

VICTOR HARBOR ORAL HISTORY PROJECT, 'Beside the Seaside'
Interview with Graham Nottle on 23rd July 2014
Interviewer: Joan Sandford

Hallo Graham.

GN: Hallo Joan.

It's good to talk to you again.

GN: Thank you.

You're a local lad.

GN: Yes I was born in Victor Harbor and lived out here all my life, on this same Section, right here.

Your parents...

GN: They had their farm here.

Your Dad was a farmer.

GN: Yes he was a dairyfarmer and he built two houses up here; he could be called a handyman I suppose.

A dairyman.

GN: Yes, he had a dairy.

I saw the dairy up the hill.

GN: Yes, we built that dairy.

Did you?

GN: Yeah.

How many were in your family?

GN: Two sisters.

You were the only son?

GN: Yes.

What are your earliest memories?

GN: Earliest memories? I suppose when I was a kid, or a lad, (indistinct) in Inman Valley twenty-four dairies back in those days. Twenty-four and now there's only one, that's my earliest memory. That's up the main road; there were twenty-four dairies.

How many cows would each one?

GN: Smaller back in those days. Might have been ten.

Did you have a milking machine?

GN: Often by hand a lot of them, perhaps ten cows I suppose. That's going back a while, I was only a lad. A bit more than a kid I suppose, twelve or thirteen or something.

You started off working on the farm? Where did you go to school?

GN: Inman Valley to start then Victor High School for about ten months.

You didn't stay there long?

GN: No. I couldn't get on at all, no good at all.

You were probably needed at home.

GN: Came home and helped my father build a house up here, up the Inman. Then I helped my father milk the cows as well. Then in the Army for three months at Woodside, National Service.

Was that compulsory?

GN: Yes, you had to register when you reached a certain age.

Everybody did?

GN: All the boys did; had to have a medical of course. I passed that, they caught up in January 1952 I think it was. We were up at Woodside for three months and after that at El Alamein, for another, I think I was up there a fortnight.

That's up there near Whyalla.

GN: Yes.

You probably already knew how to shoot and things like that?

GN: Oh yeah. When we were kids we used to go out night time with a spotlight, a bit of rabbit-shooting at night. Rabbits back in those days, now there's hardly any at all now.

That's probably good.

GN: Yeah, that was a bit of fun; used to walk miles at night time.

Were there 'roos and things?

GN: There's more now than then; a lot around here now, quite a lot.

You'd have to be careful at night.

GN: Oh yes, my word. Mm.

You helped your Dad on the farm and gradually got.

GN: Oh we got bigger; he bought more land, some across the road and this flat down here. It was up the road, called Jagger's, he bought that. We took over in 1971 I think; we bought next door, 213 acres from Allenby Parsons, bought that scrubby hill. All up there's about 460 acres I suppose. We did alright there but son didn't want to milk any more cows so that was it.

I wonder why?

GN: It wasn't much money in those days. No.

It's very constant too isn't it? No weekends off or anything.

GN: That's right. We did it employ a bit, had to a bit. Apart from that it was good open air life; out in all weathers, that part about it.

Makes you tough! You've got to be tough to survive.

GN: You've got to be a bit silly too I think. Not a very popular job these days, milking cows. Oh no.

What about the early days, did you buy a car or a motorbike or how did you get around?

GN: I've had several motorbikes, mainly farm ones. A lot of them farm ones, about six I suppose, all up. Probably been more than that; I've got one out in the shed there now, ride it a bit. We did alright, I think we did alright; we bought several tractors; bought more land after from Parsons over here.

Did you go more out of the dairying and into, when you said you had more tractors?

GN: No, no, they were farm tractors.

Just...

GN: You've got to have one.

You'd need them for hay and so on.

GN: You've got to have one, yeah; hay. Betty came on and she did the job, the wife here. She helped with the cows and so on. I didn't know all the cows' names!

Didn't you?

GN: She did though.

Really?

GN: Yeah. Some of them had numbers and that sort of thing.

Did they just all line up like you see them at the dairies when it's milking time?

