

VICTOR HARBOR ORAL HISTORY PROJECT, 'Beside the Seaside'

Interview with Jeff Batty on 1st March 2016

Interviewer: Heather Watkins

Jeff, thank you so much for your willingness to be part of the Oral History of Victor Harbor Project. We appreciate the time you have taken in preparing for this interview and hope it has helped to recall some great memories of your life at Encounter Bay. Firstly, can you tell me a little about yourself.

JB: I grew up in Encounter Bay; in the early stages of the Second World War we moved back to Adelaide when Dad went in to the Army.

OK we'll get on to that later. When were you born?

JB: In 1939.

And were you born at the...?

JB: At the South Coast District Hospital.

Were there others in your family, siblings?

JB: Yes I had an older sister Helen and a younger sister Virginia. She was post-war.

To go a step back further, your parents; when and where were they born?

JB: My father was born in Victor Harbor, just where I don't know; could have been at the home at Encounter Bay near The Bluff. My mother was born in Adelaide.

How did they meet?

JB: They met through the auspices of Alan Grey who was fond of my Mother's cousin and at different times, particularly in the Adelaide Show-time and in the militia, the South Australian Mounted Rifles. They used to have ANZAC Sports Days which involved competition, horseback, various things and those meetings and also when my Mother's cousin Ina Hodge, Ina Sheridan rather, she was working in Adelaide and staying in the house at Richmond. Anyway, Alan Grey brought along my Father on one visit and he met my Mother and it went on from there.

Where were they married?

JB: In Adelaide.

The Batty family obviously has a long history in the area; can you tell me how the Battys came to be in Encounter Bay?

JB: My Great-grandfather came out from England in 1855. He'd bought land off the map in England from the South Australian Company. When he arrived in Adelaide, he went to Melbourne on the boat and came back to Adelaide by another boat I guess at that time. When he arrived in Adelaide and looked up his Section of land, found it was in the reed beds at Fulham. At that time it was in the swamps of the River Torrens. His land was just swamp land. It was quite obvious he'd made a big mistake, trusting the South Australian Company.

He worked around Adelaide for a time as general hand and bullock driver up at Mt Osmond Mines I believe until he got some money together, and I'm not sure, whether the South Australian Company offered him a Section of land out at Waitpinga, which is west of Victor Harbor. Or whether he bought it, I think probably they said, "Right, here's a Section, forget about the other one."

That area in reed beds was later, had cows pastured on it and it was renowned as an area that was prevalent with TB in cattle. Anyway, he went to Waitpinga and times were hard and money was very scarce so he used to walk in company with a near neighbour, Tugwell who was patriarch of the Tugwell family around Encounter Bay. He used to walk to Goolwa on the Sunday afternoon and spend the week there at Goolwa, setting up the river port; plenty of work there at that time in housing and port facilities. Possibly the railway line that went on to Port Elliot and then later to Victor. It took the stuff from up the Murray-Darling system to the port of Victor after they replaced the port at Port Elliot because of the number of wrecks there. They worked there during the week and on Saturday afternoon they'd walk home to Waitpinga, have Saturday night at home; Sunday morning then set back to Goolwa again.

He accumulated a bit of money and then he started various businesses of his own and I'm not sure what time he took up the lease of Section 6 of Encounter Bay, part of the old whale fishery, from the South Australian Company.

He, for a start I think, a wool-buying business, because his family were in the wool trade in England, in Yorkshire. He went around with a horse and cart, buying wool. He had a partner called Ellis who did the washing of it in a bend of the river which is now the proposed dog park, in behind the Recreation Centre. He went on with that for a time and he started working the land as well and at some stage he was in the South Australian Company office in Adelaide and the person there in charge of leasing the land out at Encounter Bay said, "Do you want to take over the adjoining Section from Attrill?"

Great-grandfather said, "No I don't want to put Attrill out of his Section."

The official said, "You won't be putting him out of it because he hasn't paid his rent for two years."

Grandpa said, "Alright." So he leased that. A footnote to that is, when he turned his cattle in there, Robinson who lived half-way down the hill, Waitpinga Hill on the road to Waitpinga, came storming up and said, "Why are you turning your cattle in on my land?"

He said, "How is it your land?"

He said, "Attrill sold me the lease when he left." There were plenty of rogues around in those days.

Another time my Father's uncle, the older son, William, was working with his father on the roadside there doing some fencing. A chap from Waitpinga came down the hill and my Grandfather went and hid in the scrub. When he came back he said, "Why did you hide in the scrub when that chap came through?"

