ah. But your father wasn't involved with mining.

J. No, no being on the Railway, during the War he was there and what did they call it, a protected service, and he wasn't called up. We spent most of the War years there.

K. What was the name of your parents?

J. Clarrie and Violet Rudd.

K. So your parents weren't mountain people by any means.

J. Not my father but my mother was a Russell from Adaminaby.

K. Did they meet somewhere in the local area?

JR. My mother was a teacher and she met my father while teaching down near Holbrook, at Mountain Creek, I think was the place. Many years ago, (laughing) I don't know how many years.

KH. So your mother was a teacher.

JR. Yes.

KH. That is supposed to happen quite a lot I believe, women who were teachers went into the country, then married local men and often they turned into farmer's wives.

JR. Although he was only there on the Railway. He wasn't a farmer.

KH. No, in this case it is different. And she is related to the Russells from around here. From Adaminaby.

JR. Yes, as I recall my great grandfather would be Johnny Russell. Great, great Grandfather sorry and my grandfather being Mick Russell, some of the original settlers of the Upper Eucumbene area. Mount Denison, the township of Denison was controlled by the Russells or was ran by the Russells. The hotel there was under the control of the Russells I think during the gold mining era.

KH. That long ago?

JR. Mmm, they would have been the original settlers.

KH. That was quite a common stopping off place on the way to Kiandra.

JR. It was the last staging post apparently before the mines, in the mining era, and that is where they went and had their big spree before they went up there to look for their elusive gold.

KH. That's all flooded now, isn't it.

JR. Yes, it is right at the top end of Lake Eucumbene. Although the township of Denison is still a gazetted township, a thorn in the side of the Administration.

KH. So you were roving a fair bit as a child?

JR. Yes, yes.

KH. So what was your early schooling like?

JR. Oh, mostly stable through that and then I went away to school during later years in high school. We were at Captain's Flat and Wingello, where I went to school in Bowral for a few years. We moved from there to Yass and I went to Holy Cross College at Ryde in my last few years schooling.

KH. In Sydney. So you had a full schooling, *did you?*

JR. Oh yes.

KH. You didn't drop out when you were twelve or anything like that? So after that, how did you come to come down this way?

JR. When I left school, I started with the Department of Main Roads, starting in the office there. Starting with the field of accountancy, I suppose. I couldn't see a very great future for myself at that. An uncle of mine had some land here which he had sold to the SMA and had the opportunity to lease it back and gave me the opportunity of leasing that, which I did and came up here, and started rural pursuits, which I had always wanted to do.

KH. Which was that uncle?

JR. Jack Russell. He was Leo's brother, since deceased. ^{KH:} How many brothers were there again?

JR. Three. Leo, Jack and Vincent. And seven girls, quite a large family of them. So the boys end up on the land and the girls made their way in other fields.

KH. So that was your start in the mountains, and where did you live at that stage?

JR. With relations. With my grandfather at Wattledale. Stayed there and I think my first job as well as having this bit of land myself, I was looking after stock on a block near Happy Jack's township at that time. The snow leases were still in operation.

KH. You mean with the SMA with Happy Jack's township?

JR. Yes, but the land around it. There was a rather large block there which was stocked by, at that time, the Russells, Jack Russell, Mc Phies, Lee Mc Phie from Eucumbene side. Fred Fletcher and Bruce Haslingden from Cooma.

KH. Oh Fred Fletcher was in there too.

JR. And I was given the job of tending the stock during the summer months. That was my introduction to rural pursuits.

KH. How old were you then?

JR. Oh, 20, 21 I think.

KH. What about this other ride you did with Harold Mansfield and Vince Russell? Did you say you were 12?

JR. I think I was ten.

KH. Ten?

JR. It was after the war. I used to come holidaying up here quite often, and I think that I tormented them that much that they took me. Myself and Sidy Nugent, he was another young chap on that. His father was a baker in the Old Adaminaby. They took us along on this inauguration trip which they were endeavouring to start then, as a tourist enterprise, more or less as a rehabilitation scheme after the war, of Vincent's.

KH. They spent quite a few years away, didn't they? Most of the war.

JR. Harold didn't but Vincent did.

KH. Was he badly affected by the war?

JR. He was in New Guinea, and I think, wounded twice.

KH. He was on the Kokoda Trail?

JR. Yes, a lot of front line service.

KH. Was he married then? (gap)

We were - the ride in 1947 - was it, Vince Russell had served in the war.

JR. Yes. Harold to the best of my knowledge, whether he was called up, I don't think he saw any service anyway, in the War.

KH. And they set up this...

JR. They had been buddies before the war and they set this thing up...

KH. So you just happened to be down this way and...?

JR. Yes. Most school holidays I was around the area. As I say, I really tormented them until they took me.

KH. What was their base? What property did they start off from?

JR. Harold had a property here, Morebank, near the Old Adaminaby. Vincent had country of his own plus his father still had the Wattledale country, just west of Adaminaby. They started off from that area. I remember the first day we started off from there, in the old Adaminaby township, and rode up to Happy Jack's hut that first night.

KH. Happy's hut, what is now known as Happy's hut?

JR. Yes, yes the old tin hut there, Montague's hut I think it is also called. That was the first base camp.

KH. So the first trip that you went on was really a publicity thing.

JR. Yes, that was what they ran it for. They invited the Pix journalist and the Department of Information - it was Axel Poignant and another lady, I forget her name...

KH. I think there were two ladies. I think they were sisters. I don't know what their - one of them either then or later was a Jenkins and her sister was married to Axel Poignant, I think

JR. And a young chap, he was a doctor, or studying to be a doctor. He ended up registrar at North Shore Hospital, I think. What was his name ever? I just can't recall his name.

KH. I've got all the names down somewhere, because this Mrs Jenkins remembered them very well. And what was the next night after Happy's hut?

JR. To the Boobee hut, to Boobee, it was only a short day.

KH. And then on from there?

JR. From there, I think we went down by the Doubtful Gap, took a bypass farm which.. went to O'Keefe's hut. O'Keefe's hut is near to Grey Mare?

KH. Well you'd need to go over Jagungal...or around...?

JR. Well we did go up onto Jagungal for a ride. I think we might have had the short day to - might have even had the short day at O'Keefe's and went up there and back. I don't think we did start at Grey Mare - we passed Grey Mare and went down by the G^(A O S F ?)ollant?...
G^(A O S F ?)ollant?...

KH. On to Mawson's, did you?

JR. White's River. We stayed at White's River. We went down to the Valentine Falls. So we must have stayed at Grey Mare for a night and went to Valentine Falls. Then to White's River. They had a radio there which was a big hit at the time. Dave Mackay was a ranger and he was busy trying to show us how this radio worked, with little success.

KH. Was he one of the rangers employed by the Land's Department at the time?

JR. Yes.

KH. There was Tom Taylor too, wasn't there? Jim Patinson, too?

JR. No, they were later. Jim Patinson was certainly later. Dave Mackay was the ranger out that area. He was the only ranger I knew out that way.

KH. He had the job of making sure that no-one over-grazed their leases or that sort of thing, or...

JR. They were given a quota, they could put on their lease. He had to count them on and be around to make sure you didn't do the wrong thing - control the fires, I think, was another thing. You couldn't go burning as you wished.