GN: You've got to go and get most of them. Some hang back, yeah, especially the young ones.

The milk truck comes along and picks it up?

GN: We first started with cans, tin cans; I had to wash my ten tin cans every day. Then we went to bulk and that was a lot easier.

Did you have to boil up a copper for boiling water?

GN: Oh yeah, do all those things heck yeah. We had a boiler actually, a boiler that used to make steam to make the water hot. Put it in a bucket, turn the tap on, put the steam in and it would soon make the water hot. A Jacko boiler. Coppers were there too, they were there first I think then we went to these boilers. It wasn't a bad life; every night and morning, particular sort of work, same thing every day.

The cows don't take a day off do they?

GN: No, no, unless you send them dry. Some people used to dry them off and give them a spell.

Did they?

GN: Then there was no money coming in.

Your milk supply.

GN: That went to Myponga, Myponga Factory. Not AMSCOL; it was called Myponga Co-operative wasn't it? Yeah.

Is that the building that's still there now in Myponga?

GN: Yeah, a red brick building.

They have a market there now.

GN: Yes they do. It went to there and then went to Dairy Vale, they sold it to Dairy Vale I think. I don't know what's on now, I don't know. I haven't milked cows now for probably ten or fifteen years or more I suppose.

You haven't? No. what about when you were a young lad and your social life. What sort of things did you do?

GN: I didn't do much. I didn't play football much; I wasn't really sport-minded. Did a bit of table tennis at one stage, that's about all I think. I stopped home quite a lot, I rode a push bike then I bought my sister's, she had a little Bantam Besa (BSA). I bought that.

Is that a motorbike?

GN: Yes, a little motorbike. Then I got a car, then I met Betty, here and that's about it I suppose. Then life started.

What sort of car? And then life started! That's lovely. What sort of car was it?

GN: An Austin 40 ute, an Austin. Yeah.

It would have been alright.

GN: It went alright, second-hand. I got that after I came out of the Army. My first car, yeah.

Then your children came along, Betty's talked about your children.

GN: Yeah, three of them. I had two sisters.

What's happened to your sisters now?

GN: They're still going; one's at Tailem Bend and one's in Holden Hill. They're alright. One lost her husband a while ago. Gwenda did.

Something you might be interested in. There used to be a pit sawmill here. I know one; one was at the corner here, corner of Prouse Road. (Name indistinct) said there was one down here but I can't remember that. Do you know what I mean? It had a pit, a hole in the ground, a log on the top, used to have a hole in the ground, a dip in the ground and the log used to be on top, they got it there on skids or logs. One down below with the saw and another chap on the top with the other end of the saw and he would pull it up and down through the log. Pretty hard work.

It would be a pretty big hole?

GN: Yeah, four or five feet I suppose, it wasn't that deep. If you see old houses you'll see the pit saw marks, the timbers were cut straight, not the circular saw but straight cuts in the wood. That would be done with a pit saw, you get some old timber you can see it, not now.

Did they cut the gum here?

GN: Yeah, they did, it'd be mainly red gum beside the cut. It was good timber they used back in those days, it really was.

There were some big old trees around.

GN: Yeah, some down here in this flat here, they'd be very old those red gums. Well actually you can follow the bullock teams from up the high country, find the tracks now in a dip in the ground. Come to John Brow's house, underneath that, then you follow along the creek here in the side of the gully.

Because the wheels?

GN: It'd be the gum logs that were dragged down, scoured the dirt out to do that. And that made a dip in the ground, you can follow it right down, quite a way down, quite plain, yeah. That's what my father told me, where they dragged the logs down.

Do you remember the pit saws yourself?

GN: I remember one, I can't remember the one that was here.

There's Sawpit Road towards Victor isn't there?

GN: Yeah.

Maybe it was up there, somewhere near that.

GN: Maybe one there. Could be several of them now, I don't know. ----- (both speaking.)

Were they cutting wood for the local market or were they exporting it?

GN: Only for local houses I think.

Local building?

GN: I think so. A lot of timber here back in those days.