He said, "I didn't want to speak to him."

Another instance when he and Tugwell were walking on their way to Goolwa, coming up on the back side of the Waitpinga Hill there was a clearing there and they heard a shot. When they

came to this clearing there was a dead steer there. It looked as though it had been freshly shot and Tugwell said to Great-grandfather, "We'd better find out who's done this."

Great-grandfather said, "I think we'd better keep walking!"

It was quite likely that the cattle that was shot might have been one of Newland's because in those days they ran half wild cattle out in the Sections' land behind the settled area, started off around the Bay, they referred to them as "back paddocks", probably unallotted Crown land. All the Sections that belonged to the South Australian Company that hadn't been taken up.

You talked about the Battye home which was probably part of the whale fishery.

JB: We think it very likely. I had occasion to get up in the ceiling.

Can you explain where it is?

JB: Yes it is situated on the north- eastern side of the creek that runs out from the Three Gullies Road area down through the Section Great-grandfather had Section 6 and went out into the sea. There is quite a pronounced creek. One thing that Great-grandfather said was that there was a (adjusts hearing aid).

So that place is on the corner of Franklin Parade and Battye Road?

JB: What is now Battye Road.

People today need to know that; they won't know where the creek is.

JB: It was named after the ancestors; William took it up from the South Australian Company. He leased it for quite a while and my aunt told me that he leased the land and also the Section above it, that was always known as Attrills from the first person there. I picked some figs off a fig tree I reckon that Attrill must have planted down in the gully, and made some jam with it the other day.

This year?

JB: Yes, those trees would have been well over a hundred years old, probably nearly a hundred and forty.

The little cottage that was there?

JB: The cottage, I had occasion to get up in the roof of that when my wife and I were living in it, in between houses, and I noticed there were two rooms. The original two rooms were built out of beach stone, round, water-worn beach stones had been carried out from the sea beach in front. Quite distinctive because the rest of house is built of stone that had been quarried further up the creek in a very stony hillside. Those old quarry marks are still there. That made me think it was the same building that was pictured in an early sketch of the Whale Fishery.

Do you know what the roof would have been made of?

JB: Very likely it would have been a thatched roof. In earlier times they used yakka fronds fastened together between wattle sticks. In fact we used those for thatching on haystacks even in the 1950s. They formed a very good waterproof thatching and they could be taken down a bit at a time, quite easily, as the stack was dismantled for chaffing.

Who of your ancestors first lived in that cottage?

JB: It would have been William and his wife Elizabeth.

That was probably around 1860?

JB: I guess it would have been around that time.

You said it came to Adelaide around 1855 and then he was there for a little while.

JB: He could see no future in the Section out at Waitpinga; it was very stony and when he had the opportunity to lease that Section 6 he took it.

How many children lived in that house?

JB: He had nine in the family.

Did they all live there at one time?

JB: They would have, yes. The house was in occupation by the family. His son George, after William died, right up until the land was sold for subdivision which would have been in the 1970s.

That was your Dad's family home?

JB: No. We had a house...

No, no, when he was a child?

JB: When he was a child, yes. Grandfather George was married three times. From the first marriage I think he married a Gibson. She had one daughter, Ruth, who later had a frock shop in the main street of Victor. A very, very astute woman, she had the knack of knowing when she saw a frock in the display or the fashion parade in Adelaide, the manufacturer's house, she had the knack of knowing just who she'd sell that frock to. When she got back and the frocks arrived in the shop she'd pick up the phone and ring them and say, "I've got a frock might suit you."

She had quite a reputation for that as a very good business.

She was from the first marriage?

JB: There were four children of the second marriage. My grandfather married Emma Elizabeth Hands from Mitcham in Adelaide and there were four children from that marriage, two sons, two daughters. Unfortunately she died when the youngest was only a toddler and after that my grandfather remarried, Lee from Inman Valley. There were two sons and two daughters from that marriage.

Your father was part of the second marriage?

JB: My Father was one from the second marriage. (Adjustment of hearing aid).

Do you have recollections of going to that house as a child?

JB: I used to go up to the farm frequently when I was young. We were living there in Petrel Avenue.

We'll get to that later, but we'll talk about the recollections of this old place.

JB: Yes, I can remember a bit about it. Grandfather had also bought land in what is now Tugwell Road. That was about eight kilometres away from the farm, Section 6 at The Bluff and from an early age I used to accompany my Father going around the farm and hanging around.