KH. They started to put controls on burning, did they?

JR. Oh yes, you couldn't burn without a permit. And I think there was a lot, that some people - the grazing was purely for relief grazing - for the leaseholder for his own stock. He couldn't buy stock to put on the lease. He couldn't take somebody else's on. Must be bonafide stock. They couldn't

KH. It was also more for local land-holders wasn't it?

JR. Yes. I think you had to have some criteria to have a lease. You had to assure them that you were doing a certain amount of pasture improvement, improving your

own property and you needed it for relief grazing. It certainly enhanced your chances of getting a lease anyway. They were very strict on - you couldn't take agistment, like you couldn't take stock from somewhere else on agistment for your own gain. You had to - or you couldn't buy extra stock for the summer. It had to be purely relief grazing.

KH. So the rest of the year, you had to accommodate the stock on your own property.

JR. I know those fellows, they were fairly conversant with everyone's activities and they knew the brands, knew the earmarks and things. They'd know any strange stock.

KH. So you were ten on that ride.

JR. I think I was ten.

KH. When was it that you were born again? What was the year you were born again?

JR. '35. I must have been 12, was I?

KH. '47, I'm pretty sure that that is when this - there is the Pix article - so that was the end of 1947. Some of the names are in that actually.

JR. There. That's me there.

KH. Oh, right. You're just known as "the boy", I think.

JR. The boy. (laughs) That must be Sid Nugent, that was the other young fellow that was on.

KH. Dave McKay the ranger,

JR. Yes. That's me here. That'd be Sid Nugent. He looks older than me.

KH. And this lady... this is Mrs Russell who had the original photos, would be the one in most of these.

JR. I'm sure so, yes, a lot of them.

KH. That's right, Ruth Poignant and her sister Joan.

JR. That's me again there.

KH. I wrote to Pix to see if they could identify this. But they said that you've got Buckley's. I don't know whether the negatives even exist with them any more, because the magazine has changed hands.

JR. Mmm. This would be up on Jagungal. They called it the Boogong then, I think.

KH. You call it the Boogong, now do you?

JR. They always referred to it as the Boogong, the Big Boogong.

KH. Not Bogong, but Boogong.

JR. Boogong. The Boogong Swamp.

KH. They never called it Jagungal.

JR. No. That was about the time they were all saying "What's this bloody Jagungal - it was always known as the Boogong?"

KH. But now its known as Jagungal.

JR. The big, rocky Boogong.

KH. Was there anything dramatic happen on that trip across? Did any horses bolt or anything like that?

JR. No I don't think so.

KH. Often horses turn for home at night, don't they?

JR. No. It was different then. Most of the huts we stayed at would have been occupied by stockmen. There was a horse paddock securely fenced in and you were there with them. Not like it is now. If they did get away, they'd only go in certain areas.

KH. So after White's River, you went over the Rolling Grounds did you and along the Main Range?

JR. Yes, we would've got to the Chalet from there.

KH. And that's where some of the others stopped.

JR. Yes, we stayed there for a couple of days. That's when they put on this horse round up for us. Where George Day brought the horses in.

KH. That would be some of the secrets would it?

JR. Yes. There are the ones.

KH. You might just like to look through those.

JR. Here is the horse.

KH. These are the photos I got from George Day.

JR. I've seen some of these photographs in different other publications. *Horses and Horsemen* had one in. There's Vincent - they did it, how you would do it if you were breaking a horse in. But it is difficult within a few hours - even to the stage of riding him. You see here he is riding him.

KH. Yes, I've got a sequence there.

JR. That's me looking very...(laughs)

KH. Well I'll know who the little boy is each time. What a beginning, eh?

JR. Yes, these would have been some of George's horses plus some of Vincent's horses.

KH. They weren't all brumbies though.

JR. Oh no. This was a particularly good horse apparently.

KH. Oh, it had already been broken in?

JR. Oh no. George just said "You can catch that one for me, sort of thing." George bred good horses.

KH. There's a lot of horses. I'm quite surprised at the number.

JR. A lot of those would have been our horses from the trip.

KH. So the whole thing was set up.

JR. Yes.

KH. But are there stories of George actually taking a whole lot of horses into the Geehi and on into Victoria and selling them at the stock yards, the saleyards? I don't know whether it was Albury, or Wodonga? Do you remember any of that?

JR. No, I wouldn't - but I know he used to take them back to Talbingo - used to trot them through. Heard of him doing that. Stick behind the car, and they used to put leather underneath the shoe so the jar wouldn't effect their legs so much.

KH. And they would run behind the car?

JR. Yeah, he would trot them behind the old car down the highway. Because every year he had to move them out of the Chalet before the snow. The Day's had a lot of country and a lot of good horses. They owned the Talbingo station. And the Caves, they ran the Caves House.

KH. What about ..Was it you who was telling me the story about Harold bringing snowed in cattle out? He had this reputation for being the skiing stockman?

JR. Yes. I don't know about skiing. But they did a lot of droving. Maybe the time that he told me - about he and Bung Harris and these other drovers taking cattle from Currango, when the Australian Estates had it. I think that was the last time. When the Australian Estates left there for the final muster, he said they had cattle stringing from the old cattle yards at Currango. When the tail was leaving the cattle yards, the leader was at Rules Point, getting on to 12 miles.

KH. Across Port Phillip fire trail, I suppose.

JR. Yes. Through the snow, along the track.

KH. That would be in the late forties? The time that Molly Taylor started there in '49, or something like that?

JR. Yes, another uncle of mine, Vin Johnson. He was the manager there for Australian Estates - the last manager, that I know of. Tommy came there after, when he became a ranger - he got the house to live in. I don't think he did that much work for the Australian Estates Company.

KH. No, that's right. He started when the National Park was declared, I think - in '44. I remember Molly saying that she started letting out rooms or something like that, in 1949 - that's when they started letting out the place for fishermen.

JR. Yes, because Australian Estates had Wambrook, Danjelong and other big properties around, plus the Currango.

KH. And Thomas Shanley used to work for them, as a drover, I think.

JR. Yes. A manager more or less Tom was - probably the top man in this area. Who was the other fellow? who was the big manager?

KH. Well there was a fellow called Clapperton who used to come up here, but I don't think he...

JR. I think he ended up at Yass. I was only talking to Vin Johnson two or three weeks ago about it. It started with a B - not Blinksell. (both laugh) I knew Graham too. His father lived at Captain's Flat, behind our house.

KH. Graham Blinksell's father? Was he a miner there?

JR. Yeah, would have been. The Blinksell's came from there originally.

KH. So, Tom Shanley did quite a few big droving trips didn't he? Before he became manager for some of the properties. Later on worked the circuit too, in the Gulf Country.

JR. Probably would have done. But I think he might have been above the droving category. He would have been the manager. He probably organised the droving.

KH. Yes he organised them, I think, everything was in his name.

JR. He probably did the administration.

KH. Did he then own a property later on himself?

JR. At Cabramurra, Gabramatta, where the Wests are at Yaok now. He had an interest in that I think, I don't know. He would have been a relation.

KH. You would have met Tom Shanley?

JR. Yes.

KH. Is there anything you remember about him? What would you remember him by?

JR. He was a very big man, his stance.