Was there?

GN: Oh yeah, big logs too.

I suppose these cleared paddocks, were probably all scrub.

GN: They were all scrub, yes. When my father came here, back in '32 I suppose, '34 about that era it was all scrub; wouldn't keep two cows. If you had two cows, one cow died of dry bible.

Died of what?

GN: Dry bible, sand in the stomach.

I've never heard that expression before!

GN: It was all scrub.

What did you call it? Dry bible?

GN: Well they did, I think, that's what they called it, isn't it? I think it was. I think it was too much sand in the stomach.

Did that happen because the feed's too low?

GN: There was not much grass at all, bracken fern and yackas.

They cleared the land.

GN: Yes. It was all done with the axe too, very hard work, my word yes. No chainsaws back in those days. No. My father, he worked, most of them had to work in those days.

Where did he come from before he came here in 1932?

GN: Across where they call Nottle Road where Mullins are, just across the road here, up Martin Road, they had a farm there, his father did then he married one of the Martin girls, their house was just up the road then he bought this scrub block here which is 70 acres.

You Mum was a Martin?

GN: Yes. He bought that and his family across the road, because there's a block there that was Hurtle Martin's, I think that was another seventy acres. Then he bought another block called Jagers, up the road another sixty acres. He bought the flat there by auction from Hurtle Martin, after he died I think and then we came on the scene. We bought from Allenby Parsons and this scrubby hill. Yeah and that's about it. I don't play sport or nothing; I don't mix much, put it that way.

What've you got here? Shearing?

You're allowed to talk, Betty.

GN: Now it won't write. What's that word? Sheepy?

Betty: You were in that.

GN: Sorry.

Oh the Agriculture Bureau?

GN: Agriculture Bureau, Treasurer for some years of that. That doesn't mean much.

Didn't it?

GN: I've been a member of CFS for thirty or more years.

That's going to make a bit of noise. Not to worry. Are you still in the CFS?

GN: No, no, no.

Leave that for the younger fellows?

GN: Yeah. They've got a lot of changes in that now.

Going back to the Agriculture Bureau, was that mainly to share ideas on better farming?

GN: Yeah, yeah. A chap from Adelaide would come and talk on different things sometimes. Yes we'd have a local tour around the place, looking at pastures. Then we'd have a heifer competition.

A heifer competition?

GN: Yeah.

How did they do that?

GN: They gave us different farms would have heifers in their yards and we'd pick our which is the best heifer.

What breed of cattle did you have?

GN: Number of points see.

What breed?

GN: Mainly Friesians.

The black and whites?

GN: Yeah. They're quite popular even now. But apart from that not much at all. Now I've got a motorbike and I ride that mostly, generally one day a week I suppose, yeah.

When you say you ride your motorbike, do you go into town with that?

GN: Into Victor and around the place; I've been to Willunga, down to Meningie twice.

Is it a big bike?

GN: No, 250 Suzuki. Nice day, got to be careful of course at my age but I'm alright.

Everybody needs to be careful though.

GN: Oh yes. Apart from that my life's been. Any ideas?

She's got her lips closed!

GN: I think I've had a pretty good life, never been in trouble, never been in a court case or **nothing** like that. Never had a car accident.

Good, touch wood!

GN: A bit of self-praise there I suppose.

Nothing wrong with that. Looking out of the window at that lovely hill there, you let the cattle just graze in amongst the trees?

GN: No, no, no, they'd ruin it; if you want scrub cleared you just let the cattle in there. They'd eat all those yackas and knock them around.

Just like natural.

GN: They like young trees you know, that's natural scrub, it's been like that forever I suppose.

Wouldn't be much natural scrub around now would there?

GN: Not much, no. No it's true, you've got a bit around the cemetery, that's natural. That got burnt when I was a kid, a fire came through.

It's a nice little cemetery up there, a lovely little one.

GN: It was used the other day, a lady died. If you want the land cleared or the scrub cleared **or thinned out** just send the cattle in there. They are the worst. They love young gum trees, eat them off, the young yackas, they chew the young yackas too.