There was always horses on the farm. There was a long stable built in the 1920s which combined a, had an old engine right in one end of it which drove a saw-bench outside and inside a chaffcutter. The hay was forked in by the chaffcutter and on a cutting day there'd be a couple of extra people come in and Grandfather would chaff up until he'd filled up an area where it was stored and that would feed the horses and cows in the dairy.

They used to milk cows there until the war years. After that they didn't continue. My Father was away at the war-time and he said that you'd better turn the cows out to a beef herd, rather than take on all the work because labour was very hard to obtain for farm work at that time with the demands of the War on the community.

We used to go up there quite a bit and ride the horses. I remember one horse, called Socks, incredibly lazy horse; if we started at the gate by the road and really kicked this horse into action we'd get it in to a canter by the time we reached the slip rails at the other end of the yard!
(laughter)

Perhaps it just enjoyed where it was, too close to the beach, it was enjoying its beach views.

JB: The beach was always an attraction but as I got older I seemed to be spending more time working and watching the others parading up and down the beach.

Were there other farm animals, working animals?

JB: There were the working horses; Grandfather just loved horses and he hated tractors so we were the last family to have a working horse team in the district. Eventually he gave way and bought a second-hand tractor. Another chap on the road out to the farm asked him after a while how he liked the tractor. He just turned his back on him and didn't even speak! (laughter)

Fairly typical of that generation that had horses and then changed to...

JB: It was incredible. With my Father away in the War, spent a lot of time up in Queensland training and getting ready for action, part of MacArthur's Push. Because he was in a tank regiment there was no call for tanks other than support operations in the jungle and then they had to stick to the roads, so he and others including some from the South Coast attached to a Unit with a lot of Tasmanians, spent a lot of time training up in Queensland. In that time he had an Army driver's licence that covered everything from a motorbike to a tank. Yet he came back to Victor and back to horses again. Progress was slow on the farm.

During that time when your Dad was in the War, when your Dad was away, what did you do?

JB: Mother took my older sister Helen and myself and stayed with her parents in Richmond and my Grandfather Hodge was at that time, was working for the Commonwealth Police. They

recruited people with suitable backgrounds and his was in Office Administration and he was in the Pay Section. He had to go round and get a 1928 Willys Overland Whippet car. He had to go round to all the Commonwealth installations with the pay, pay envelopes. As part of his duty as Paymaster he had to go round and deliver the money he had to carry a big 6 gun with him, a big .45 pistol. I don't think he ever fired it but after the War finished he had a lot of fishing sinkers which were .45 pistol bullets that he squeezed in the vice and drilled a hole in the end.

So that Grandfather went fishing as well?

JB: No, Grandfather Hodge did. I don't know whether my Grandfather Battye ever went fishing. He was glued to a horse all the time I think!

During the War your parents bought a home, the home in Petrel Avenue; how did that come about?

JB: The State Bank had a home, there were two identical, ones built in Petrel Avenue and one of them, the person couldn't keep the payments up so he moved out and the State Bank held an auction. At that time, my Father was stationed in Adelaide in the Army and he and my Mother attended the auction and they were the top bidders - £500.00. It was a brick building, built during the 1930s and round about 1930 perhaps. They were unsuccessful, it was passed in.

Then when my Father was away up in Queensland my Mother had a phone call from Adelaide from the State Bank asking if they were still interested. She went in to see them and she said, "We can't afford to pay any more than we bid."

They considered it then said, "All right, you can have it, but given the family situation I think it would be better if it went in your name." So that's how we got the house in Petrel Avenue. Dad wanted to put up a garage, a shed in the backyard and that was at the time that the Mt Breckan Air Force camp, part of it, was sold up.

Because there was price control at that time the auctioneer selling different lots, selling huts and building materials and so forth. As each lot was put up, because building materials were so scarce, they soon reached the price control price. The auctioneer, once he'd reached the price, he'd say, "Right, line up." When all the prospective bidders and their stooges lined up, he said, "Right, start singing out numbers." Anyone who happened to sing out the right number as it went down the line, if they sung out the right number he'd bring the hammer down.

My Father, I daresay, had his brother and his father and whoever else he could round up, in the line up; he was successful on a building which was joined two rows of huts that was used as a Mess. There was enough building materials came out of that to make a 20 x 20 shed.

It was quite amusing really in that auction my Father said, the builders of course were bringing in everyone in to the line up they could muster to try and get building materials and at that time it was known as the Austerity Period, everything was so scarce after the War. Builders were restricted to a house of 1200 square feet. Ivan Bartel had his people in the line up and one was Esther Bailey who was Council Foreman's wife and she sang out the right number and when the auctioneer called out for her name, she got a bit flustered thinking she'd have to pay for it said, "Oh no, no I don't want it."