KH. People used to know Willy Wheeler was known from his swearing and because he had one arm. There is another character that I hear people talk about... a fellow called Straighty Pendergast. Did you ever meet him?

JR. Not so much. You hear so much about the man, you think you know them.

KH. Straighty Pendergast?

JR. He had a reputation for being such a great horsemen. Sitting so straight, always rode so well. Great horseman, great horse breaker. I remember him bringing some horses to grandfather's once, either to take them to break them in or to bring them back broken in. Didn't get to know him though. I was only a little boy about the place. You were seen and not heard, type of thing.

KH. What about Tom Shanley?

JR. Tom used to go out and visit my grandfather every Sunday, it was quite a ritual. They would relate old tales and argue the point about who did this and who did that. Quite often that happened. Tommy would always have something to tell you. He'd tell you and then he'd wheel away, walk away... That was his method. He must have been thinking out what he was going to say... with his hands behind his back - turning away while he thought - he'd know he was going to have you on the spot. His day out too was to go to Cooma every Saturday morning. You would find him round Murphy's corner. He was always there.

KH. Which is Murphy's Corner?

JR. Where Murphy's Department store was. It's now Learmonth's Chemists.

KH. Opposite the Newsagent?

JR. Yes. It used to be Palladis? a fruit shop. That corner, Murphy's Corner was, used to be a great meeting place for all the country people.

KH. And Vince Russell was a good breaker, was he?

JR. Yes, good amateur jockey, good rider, good horseman.

KH. That's right Leo told me something about that. He then became too heavy to be a jockey, or something.

JR. Yes, he kept his amateur licence up for some time. I don't think he ever rode professionally, as a jockey. May have done. He certainly rode a lot of Corinthian races.

KH. And they did these treks for two or three years until the Snowy came, is that what you were saying?

JR. Mmm. I'm not too sure just how long they did them for. The Snowy came in and they packed their surveyors around a lot, for the Army survey, for the Scheme.

KH. The Army survey was before the SMA actually started wasn't it?

JR. Yes. They didn't have any roads in those days so they had to...

KH. Do you remember anything about that?

JR. Not really. Only what I heard, that some Major So-And-So... probably George Bansford(?) might remember his name.

KH. Not Major Clews?

JR. Could have well been. That does ring a bell.

KH. Clewsy with the clattering false teeth - lived down Khancoban way, later on.

JR. I didn't know him. But that name does...

KH. He set up... he was involved in some of the early surveys and I think identified the site of Cabramurra as a township, later on. What is his nick name?

JR. Apparently a fairly hard man - used to keep them on their toes...

KH. Did he? That then resulted in the first topographic map, that survey work by the Army. That was the first decent map with contours on it. Before that they were mainly sketch maps. And then you went across to the Chalet, and some of the other people stayed on there and then you rode back in a day.

- JR.** Yes. We brought the gear back in the day.
- KH.** A day back to Adaminaby, from the Chalet. That's worth noting. (both laugh)
- JR.** It was a long day. I remember that.
- KH.** I'll say, because you took about five or six days to get there.
- JR.** And came back in the day.
- KH.** With the pack horses?
- JR.** Yes, leading our pack horses because they didn't believe in letting them go. You had to lead them, or someone else led them for them.
- KH.** You must have started at six o'clock in the morning.
- JR.** We would have started early, yes.
- KH.** Back a similar way to the way you went?
- JR.** Yes. Pretty well identical I think.
- KH.** Do you remember much of the country being burnt then, and more open?
- JR.** Much more open. Now it is just grevillea type scrub, which you've got a job to track anywhere now. Then it was open country, grasslands more so than woodlands.
- KH.** Mainly kept open through the burning and the grazing do you think?
- JR.** Well I suppose so. It's certainly gone from grasslands now. The way trees are coming down the hillsides now, it will soon be woodlands.
- KH.** Yeah. Did they have wax matches then, in those days? You know you hear stories of them flicking a match off every so often, on the last day in autumn, or when they were into burning off. How did they do it? Do you remember?
- JR.** Yeah. I suppose you would have had wax matches if you could get them but they were very difficult to get - or any sorts of matches.
- KH.** Because wax matches burnt longer, didn't they? You just chucked them and
- JR.** They would burn. I didn't know much about that sort of thing at the time, just what you heard.
- KH.** Did the fires ever get away?

- JR.** I don't think so. Well there was too much vested interests. You wouldn't dream of lighting fires unless it was wet, mustering time, or early springtime. They didn't have any summer fires like you do now.
- KH.** Well they'd keep the growth down all the time, with regular burning.
- JR.** Plus the fires didn't get going. There were too many fellows around. There was something like a thousand blocks through the mountains and each block would have a man, or each four or five blocks would have a man somewhere around. If you've got a lot of interest in your stock up there, you couldn't afford to chance them getting burnt.
- KH.** Had they brought in salt blocks by the time you were around, to keep the stock in certain areas?
- JR.** Yes, had a lot of fences also, but they still salted them to keep them... and, I think, to help them muster.
- KH.** Were you involved in any of the musters?
- JR.** Oh yes. Holiday time I would always be trying to get to the mountains for a muster.
- KH.** And it wasn't until you were in your twenties that you actually settled down here and set up a place, got that land.
- JR.** Yes. I just leased some land which had been sold to the Authority, and they would lease it back until it went under water or part of it went under water.
- KH.** And what happened after that? What did you...
- JR.** I kept on leasing a bit more and a bit more around the place. And in the end I leased this property here with an option to buy it. Wool kicked up a bit better in the seventies and I got enough money to get a deposit together.
- KH.** In the seventies...
- JR.** Yes '73 it was.
- KH.** That recent. So you were knocking around for quite a while.
- JR.** Oh yes.
- KH.** So you were pretty poor in a way?
- JR.** Oh yes, still poor. (both laugh) I started off when I was 21. My father lent me 500 pounds. So that was all I had to start with. It is a long track when you... you never seem to get in front of it...so I used to go out shearing...

KH. So you did some of that too, did you?

JR. ...any other job that was going, in order to try and get some spending money.

KH. Were you involved in the building of any of the huts?

JR. No.

KH. I suppose they were all there by the time you came. Do you remember ...? No it would have been before... Do you remember anything about the history of Broken Dam? Has it always been there?

JR. Yes. We repaired it.

KH. You repaired it. But it has always been there since you've known it?

JR. Yes. It had an awful lift to starboard. We went out there and put some big posts in, once, to stop it from going any further.

KH. Did you do any work on any of the other huts?

JR. Some maintenance on them... but not much though.

KH. What about any other long rides? Any other long droving trips that you were involved in?

JR. As a boy again, my grandfather once took cattle across to the Upper Murray, from Wattledale to Greg Greg.

KH. What was the route you took?

JR. We went via the Boobee, Farm Ridge, Round Mountain, down by Toolong...

KH. Oh yeah...down Toolong Spur.

JR. Down the Yellowboy. Came out at Greg Greg. I think I ate too many of Mrs Pierce's cherries and got sick and they had to send me home in a car. I wasn't very popular.

KH. Send you home in a car? How old were you then, when that happened?

JR. Either the year before, or two years before this other trip. Somewhere about that time.

KH. About '45, '46. And who was that with again?