Do you think they helped clear these paddocks?

GN: Could have back in those days, yeah.

Except for the really big trees I suppose.

GN: There's a lot of stumps too. My father used to cut the trees, he'd ringbark the trees and they'd die. After a while he'd cut them down for firewood and so on I suppose if you were going to bulldoze you'd have to push out all these stumps. Yeah, dozens and dozens of stumps.

What did he do with that?

GN: Burnt them up.

Burnt them?

GN: Yes.

What a shame, all that lovely wood.

GN: There wasn't much demand back in those days. No. Do you want to know what I did with the old Orange Grove Tearooms? The house that was there, built back in the 1850s.

Which house do you mean?

GN: Where the chimney is.

Oh yes across the road here where there's just the chimney standing there. And what was there?

GN: Martins used to own it, well it was (name indistinct) for a start then they sold it to Martins I think, something like that. That was built in about the 1850s. The shed that is still standing that would be a similar age, that old shed.

What did they have there; a tearoom or something?

GN: That was on this side of the road.

Oh.

GN: Mrs Martin had a tearoom there.

Is that where those steps are?

GN: Yes.

That had been well used I suppose?

GN: Quite popular I think back in those days. A chap used to come out with his horse and cart and would bring people out in that for a cup of tea. She had a big hall there, a long hall. She used to have dances out there in her day.

That's on the southern side of the Inman Valley Road?

GN: Yes, it's all gone now because it was full of white ants.

It seems to be looking like going up hill up there; there must have been a flat area.

GN: There's some really old trees there, some lovely old trees.

A pause before beginning recording again.

You were talking about the shed, the shed across the road.

GN: The shed, next to the old house over there, that's been there probably about the same age as the house, I think.

How long ago was that?

GN: 1850s about.

That's very early isn't it?

GN: Yes, that's still standing and there are a lot of big red gum posts in it.

In the shed?

GN: Pit sawn, yeah. I don't know what's underneath but the top of them isn't too bad. Actually I had to alter the roof a while ago, it had a gable roof. The wind got to it, sort of lifted it up so I took it off and made it.

Do you own that block over there?

GN: The family do.

That's good; nice to keep a bit of history, the pit sawn timber and things like that.

GN: That's true; it had a wooden floor in it for a while until the ants got in to that a bit.

So you do get white ants here at times?

GN: Oh yes, yes. Apart from that I don't know what I do. There used to be coaches in there in the olden days. Martins had a horse and jig thing. They had them in there, keeping them in there out of the weather.

That would have been their transport wouldn't it?

GN: Yes.

Do you remember what sort they had?

GN: I didn't see them, it was before my time; back in those days the road was like dirt, the road was. It wasn't bitumenised at all.

No, it would have been a bit dangerous too.

GN: They say it was very rough actually; pot holes, old cart marks through it. I can't remember that.

In your memory you were already in cars were you by the time you remember?

GN: Pretty well.

Not so much the horse and cart times?

GN: No; the flat down there that was in oranges down the hill in Hurtle Martin's day.

You mean the flat on the north side of this house?

GN: Yes, below this shed we were talking about, his packing shed. (indistinct) he had hundreds of orange trees there.

Really?

GN: Then he had two bad frosts, two or three bad frosts straight, and that wiped most of them out

Did it?

GN: That's true, yeah. I don't know when that was, back in the thirties, forties I suppose.

What about apple trees and things like that? They'd grow fairly well here wouldn't they?

GN: There're some peaches there too I think. (indistinct) before my time.

You were just saying it's amazing how things change.

GN: They really have. The whole world has changed really. Planes being shot down.

You have just been saying how things change.

GN: Yeah. Look at what's going on now, the whole world's changing really; there's troubles everywhere. Plane being shot down out of the sky the other day; don't know what it's coming to really.

Even when you think back to when your parents had horses and carts and before that they probably walked a lot or rode a horse or something.

GN: Yeah, rode a horse, walked that's right.

They had little cars then bigger cars.

GN: A different world now, a lot different. No TV in those days either.