Ivan was standing alongside her and said, "Yes you do!"

Certainly different to the way auctions are conducted now.

JB: That was special sort of circumstance because of price control. With any sort of price control there's always a black market; people seemed to be able to get building materials. One builder in Victor particularly seemed to get all he wanted.

You returned to Encounter Bay at the end of the War?

JB: At the end of the War, yes. One of my memories of those is my Grandfather coming down to Victor with my Mother and us two children and he had a flat tyre going up Willunga Hill. I can remember playing on the side of the road with my sister Helen while he changed the wheel.

You had spent your childhood in the city?

JB: Up until age five.

What do you remember about living there?

JB: From age about three to age five.

What do you remember about it? Going to the market?

JB: Yes, we used to go in to the market, Adelaide Central Market. We used to catch the tram down from the corner of Deacon Avenue on South Road and go in on the tram and after my Grandmother had done the shopping, we'd walk down to West Terrace to the playground. She would have a rest there and my sister Helen and I would play on the swings and the slippery dip and other things.

Then we'd walk from there through, over the railway lines into Mile End past Charlick's Flour Mill back to Deacon Avenue. My Grandfather had a block there with the house with a veloron with one acre of land. There was a row of houses there with one acre and we had a poultry farm on the corner adjoining, belonged to people called Stapley who sold that to one of the rubber tyre firms. They moved to Cudlee Creek area, Gumeracha, Cudlee Creek to an apple orchard.

We had children alongside us and the neighbour on the other side was AE Williams, Bert Williams, who later became quite a large asphalt and paving contractor. He expanded the business when the service stations were built and he did a lot of paving work around the entrances and parking areas. I remember him coming in one day and he had a model of a Lancaster bomber which he gave me. I remember saying, "That's not an Air Force plane."

He said, "Why not?"

I said, "It hasn't got the red, white and blue rings on it." He didn't say anything; my Mother rebuked me later for being so rude. Anyway, he came back the next day and it had the red, white and blue rings painted on it.

He had, I think, four boys and a girl but they were much older than I was. The youngest of them was probably going to High School when I was started Primary School.

When you came back to Victor Harbor had you spent time at the school in Adelaide?

JB: I'd started school in Adelaide for a few months in the Richmond Infant School. The Infant School was on the western side of South Road from Grade One up and we were on the other side. My sister Virginia, Helen rather, we used to ride this three-wheeler bike. I'd be standing on

the axle and she'd be doing the pedalling to go to school. Because I'd finished earlier than she did I walked back to the house in Deacon Avenue; it wasn't very far.

Also, remember of those days, going down to the corner at Hilton to go to the barber with the shilling tied up in my handkerchief. Helen and I were sometimes sent down there to get a loaf of bread. I remember coming back, in those days there was no packaging other than a piece of paper round the outside of it and we were thinking this fresh bread is very nice and by the time we got home there was a hole in it.

I think we've all done that with our loaves of bread at that stage. When you returned to Victor Harbor and went to school you were living at Encounter Bay?

JB: At Encounter Bay.

So how did you get to the Victor Harbor school?

JB: The Abbotts had a school bus go out that way and I think it was tied in with another run and we used to get on the bus at the main road round the foreshore. It used to go as far as what is now Whalers, to where the Jagger children boarded it. We used to, if the weather was cold and wet, we would get underneath the verandah of the house in front on the seafront.

What are your fondest memories of school?

JB: Of school? I think two teachers, Ted Gare and Basil Walters. Ted Gare taught Grade Three; Basil Walters, Grade Seven. Edna Birchall I detested.

I loved her after being freaked out the first day!

JB: She killed initiative. I remember one day, this was in Grade One; she required us to put our hand up if we'd finished a page and required a margin ruled in it with a red pencil. Any rate I finished a page and I looked up and there were a number of hands up in the air to get this margin ruled, so I thought, I've got a ruler and a red pencil so I ruled it myself and carried on. I was well into the page when I received a resounding whack on the ear with her hand.

"Smarty pants, I'll teach you, or I'll lace your legs." They were her favourite sayings. I had no time for her whatever.

Maybe that's why she became a Grade IV class by the time I was there.

JB: Ted Gare had a very sad time in his life. When I was in Grade III, he had a son called Peter who was also in that same class. Then Peter had absences and then he just didn't come to school. We didn't know why and of course we wouldn't ask. It turned out that Peter had leukaemia and died. We didn't know and it never seemed to show with Ted; he just carried on and thereafter I think he regarded each class that he taught as his family.