JR. With my grandfather, Mick Russell.

KH. Was there anyone else on that trip?

JR. No, we took them ourselves.

KH. Just the two of you?

JR. Yeah.

KH. You came home in the car. What happened to him?

JR. He had to ride back by himself.

KH. And was it cattle or sheep?

JR. Cattle.

KH. And he spent a lot of time in the mountains?

JR. Well he was born here, and that was his life, the mountains.

KH. What are the outstanding things you remember about him? Was he a yarn teller or anything?

JR. Oh yes. He wrote a lot of tales, a lot of poetry which he had passed on to him, or passed down to him from other people. Very keen on racing. He had a great memory for horses and horses names. He could reel off the pedigree of many horses.

KH. He would have been mates with one-arm Willy Wheeler, would he?

JR. Yes.

KH. Would he have been that sort of vintage?

JR. Yes, I feel so. Particularly with his contacts, when they took the cattle across there, they'd have a week there and things like that.

KH. Apparently Wheeler used to come over this way too.

JR. Yes, I think he came and bought cattle, and the Pierces, the Greg Greg Pierces...

KH. John Pierce?

JR. Johnny Pierce, yes.

KH. He was apparently involved in clearing the route up Hannel's Spur. Do you remember that, at all? John or one of the Pierces. You know the Hannel's spur route down to Geehi?

JR. Yes.

KH. He was also involved in the Grey Mare Mine when the Bells went out there in the '30s, John Pierce.

JR. Yes Mrs Johnny Pierce... Alan Finlay was the manager, when we took these cattle over. He was the manager of Greg Greg at that time. Greg Greg being a fairly prominent station right on the river. Since been split up I think. Barney Finn was somewhere about at that time.

KH. Who's Barney Finn? I haven't heard about him.

JR. He was in that area...a great stockman...he looked after a lot of the cattle on the fifteen mile... on the Round Mountain side, for the O'Keefes. O'Keefe's hut at the Boogong. Who would Barney be with? The Mitchells. I'd only be guessing. They had all that Tumut River country. From the Round Mountain, right down to what is now Happy Jack's township or Junction Shaft, in there. They ran a lot of cattle, at Fifteen Mile, Emu Plain, in that area.

KH. Oh, yeah. That's Black Jack. Round Mountain, Toolong Spur, down into the Tumut towards Happy Jacks.

JR. He was reputed to be able to call the cattle out. He'd give them salt during the summer and call them and salt them. And when they wanted them they'd call them and they'd come bellowing out of that country and draw themselves out.

KH. They knew he had salt.

JR. That is how he broke them in, to call. It was very rough country.

KH. Right. It is very gorgy down there. I mean it is really rugged down there.

JR. The cattle would start to bellow and they would draw each other out.

KH. Apparently they used to have two musters. They'd have a big one...

JR. The first muster, you'd exchange stragglers. You gave your neighbours' back if you could. It was a sort of unwritten law...the next muster you would take what you got. You'd take them home and bring them back the next year. It seemed to work well. Everyone trusted everyone.

KH. So that even if you got someone else's for a while, the next year they could go back to their original owner.

JR. Yes. Say around Happy Jacks, the Monaro cattle, these runs would go to about the Tumut River and the Upper Murray came to the Tumut River the other side. They would get mixed up. After your muster you'd meet and you'd exchange stragglers, the first muster. Then the straggler muster, they used to call it, you'd take them home and you'd look after them for the winter and bring them back in the spring.

KH. Was there any animosity between the Murray people and the...

JR. I don't think so. I only know this side...they seemed to speak well of them.

KH. While I think of it. Do you remember any hermits around this way? In the '40s and '50s? Any people...there have been various...not necessarily hermit totally, but solitary types, who had a bit of a shack in the hills and would come out every so often and get a bit of tucker and go back...People like Fred Bernhardt to some extent. In days gone by, some of them used to be miners... Like Charlie Carter, for instance down at the Tin Mines. I know a lot about him. Were there any people like that out this way?

JR. Not so much. Not at that time. Here in later years there was a fella called Ted Hands. He sort of came around, used to trap a few rabbits and lived very rough in the Long Plain area. He wouldn't venture out very much. He was caught up there in the big snow of '65, '64. I think he had it fairly rough then. He was at the old Cooinbil House. Noone knew where he was...Until they put the dozer through to try and get the cattle out, they found him. He was saying that he was out of food and he was so weak and he was trying to catch a kangaroo. They'd come down to the sheep yards at night and he'd get out, but before he could get to them the foxes would have them eaten, they were also so hungry. He had his old horse in the back of the hut with him.

KH. So, it wouldn't be attacked by the foxes?

JR. A bit of shelter for him. Had a lot of snow, he'd just scratch a bit of grass out for him - kept him alive.

KH. This is what is now known as Long Plain Hut?

JR. I get confused. What is known as Long Plain hut now used to be called Col Ibbots on's hut. We always call Long Plain hut Cooinbil house. It is now Cooinbil.

KH. Right. Yeah. Further down the plain. I know it. That is the one he stayed at.

JR. Mmm.

KH. He used to have a big building out the back too.

JR. Yes. The old kitchen part, the old slab part. That is where he had his horse apparently. He was in the other hut.

KH. And what happened to him?

JR. They took him down around Tumut. He wasn't such an old man either. He always just looked such an old man. I think he is down round Melbourne somewhere now, they took him down there.

KH. Oh, he's still alive?

JR. Mmm.

KH. How did he get up here in the first place?

JR. He came driving a horse and sulky and just hung around.

KH. Down in the Goobragandra, there was a fellow called Venables. Some people called him Plonky.

JR. Yes. Plonky's hut. Neville would know a lot more about that. Neville Clark. I don't know that area very well at all.

KH. He was a sort of a solitary type, you know, a hermit.

JR. Yeah. I don't think there were many round this area like that. Some might go out and stay up to a few weeks, but they would be there for too long..

KH. There must have been still quite a lot of rabbiting in the '50s, before myxomatosis took effect and so on.

JR. Oh, yes, I think so. It was a big industry. Rabbit skins were making about a pound a pound in the old days...

KH. A pound to a pound of fur, of hide?

JR. Yes. Everyone was out catching rabbits at that time. I know my father used to come up here holidaying and rabbiting. It was a big deal to come rabbiting.

KH. Did you do any rabbiting? With ferrets?

JR. Oh yes. We'd set a few traps...mainly trapping. Ferrets weren't very popular.

KH. They take a bit of looking after, don't they?

JR. A lot of fellows made a lot of money in the mountains, rabbiting. Amos Kennedy who lived next door here, he was saying that he was so busy rabbiting that he employed chaps to peg his skins out for him, and keep the camp going. They were catching a hundred rabbits a night and the likes and at that time I suppose that wages would have been about seven or eight pounds a week. If you were catching a hundred rabbits a night, say they were going six to the pound, at a pound a pound they were getting 12 or 15 pounds a night, you...

KH. The rabbit plague was a godsend, in that case.

JR. Well, I remember Roslyn's mother saying that they had a rabbiters' ball down here at Meroo.

KH. Did they?

JR. Someone raised three cheers for the fellow who let the rabbit go. He's been cursed a lot since. That is another big problem with the Park now, with the rabbits.

KH. Yes, I was going to say that you could employ someone just round Kiandra.

JR. It's not right. They should be doing more towards eliminating it. Myxomatosis is controlling them at this stage, but it is only a control measure. If it fails and they haven't done something...They're not noticed so much with the long grass and that about, but there are still areas where there are very high population of rabbits.

KH. They're very bad on the Gungahlin. Davey's hut and some of those places... swarming with them.

JR. They do untold damage too to the mountain country. Even if they don't breed early and late, they still breed up and...They can survive in the snow.

KH. To go back to your ride. So you did that ride with Mick Russell, again, as a boy. What about after that? Did you... Are there any other...?

JR. Only when we started this tourist operation ourselves...we've had some rather big rides.

KH. What are some of the biggest rides with customers?

JR. Well, we did a big ride going into the wilderness area, into the south without vehicle support.

KH. Without vehicle support?

JR. Yes. Not knowing a lot ourselves at the time. I forget... we had some people from Melbourne. He was a doctor in Melbourne. I think he was the one that did a lot of work on the breathalyser or the main instigator of the work on the breathalyser. And he for some reason did want to do it. He had his sister and his sister-in-law. They were both well in their sixties, if not more. and they weren't so keen. But they were prepared that if he wanted to do it, they would do it. They came here for a week before...wanting to have a little bit of riding experience first. He wasn't getting on too bad, but not too well... He would say "Do you think I can do it?" I didn't have the heart to say "Well I don't think you should." Then he would say "You think I can't do it, don't you?" And I would say "Well I don't think so, but maybe you will be able to do it." In the end away we go...There were 28 of us altogether...

KH. 28? God!

JR. We went for seven days, packing everything. Before we went he said... he had a brother in Canberra..."I can't write a prescription here, I'll get my brother to write a prescription for some drugs. I won't need them, but somebody else might need it, so I'd like to make sure we have these things." So he did, and he picked up this little

black bag of goodies. I don't know what was in it. But he must have had a lot, and he guarded it like a cat watching a mouse. And every time we unpacked the horse, there'd be Bob's black bag, and he'd look after it and take it away...and look after it. But to cut a long story short, the only chap that did fall off was Bob. One day his horse got caught in a bit of wire, and jumped and he fell off. I said to Bob "Do you want your bag, Bob?" He said "Oh no, I'm a great believer in self healing". After packing this bag for all that way.

KH. Maybe it was like his security blanket.

JR. Yeah. He must have felt better for having it. He'd always say: "Not that I'll need it, but somebody else might need it." He'd make that point every time you mentioned his... They were both quite... they said they were teetotallers. I said "Would you like to take some alcohol?" They said "No, we won't be needing any, we're teetotallers." I think about the third night out, she came up to Roslyn and said "Have you got a beer?" (both laugh) We were down into the Doubtful River and we were trying to make up our mind, would we camp for that night or would we go on further? Had a bottle of rum, and took the cap off, and giving everyone a little nip out of the cap, and every time I turned around, here is Bob behind me wanting another one.

KH. When you get out in the mountains...

JR. ...got him off the straight and narrow.

KH. What was the turning point on that trip? Where did you turn around and start coming back?

JR. Oh, we went to Grey Mare.

KH. Did you go to Pretty Plain?

JR. No, we didn't go down that far. But we came back by ^{Cesjacks?} Cec Jackson's...we did a round trip.

KH. So you did a circumnavigation of Jargungal.

JR. Mmm. Not that knowing...

KH. Is that the trip where some of your horses bolted in the night?

JR. No, that was another one.

KH. I heard about that one from Carolyn Stewart. David Williams? They are friends of mine in Canberra.

JR. Oh, yes. They got away. We were out nearly all night looking for the things.

KH. Does that happen very often?

JR. No. Once again, we have learnt a bit more since. I had them nearly all hobbled that night. They got down in front of the Grey Mare... we had camped away from the hut, thinking we were on the track we came in on, keeping them back. But they got down and onto the fire trail. Just on dark we could hear them going, and we tried to short cut them to pick them up...we didn't know the country that well, and I was a ridge wrong... and they got in there, into Smith's Lookout, or over that way...

KH. Over towards Bogong Swamp.

JR. No. South of there...

KH. Oh, Rytie's Parlour?

JR. No, Rytie's Parlour is on the...is it Smith's?... some lookout...

KH. Oh, towards Jargungal?

JR. Yes. I missed them in there somewhere. Anyway, I was about to say that "We'll have to camp the night ourselves..." - it was pitch black. We went a bit further and we came onto the track and we came on to the horses and got them back. The mistake was that some were hobbled and some weren't. I took pity on some and thought - they won't go away. But they led the ones in the hobbles.

KH. They're clever aren't they?

JR. Once they get going, and see red, they just go, go, go.

KH. They would have gone all the way home?

JR. They don't see any reason... always towards home... a natural barrier might have stopped them somewhere for a while. One or two might be OK, they might just poke along quietly. But once you get any number... particularly with a noise... the noise of the hobbles... it starts that rhythm going...

KH. This is when they are hobbled across, not from front to back...

JR. We have some hobbled that way also but some of the rogues that you know go... But since then I usually try to hook up some sort of an electric fence or some restraining... or camp in an area where they are in a natural barrier. That helps a lot.

KH. At the dinner table you were talking about taking more sheep across the mountains? You bought some sheep?

JR. Yes, we bought some sheep, about four years ago. We took a punt on some sheep. The season turned sour. I decided to take them over the other side of the mountain...it was pretty good over there.

KH. Where did you get them?

JR. We bought them down in Dedjick, in the first place.

KH. Dedjick? Where's that?

JR. Down in Victoria...down below Bombala. And we brought them up here, and held them here until May.

KH. Did you bring them overland from Dedjick?

JR. Mmm. They were much travelled sheep by the time we got them out to the other side of Wagga.

KH. Where do you go? Do you go the Cann River Highway..?

JR. Down below Delegate. Dellickora.

KH. Where do you cross the Snowy? I mean, does it go that far?

JR. No, not quite on the Snowy.

KH. So you come Delegate, and you come stock routes.

JR. Yes. Up by Bombala. And turn in by Dalgety, in that way, Berridale, over here.

KH. Delegate, then Dalgety...

JR. ...to Berridale, then across the back here to Adaminaby...

KH. ...then you had them here for a while.

JR. Had them here for a while... out on some agistment out on some country on the Lake... Went from there, from here up to Providence, and Kiandra... we went along the highway to Rules Point. From Rules Point, up to Broken Cart... that way...

KH. Broken Cart track...

JR. Yeah. Argalong...

KH. Oh, Argalong there? You almost hit the pine plantations?

JR. Yes. Along the edge of them we were.

KH. And you reckon that was one of the last mobs through?

JR. It was the last mob of sheep to go right through.

KH. That was quite a long trek, for four years ago, wasn't it, for overland? Who was on that?

JR. Neville Clark, Mike Cattermole myself.

KH. Mike Cattermole?

JR. An English chap from here who had some sheep of his own in the mob too. We had a freelance journalist who went with us on that trip too - selling his story to... it was a publication that...I'm trying to think what it was...

KH. A weekly?

JR. It was a weekly from here. He was trying to sell it overseas... I don't know how he got on.