He was a wonderful man and later on if there was, particularly if there was organisations, Youth Club and the Rural Youth, the Old Scholars, if there was a Ball on, he'd be on the ticket office. He did a lot of voluntary work like that. He lived with his mother; his wife divorced him after the death of Peter and he lived with his mother in Lindsay Street. He always rode about on this lady's bike.

Basil Walters, he was a relaxed fellow, he was in the Air Force during the War over in England. He'd known my mother, taught in the Moonta Mines School with her pre-war and he said to her

around 1951, he kept saying, "Will you come back and help out with the teaching?" Teachers were in short supply then because of the expansion in the number of children. When my sister Virginia was old enough to go to school Mum went back to teaching to help out and stayed there for twenty-one years.

Was it unusual for somebody's Mum to be out working?

JB: To an extent it was then. I think we have to view that in terms of the times. When the War finished there was a lot of women that had been working, particularly in the city, had been working in munition factories, making all sorts of things; army uniforms. That's how Kentish Clothes got going; they really got going in the War years making uniforms and after the War finished all these men returned back to the jobs they were doing or other jobs as the opportunity presented. I think a lot of women in those days just went back to household stuff. Quite different from what it is now of course.

Very different, very different. You lived and did a lot with your Dad who was on a farm but you also lived in a fishing community at Encounter Bay, so what was that like?

JB: I used to throw a line in without much success.

But there were fishermen who were...

JB: There were fishermen there, the Rumbelow family, the Ewens, they were the main ones. Mr Shannon, that was Carrie Shannon's husband. Carrie Shannon was Cane Rumbelow's sister. She was a very Christian woman; she used to teach Sunday School at the little Yilki church.

She was friends with a lady who was head of Hoadleys Confectionery business. I never thought about it much at the time but at Christmas time when the Christmas wind-up for the Sunday School happened with a little bit of a concert there were always plenty of Hoadleys Violet Crumble bars and other sweets. I think they'd call it a CEO now, Hoadleys at that time. I think she was a regular visitor to Encounter Bay during the holidays.

You mentioned when we were talking last week about fishing and you called it moonlighting.

JB: Yeah, those days schools of mullet came around the Bay and on the point near the end apartment, those in a row along the frontage of The Bluff, they had a bit of a rock wall there to keep the wind off them and they'd sit there talking and the first one that would see a school of mullet come around the bay following around the shoreline and then going out around The Bluff between the reef and where they were sitting they would, the first one to see a school would point it out to the others and that was his school of mullet.

When it got close enough that one would just go down to their flat-bottomed boat with the hauling net on the back on the board and he'd just, because they kept their boats in a little sandy area between the reefs of rock and he'd just push it out, row out then run the net around them and haul them in. In the meantime one of the others might see another school following behind and that would be his school.

That way they had plenty of mullet to send off; they used to pack them in boxes with ice and send them on the morning train to Adelaide to the Fish Market. They were wooden boxes and they used to go to Daw and Sons Fish Auction.

There were many fishermen who lost their lives, how did that impact your community?

JB: I was too young, I was not even born at that time but Lionel Rumbelow's brother Dave was lost at Waitpinga Beach. They were coming back and it was dark and they saw a light and thought it was one of the lights around Victor and they headed in towards it but it was the Honeyman place up above Waitpinga Beach and they went aground. They were swept over when the boat went aground and brother Dave was swept out and Lionel was swept in to the beach. He managed to get up to Honeymans.

Another one of the family, I think it might have been a cousin, was also drowned and one of the younger generation, Geoff Rumbelow, he drowned on a particularly stormy day. He went out with another chap to retrieve his boat which had broken its moorings and was going out, the other chap said, "It's too rough, let it go."

So he went in and Geoff went out on his own to try and get it. A wave tipped him over and just at that time Graham Rumbelow and his son-in-law happened to be driving along and saw it. They hopped in a dinghy and went out and pulled Geoff out of the water, he was clinging to the upturned boat, dinghy. They got him in but it was too late and he didn't recover.

That was particularly sad; he was a friend of my Father's, worked out on the farm with him before the War and Geoff went away with the Infantry that went to the Middle East.

After the War it used to be a Sunday morning job for Geoff Rumbelow to bring his kangaroo dogs around to Dad's and they'd sew up the wounds they'd incurred the night before with foxes biting them or kangaroos ripping them or catching themselves on spikes. I remember one day when Geoff Rumbelow had the wounds stitched up on his dogs and was walking back to Yilki and Mrs Dawson's cat made for home. These dogs saw it, they got Mrs Dawson's cat before it reached home! They had to break the news to her.