KH. There's the National Times.

JR. No. Not the National Times.

KH. There's the weekend magazine sections in most of the papers.

JR. It was more of a periodical.

KH. There is People and Pix and all the women's magazines...

JR. No...

KH. Anyhow, you had sheep. How many sheep did you have?

JR. We had a bit over three thousand.

KH. A bit over three thousand? Most of the way? Where did you end up?...after Argalong and over Tumut?

JR. We went to Wagga and from Wagga towards Coolamon. Where did we end up? A little place out there.

KH. It is getting into pretty flat country.

JR. Yes, we were well out.

KH. Coolamon... the railway goes there doesn't it?

JR. Yes.

KH. It's towards Narranderra.

JR. It's on the Narranderra road. We didn't quite get that far. I got them on agistment down there and sold them in the end.

KH. That's quite a trek. A modern day...No wonder you had a journalist along. What about this mailbag ride? You were involved in the organising of that?

JR. Mmm. Yes. That was a long ride also. Yes. It was Sally Hill contacted me regarding organising it to go through the Park to Jindabyne. They didn't want to go around the road. They wanted to go across country. So I had to... We couldn't get vehicles in, so we decided to do it in the one day. For one trip... if we all wanted to go together. so we left Providence one morning at about eight o'clock. 28 of us, I think there were, with this bag of gold. Not knowing how far it was. I'd been near about half the distance, pretty well, but didn't know what happened from then on. I rang up a couple and they said that you won't be able to get through here... So I thought we'd go down through Kalkite and... where Jindabyne Lake is now. They said oh no you can't get through there. We had to go right up to ... almost to Island Bend, and down the other side of the Snowy River and out at the pumping station.

KH. To Munyang?

JR. No, the Jindabyne pumping station.

KH. Oh yes, you come down across the Gungarlin, down low...? Snowy Abbotts... You would have crossed the Gungarlin.

JR. No we crossed it on Snowy Plain, but then had to go sort of north west, up almost to Island Bend... and down the other side of the Snowy. Had we been able to go straight through where the water is and down through Kalkite, across it would have been not too bad. But we didn't arrive at the Jindabyne saleyards where we had to meet the Victorian team until about half past eleven that night. It was a long, long way.

KH. They were all going to then ride on into the night.

JR. Yes, they kept on going.

KH. So it was a team sort of thing.

JR. Mmm. They were running in a relay... The rest had to run in a relay type thing... a horse would do six or eight or ten miles... and go out in a float... you'd do your distance and put your horse in a float and then someone else would carry on... that wasn't so bad, you could make good time.

KH. So from Jindabyne on, it was a smaller team again.

JR. Yes. It was just a relay - one or two, or sometimes one would hop out and trot their ten miles and someone else would take over.

KH. What was the whole idea of the thing?

JR. They ran this from Cape York through to Melbourne. It was a sealed bag - these big bags, on the back of the horse, having gold in them... Everyone was supposed to

get a medallion - which we all got, for bearing some of the gold. And they had letters post stamped, we were carrying...

KH. So it was mainly a Post Office thing was it?

JR. Well, I think it was to do with setting up a National trail all the way. There is a horseriding trail through from... all the way through... from Cape York to Melbourne. It was to do with that. I don't know whether that was...

KH. So you had a long day. That was one of your longest days in the saddle, was it?

JR. Yes, I remember Brendan had just completed an endurance ride and he thought it was about three endurance rides. He did the 78 miles here in six hours and twenty five minutes, but he thought that was nothing to this mailbag ride. I remember being up there at Brook's hut, looking at the map trying to work out what we were going to do and Damien... he was only a little fellow... he came out the door and he says "we've been that far, and we've got that far to go..."

KH. What did you do after - you went via Cesjacks I suppose.

JR. No we went down Snowy Plain.

KH. Oh, down the Gungarlin?

JR. Yeah, down the Gungarlin.

KH. I'm with you. That would be open country.

JR. Yes, reasonably open country. That was OK - it was from there on... once we went past the Shooting Grounds up on one of these tracks... where we had to cross the Snowy.

KH. Did you cross the Snowy on a bridge?

JR. There was a bridge, where we went through. A big bridge there.

KH. That was Snowy Abbott's there.

JR. Must have been a camp there.

KH. Below Island Bend.

JR. That's right, below Island Bend. And then there's a

KH. There's a track that leads around and comes out near Waste Point. Where the rangers live.

JR. Yeah, that's it. We got down to the pumping station, the gates were locked. I think it was George Barry was working about then and he got the key for us. Got us out, otherwise we might still be in there.

KH. So that was the National Mailbag Ride. Well I won't bother to go into all the people who were on it. I won't list 28 people in my book, I don't think. Who were the main organisers of that bit? You and

JR. Sally Hill, I suppose...

KH. Did she ride it too?

JR. No.

KH. No the bit here. Who...?

JR. Who would be?... Some from Cooma came. Mal Lester from Cooma, and Bob Maguire. Kylie Plaice was here and her mother. We sort of made a day out of it. We thought...

KH. A day and a night, by the sound of it...

JR. They also sent an organiser that was here, I forget what his name was... He was around at lunchtime... Neville, he went... A lot of kids and things. It was one of these things, you were probably glad you did it, but at the time you were wondering why.

KH. Do you remember Bung Harris at all?

JR. I did meet him, but not to say I remember him, no.

KH. What is he known for?

JR. Oh, he was just sort of a legend in his own time, droving and hard living sort of fellow - a single man..

KH. All the drovers were single, weren't they - all the sort of stockmen up here?

JR. Yes, well I think it was a nomadic type life. Bung himself, I think he had a lot of cattle himself. He was a great stockman, a great horseman, a great stockman.

KH. Did he recite poetry?

JR. Well I don't know much about him. Neville would know a lot about him. He drove with him and...

KH. What was the poetry you were reciting to me before? Who recited that? Was that Mick Russell?

JR. Yes, Mick Russell was always reciting poems.

KH. Can you remember a few of the lines?

JR. The only one I can remember is the "Yan Yan Stakes", saying where these chaps were working round the mountains, miners and stockman, I suppose the attraction of a pretty girl was on their mind, and Mary Yan, living at Kiandra - they had christened her the Asiatic belle. I don't know who wrote the poem, but it is to do with how they all sought to win the affections of the Asiatic belle. I know how it starts off:

John Thomas says to Mrs Ball
We'll hold a dance in the Kiandra hall.
And invite the Chinese big and small...

and it goes on:

Now Mary Yan was one of the crew,
And she swung in the centre with Jimmy AhDoo.

and it goes on and on about how:

The Careys and the Reeces
Had the light weight shot to pieces

and someone had no show:

Because Mick Shanley cared to show.

But the names were factual, it is the...

And the man from Pigeon Square

Was well into Jim Low swear.

I don't know how well it was taken by Mary Yan.

KH. And Mary Yan, was she a sister to Tom and Jim Yan?

JR. Oh, it might have been before then - a generation before.

KH. That would be sort of around the turn of the century stuff.

JR. Yes. I feel so. Probably their aunty or something.

KH. What was it you were saying? Tom Yan was the brother of Les and Jink...

JR. Jink and Artie.

KH. And were there any girls in that lot?