You also talked about going out at night time with fish and a net.

JB: Hope Jagger who used to be a neighbour, who was a neighbour of the farm down at The Bluff. He had a truck about a 1947 or 1948 Fargo, American truck and they used to go out spotlighting, getting foxes and rabbits. They also, when the tide and the moon was right, it had to be a bright moonlit night, full moon preferably. They used to go moonlighting around King's Beach. That involved one person, usually Geoff Rumbelow, with a large hoop net, he'd sneak out so his shadow wasn't on the water and put the net in the sea at the entrance to these block channels.

When you say, "a large hoop net," how big is that?

JB: It would be probably nearly a metre hoop wide and a net a bit the same as the net they used to pull fish up when they caught them on a line only much larger version with a long handle. That would be put in the mouth of this gutter and once it was in place, the other helpers with bamboos, would start at the back of this trench, stir the water up and chase the fish out. As soon as one or more fish landed in the net he'd say, "Stop!" So they'd stop stirring it up while they put them in the bag, replace the net in the mouth of the channel and once we'd worked right through to the front, we'd go on to the next one.

Was there a big difference during summertime at Encounter Bay? Were there a lot of holiday-makers?

JB: Yes, people used to come down regularly for holidays to Victor Harbor and Encounter Bay. The Bolger family, that was Rita Adey's mother and father, they had a house called *Nantu-warra*

guest house half way between Yilki and the Inman River, right on the seafront with a board ladder going down over the sandhills to the beach.

At that time there was no made road along there, just open sandy track and at other places some of the Rumbelow family had fair-sized houses and also a small dwelling at the back. I remember Cain Rumbelow's house had two rooms, separate rooms, at the back of the house and during the holiday times they'd rent the house out to people for the holidays, school holidays, and they'd move into the back part. That was extra income for them. The Aunt Sis she was a Rumbelow, Malen's family, she had the same sort of thing.

There was also at that time, camping around the foreshore from The Bluff back around. There are pictures of the line of tents around there on the beachfront. In those days not many caravans; people had tents.

At that time, pre-war and for a short time after the war there were horse drags which were just like a large wagon with comfortable seats. I think a man called Stephens in Oval Road had the last one. The tourists could go for a trip to various places out The Bluff at a leisurely pace. One of the Tugwells had the strawberry farm on top, just in by, underneath the trig point of Newland Hill. He had a few cows as well and the horse drags used to take people up there and they'd sit down on benches and there were strawberries and cream and look at the view at the same time; view right out over the Bay, Victor Harbor and beyond. Same sort of view that you get now from the Lookout out on the top of Waitpinga Road. They also used to go out to the Hindmarsh Waterfall.

Did these people drive vehicles down or did they come in a train?

JB: Some came down in cars, others caught the train. The guest houses, and there were a number of them in Victor, one called The Clifton was right alongside the old school. They used to have people come down for holidays on the train and they'd wander round the town and go over to the Island for a walk; go swimming, fishing.

During summer did you get to go to the beach or were you busy working?

JB: We used to go to the beach in the summer-time after school; soon as we'd get home, on with the bathers and down to the beach. After I could read a bit I used to have a quick look at the paper before I went for a swim because Dad would have it after we'd had our dinner.

Why did you want to look at the paper?

JB: For a start it was interesting and right at the back of it there was a Brick Bradford comic strip; not a comic strip, it was a continuing saga of the adventures of Brick Bradford. There was also Mandrake I think. Because I was young a lot of it was forgotten but there were world events in particularly Russia, Cold War and various things. Hardships and strikes in Australia in the coal mines.

Let's look back at your parents' life again. This is after you'd left home; they were quite involved in the community.

JB: Yeah, Dad was involved with the RSL, Football Club, Encounter Bay, the Show Society and a lot of time we'd be sitting down to dinner and Dad would rush in, have a quick shower, have a quick dinner and then be out again. As time went by he slowed down a bit, I think it was a case of have to but he was pretty well involved in community things.

Your Mum was a full-time teacher?