JR. No doubt there would have been, I don't know.

KH. I think they were a quarter Chinese. I interviewed Tom Yan, he looked like

JR. Did he..?

KH. My records... shopkeeper at Kiandra, father of them being George Yan. Whether there were two strands of the family, I don't know, there may have been. There were certainly photographs around the turn of the century, people on the verandah of the old hotel in Kiandra, or one of the hotels... There is a girl there who

looks very Chinese. If not full Chinese, she is half Chinese... short and typical... she may be the Asiatic belle. You don't remember any more?

JR. No, I'm so disgusted that I didn't get it all. Leo knew a lot of it. He could go on and on...

KH. That would be nice to get some more of that one. Is Bill Patrick mentioned in that poem? No, he would be beyond that. He wouldn't be mentioned in that poem, because he is after that...or the Dorans?...what about the Dorans? or the Pattinsons? are they mentioned in the poem?

JR. No, I think they would have been after also... the Pattinsons and the Patricks.

KH. Hughes?

JR. Well Mick Shanley was in it and I think the man from Pigeon Square would have been one of the Linleys on the Gundagai side. So it might have been a bit later vintage.

KH. Yes, a bit of a mixed bag... Certainly it sounds like the 1920s. See there was another poem which I used in the Huts Book which was called *Riders of the Range* and it goes through all the stockman that this particular lady met at the different huts as she went through the mountains, which is another one of the same sort of style, the same theme. Are there any other snippets of poetry that you can...? Probably a bit hard on the spur of the moment...

JR. My grandfather was of the opinion that if you had heard something once, then you should know it... but I wasn't that alert, as he was. He'd recite them and recite them.

KH. Bung Harris in later life, lived at Coolamine, for a while, didn't he?

JR. Yeah, then he went down to Brindabella. And he died down at Brindabella. You used to hear a lot of stories about Bung.

KH. What sort of stories?

JR. Oh, mainly about hard riding, hard living,...

KH. Did he drink too?

JR. Yes he was known to have a drop, yes. And Neville has some of his old pack saddles, his old pack bags... with a special pocket for the rum in it. I heard a story about the publican at Tumbarumba when he was going on a trip, apparently, Bung went in and ordered 28 half bottles of rum. And the Publican says..."Mr Harris, it is much cheaper to buy it by the full bottle, it would save you a fair bit." and he said "But you don't know how clumsy my pack horses are." He thought he'd cover his bets a bit.

KH. Well distributed in other words. Well that ride that I went on with Staceys. That was the first thing that happened. The pack horse that was carrying the whisky, bobbed and rolled. And that was the end of at least one whisky bottle.

JR. We always put ours on the safe, quiet horses. We don't take risks like that... we put the food, the non-essentials on the wild horses.

KH. ...or the tents, or the sleeping bags or something. Yes, I've heard a lot about Bung Harris. Oh yes, there was another guy... Radium, the Radium King. Tom Taylor talks about him... a guy who used to be on to radium everywhere. Does that ring any bells?

JR. No.

KH. What about Arthur Cochran ?

JR. Once again, not to know him. I have heard of him.

KH. When I visited the Maxwells, they had a diary of his. He kept a diary of a trek, he brought some stock down from north of Dubbo. All the way through to Yarrak. And then one year all the way through to Bairnsdale. There was a ride... I've got to get more on some of these...But there was certainly one that Audrey was on in '46 or something like that where they went down the Barry Way and through to Victoria.

JR. Droving was the order of the day in those days. It was the lifeline of this area. You were cut off if you had most of your cattle breeding area... You had to sell to the fattening area...so if you were to get any money in, you had to get them there. I don't know how they... I think most of the sales were made on delivery - deliver them.

KH. The ones I read about... I think the drovers were just employed to bring them from one property to another. Although the Cochrans wouldn't have done that, no...they would have brought them.

JR. It would be someone who would probably have the contract as well, he might have his own in the mob. I think that the Russells, probably his bit of bonus to take them over. Donald Cochran, I used to hear a lot about him.

KH. Donald Cochran - was he a brother of Arthur? or a relative?

JR. A relative, probably a brother.

KH. There were a lot of them too.

JR. Yes, a lot of them.

KH. Donald Cochran. What did you hear about him?

JR. Oh. I remember grandfather saying once...going on one of these rides with the cattle and he said "Oh I'll give you a hand...I'll give you a start" or something, meaning

he thought he'd just give him a day or so and he ended way up the other side of Happy Jacks, still going...weeks after. Donald was like that - he would go and stay anywhere and do anything, before he realised he had to go back. Apparently in later years he used to be a bit forgetful. Neville knows more about it when they were out there brumby running and things. They left Donald and, it wouldn't have been Arthur, it would have been someone else, to guard the wing. Anyway they were away a long time and the runners came back and Donald had got cold and had lit a fire in the gate of the yard, and they were there asleep. They weren't very popular, I imagine.

KH. Is Neville still up?

JR. I think he is. I'll go and... He can tell you more about those Yaouk.
..... on the Yaouk.. in particular that big mob of cattle that were snowed in.

KH. Well you tell me what you know about it.

JR. Oh... only sort of heard of them being snowed in...

KH. ...at Coolamine.

JR. When that big fall of snow came in '64.

KH. That was a big year, a big skiing year.

JR. It came overnight, on the 14, 12 July. It caught the cattle right on Coolamine. And they couldn't get over Fiery Range, which was the problem. Les Yan was telling me that they used to go out every morning and broke a track out, to try to get them to go, but by the time they got back, they couldn't get going that day, it would snow again and fill the tracks in. And so the next day it meant starting again.

KH. Meanwhile the snow is getting deeper and deeper.

JR. Mmm. Deeper and deeper. I don't know how the word got out, or whether anyone got in, but they did feed the cattle with the aircraft. The Army and the Air Force did some sort of operations deal for them and fed... And John Dowling from Brindabella, he eventually got the road open with a bulldozer. He was telling me that he couldn't do it, just to go through and open it, because he couldn't do it in a day. The same thing happened to him. He didn't have a radio and he wasn't going to stay out there without a radio. So he'd have to come back with his dozer. So the next morning, he'd have the same job again. He'd have to start and go again. To get up over the Main Range. They could get up in a four wheel drive within a few miles, but then it was a dozer job.

KH. Because they wanted to get them out Tumut way.

JR. Yes. Any way, they were trying to get them out. But in the end they opened the road down Long Plain and got them out that way. The cattle came out surprisingly good. I think they had six weeks in there.

KH. Is that right? Who was on that?

JR. Les Yan was the man in charge. And Jack Simms...

KH. This is the Jack Simms that I should go and interview down in Tumut?

JR. Mmm. And Neville said he worked for Linleys and they got out just before it happened. And I think the day they got the cattle out, Jack Linley and all up from Tumut, they gathered them all up the Saturday night and they were all coming up to Rules Point to try and ride in from there and break a track out, the idea being that if you had enough strong horses, you could break a track for the cattle to follow. They got up there and they just had them out, or were just getting them out...

KH. Yes, one of the photos has got Noel Sefton on it... so that must have happened later on. Well the Coolamine country is not quite so high, is it? The snow mightn't have been...

JR. Well, it wouldn't have been quite so high. I remember that year around Kiandra, you couldn't see any fences.

KH. It was certainly a big year in the resorts. Stories of cars being totally flattened with the weight of the snow on them.

JR. Well, the same... That was the year the DMR got their first lot of snow ploughs, and they thought they were going to be the ultimate in snow clearing. But by the time the operators put the white posts through them a few times... And in the end they had to put dynamite in to blow some of the cuttings... from going in and compacting it. It had compacted up so tight, they couldn't shift it at all, not even with their D8s.

KH. It'd be almost a pick and shovel job.

JR. So that was a problem, clearing it, they had nowhere to push it.

KH. Right. Of course. So, you need blowers. You've got to have blowers, to blow it up high and away...

JR. They couldn't keep the blowers operating, so then they started to try and push it with the ploughs. It was compacted into snowballs.

KH. So if they had been any later with their cattle, that would have been it.

JR. Well I suppose they might not have started if they had not been there. They would have taken some other route I suppose.

KH. I would have thought it would have been better to go back out to Yaouk.

JR. Probably the same problem. You've got to go up over, back up over Currango or up over Morgan which probably would have been harder going. And nothing to go to. From where they were... a few miles up over Fiery Range, they probably would have

been right. But they just couldn't get that ... plus snowing every day, you just couldn't do it.

KH. Whose cattle were they?

JR. They were mainly Cochran's, Yaouk cattle.

KH. They were being sold to someone?

JR. No, every year they'd take them away for agistment or just go droving with them. Sell their calves and get the cows on agistment. Down around ..?...a lot too. Murdochs down that way.

KH. For the winter months. And then they'd come back.

JR. Yes. They'd come back in the spring.

KH. So it was a sort of reverse. Normally they brought stock... Oh that's right...

JR. Yes it was reverse, yeah. Because at that time Coolamine was owned by someone from Boolagil and they used to bring stock up to Coolamine every summer.

KH. From Boolagil. That's a long way. Was that over land.

JR. They'd walk them up. Yes.

KH. Cattle? Sheep.

JR. Sheep. They'd bring sheep up.

KH. Boolagil is way out in the Hay Plain isn't it?

JR. Yes. "Hay, Hell and Boolagil" (both laugh)

KH. We'd better finish soon, it is 10 to 11.

JR. Riding the mountains seems to becoming a more popular thing just the last two or three years. A lot more... Whether we are getting better known... It takes a long time to get yourself established in these sort of things. Unless you have untold resources to advertise here, there and everywhere. We have had incredible inquiries this year. We have had people from Western Australia, from Darwin, from South Australia.

KH. Maybe it's *The Man From Snowy River* film.

JR. I think a bit of that.

KH. Stir a bit of nostalgia, and..

JR. Plus I think people are realising that you can go higher to beat the heat. If you go to the coast it is hot and sticky. If you get up here, it is a beautiful summer climate.

KH. Thredbo has become very much more popular in the last few years in the summertime.

JR. No mosquitoes, no humidity. A lot of my information is hearsay.

KH. Yes, I know. But in some cases, that is all I've got.

JR. You think you remember until someone asks you the question. Then you think, what was that?

KH. So I've got some of your long rides down. I've got the one you did with... across to the Chalet. And then the one you did with Mick Russell... They were both as a boy. And then I've got bits and pieces from the commercial trip you did, Grey Mare and round there. And the big lime(?) droving trip, with the sheep. Well that's worth noting. They're good, that's good. There was one of those... Oh you probably wouldn't know much about that one... There was one down the lower Snowy through to Victoria and there were quite a few women on it and it was quite unusual. Most of the trips that you would have been on, were mostly men, weren't they? And the women stayed at home.

JR. Mmm. See Warren Webb drives his cattle backwards and forwards every year. He hasn't long gone now, over to Tumut. His wife Hoppy, she goes with him... and the little boy Stuart, he goes along.

KH. Where are they from?

JR. Well they have the country out here at Stuartville which was Pat Minors... you asked me about the Minors, Kevin Minors. They were always at it too. They always used to take cattle away for the winter. Sell their calves down round Wagga and take the cows and try and find agistment or drove them. And Warren does it nearly every year. He often ends up out round Hay with his cattle.

KH. They got a Landrover or some sort of caravan?

JR. Yes, caravan, four wheel drive. His television... I suppose he's going to be hampered a bit when Stuart has to go to school next year.

KH. This is only a young couple, is it?

JR. Yeah.

KH. And do they pay all these fees to the National Park, to get through it?

JR. Yes. The same thing. It is a bit of a thorn in everyone's side. The Park's are reasonably understanding if things are OK. But they are not providing you with any holding paddocks or anything like that. As yet... soon are... it makes it very difficult for

anyone droving. You are up all night with the things. You don't know whether you are going to be there in the morning, or gone.

KH. Because you've got no fences, any more.

JR. No fences. And you can't be counting them all the time. If you are short... you are not too sure where they are short. It certainly doesn't encourage... But there is still a stock route still gazetted through it...

KH. Yes I notice... in the Plan of Management... there's two... one over to the Murray way... and one over here.

JR. They say it is not a stock route... it is a route for travelling stock. As distinct from Pastures Protection travelling routes which are stock routes. They have a different scale of charges.

KH. There are still travelling stock reserves throughout the country and in the National Park, aren't there?.

JR. Oh yes. Apparently they are going to become now travelling stock and public recreation reserves. It is quite a good move. If anyone is wanting to ride a horse along, or just to camp, or do anything, you can have public ground every few miles apart.

KH. There's one over near Adaminaby, along the highway there.

JR. Yes. There's two or three to the right of Adaminaby, another one just over here... From here to Cooma, there would be eight.

KH. Really? Must camp on them. Do a trip to travelling stock reserves.

JR. We did have a Pony Club camp through here about twelve months ago, they were doing that. I think it is quite good that they are available.

KH. They would often have a dam on them I suppose.

JR. Oh, yes, they would have, feed and water, fenced.

KH. Any memories of bad floods at all? Hard river crossings with stock? We've had snowed in cattle and one of the other things that country people feel, is floods.

JR. Floods. We have often had high creeks coming out of the mountains, with sheep. Had to be careful, because they knew it was time to go home and once you started them, they'd go. They'd go into these flooded creeks with very little persuasion. You'd have to watch them that way.

KH. You'd have to watch something like the Dartmoor and the Tumut, when they are in flood.

JR. So one drover from Cooma taking, I think it was Cooranbong sheep, or Hazeldene sheep up to the mountains, let them run... big strong sheep running along and the leaders balked at the little creek in a dip and the tailers came along and they just levelled it off, like a bridge. Some incredible number were smothered.

KH. Like lemmings. Ants are supposed to do that too. Where was that?

JR. Well one lot was coming over from Cooma towards the Snowy Plain, somewhere up that way. My grandfather spoke of two up here at Hayward Yards and said something the same. They were big mobs of sheep. Thousands in the mob. Big, strong whethers. Once the leaders balk, the others just run over the top of them. Droving is not just getting in behind and hunting them along...

KH. Any involvement with Search and Rescue or bringing out anyone who was hurt?

JR. I haven't been involved with it. Once again, Neville was, when he brought Snowy miners out when they got hurt.

KH. I think that's probably about it. A good time to stop. Thanks very much.