JB: Yes, she was in the RSL Women's Auxiliary. The RSL at that time after the War, had their meeting room upstairs above the Supper Room of the Town Hall. Later, in the early 1950s I think it was, they bought the old Wool Store around in Flinders Parade and that had a history. Half its life was a Wool Store and when the Port of Victor ceased handling stuff that came down the Murray, that finished when the railway line from Eudunda to Morgan killed that. It was later used as a dance hall and a nightclub. They called it The Blue Lagoon and I can remember seeing Pacific Island pictures painted on the wall. I was told that they had little private boxes with a ladder up to them around the walls; a few of those around the walls where people who wanted a bit of privacy could just sit there and look out the window at people dancing around.

Did you go there as a teenager to those dances?

JB: No, I was a bit young in those days to do those things.

After you left school, what did you do?

JB: I went away, first to Adelaide for a year and then to Agricultural College at Roseworthy. Then I went up into the mid-north and worked on a wheat farm for a year then started, just for a job to do while I thought about, what next? I went out in the shearing sheds in the pastoral shearing sheds and continued on with the wool-classing course and became after three years, a three year course, involving a bit of theory in Adelaide and I'd done some at Roseworthy College which counted towards the course and the rest of it was out working in the sheds for a minimum of one month the first year, two months the second and a month the third as a senior hand.

Thereafter, went out with, they brought in wool-classer stencils and licensing at that time and we had a provisional stencil which went on the bales. Until we'd submitted two clips, one Merino and one Crossbred for examination down at the Wool Stores. Once that was accomplished to the satisfaction of the examiners we were given a full stencil.

I continued in that during that time I went over to New Zealand, working in the high country shed in Central Otago with a South Australian shearing team, four, three from South Australia and one from Tasmania who were based around Jamestown and Oodlawirra area, a Western Australian wool-classer.

I was on that for four months and then went down to the Export Abattoirs, to do their export lambs and was there for about another four months, back to South Australia to continue with the wool-classing course then I went back for a full year, back to New Zealand but too late to go round the sheds so I started in the abattoirs.

Then went on to a construction site with a Maori chap that I was travelling with. He'd worked there previously and that was about the only suitable work, he used to get asthma and anything dusty he couldn't do. I was there for eight months, which was an education, paid fairly well.

It was an American construction company in collaboration with two New Zealand firms. They had 85% maximum foreign and 15% minimum of New Zealand involvement in anything like that. Their job was to construct the second stage of a paper mill which was quite interesting. I wandered through their despatch department one day where big rolls of newsprint were stacked up. I saw Advertiser newspapers on one of the rolls.

How long did you spend in New Zealand in total?

JB: I spent a full year then came back. I didn't go back again after that.

Right. Then you came back and worked on the farm?

JB: A combination of wool-classing and working on the farm. After I was married I only did local work and eventually it just got too much so I gave up the wool-classing locally. I only did sheds where they were stuck and couldn't get someone.

You were mainly on the farm out Tugwell Road?

JB: Yeah, Tugwell Road. I lived in Victor and went out each day. My parents, in the 1960s, sold the house they had at Yilki and had Bartels build a house out on the farm. This was after my Grandfather had died in 1961.

You've given me a couple of bits of paper here about going to school from Yilki. I think you might have covered that.

JB: We've spoken about that.

I think we'll leave this one.

JB: Is the recorder still on?

Yes.

JB: When we were young at Yilki there were a number of Rumbelows' children and it just seemed that all of the Rumbelow parents were always 'aunt' and 'uncle' to us. There was a fairly tight community of the regulars and by that time there were getting to be a few holiday places. Some were regulars, holiday-makers there that had houses and others started building small holiday places.

I remember 1948 was a very wet year and the drainage for the Bay flats and a lot of the Bay flats were under water and the drainage for part of it came out alongside where the public toilets are on the seafront going out towards The Bluff at the corner of Whalers Road. There was a drain underneath the road there and that had scoured out quite an area of verge between the road and the sea. It just about undermined the road so the Council gave my Father a regular lantern, a kero lantern, each night he took that over and lit the lantern and hung it on a post to warn people not to go too close to the edge.

Another time, later, when there were some holiday places along Whalers Road there was one in a bit low-lying area and the drain must have been partly blocked and the water had built up around the foundation of this house and it was just about running in the front door and Dad went over and cut a gutter away from it to let the water level go down. Somebody must have told the people because he came home with a huge box of chocolates for Mum!

Where was that flooding?

JB: Along the side of Whalers Road at what is now called Yilki Common. That used to be a large pool of water in winter. The area going towards the old Tabernacle Cemetery, that used to get wet and a lot of the flats which is now Encounter Lakes; that used to get wet and hold water. In fact, there is one point just behind the sandhills where it was lower than sea level, in the paddock that Herb Smith used to own.

John Roche, an Adelaide development company bought it later and had it for a long time, just running cattle on it, because they found out it was too low-lying for housing and it stayed that way until they did that Encounter Lakes development.

There was a trotting track near the hospital?

JB: Yes.

Was there some family involvement with the trotting track?

JB: There was. A lot of the work setting that up was done with voluntary labour and some paid contractors. My Father was Clerk of the Course there for some years until his horse got too old. There was one horse had unseated the driver by rearing at the start, it was going around with the mob and my Father set off on the horse to catch it and get it out of it and the horse wasn't good enough so he thought it was time to give it away.

Was that an unpaid volunteer job?

JB: I think he was paid for that. Jim Muirison (?) gave him his red coat from the Adelaide Hunt Club. It must have been a tight fit on Dad; Dad had quite wide shoulders and Jim was fairly slightly built.

Is there anything else you'd like to tell me?

JB: Of the people there, there was Gordon Adey, a long time resident, they had the identical house further along Petrel Avenue. They had a cow they kept in the back portion and there were vacant blocks around that they used to graze it on. Rita, his wife, she was Rita Bolger, she used to lead this cow around there and go round Yilki and while she was talking to people the cow would just be grazing along the roadside. When we were young, Helen and I, they had no family, Helen and I used to take our bowl with Weetbix in it and stayed the night with her. I remembered her and Gordon Adey for a long time with much affection.

There were people -----(indistinct) I don't quite remember his wife's name, she was English. Ava (?) was Dutch. He'd come to Australia some time between 1900 and the First World War and started working in the western districts of Victoria on a large property. Eventually, after he'd married I think, he found his way in to the Mallee around Geranium. He was in the First World War in the Australian Army. He enlisted in the Second World War but he was considered too old so he was a Drill Instructor and Physical Education Instructor on the recruiting side. He said to me once that every ANZAC Day when he went and joined his old mates as soon as they saw him they'd say, "Hup two, three."

He was a wonderful man; when he was probably seventy or more he still had a very fit physique and used to help us sometimes at hay-carting time. He and Les Hutton were working on the stoning of the sea-wall around the beach which was a Council initiative, probably got a Grant for it. He was working on that and when they put the water mains around Yilki which was sometime in the 1950s I think, he did a bit of work on that.

He'd come from Geranium, out in the Mallee, and he retired up in Seacrest Avenue; bought a block of land there and he brought an old school building from out in the Mallee, one of the one teacher schools. He'd bought that building and had it carted down and he put it up on the block in Seacrest Avenue on the low side of the road. He must have, either the road wasn't surveyed very well or else he got it wrong, because when they did the improvements, bituminise in

Seacrest Avenue they found out that his house was half over the road boundary. Council came to an arrangement with him that he could continue on as it was for the rest of his life but once he was gone it would have to be altered somehow.

They were a lovely couple; he was a lay preacher in the Yilki Church and he was preaching at a service one day while I was over in New Zealand, and he was up at the pulpit and he said to the congregation, "Friends I don't feel very well." He sat down in the chair and he died.

Others were consoling his wife and she said, "He couldn't have died in a better place."

I think they were the family that took the photos of the water spout.

JB: Of the water spout, yes. He had a pair of very good binoculars and that was quite a remarkable photo. It was just very good that it didn't come through Yilki.

Yes, yes. I had a series of six photos that came from that family.

Well, we could go on forever couldn't we?

JB: I could probably think of more!

I'm sure you will.

JB: By then my hearing aids might be fixed.

OK. I'd just like to thank you once again Jeff. I'm sure this is a significant contribution, especially to the Encounter Bay area of what people will be able to look back and listen to, to hear about how Encounter Bay operated in the 1900s, because you've looked back at your Dad's, your Grandfather's and then your life from late '30s. It's amazing how your family was on the land here in Encounter Bay for 100 years before you came along.

JB: I've just thought of another thing.

OK, we haven't finished yet.

JB: My Grandfather told me that his Father told him that in the several hundred metres up the creek from where it goes underneath the road the creek takes almost a right-angle bend. He said that there was an Aboriginal burial tree, platform, up in there when Great-grandfather started living in those two roomed cottage. He said the remains in the platform were fairly recent and it was a little bit distasteful.

It is to us; but it was what was acceptable to them.

JB: They didn't camp underneath it. One little thing, I can mention two little things. When they put the culvert in underneath the road to take that creek water out they had to do quite a bit of digging there and they uncovered a number of Aboriginal skeletons and the thing about it was that they were arranged like the spokes in a wheel. When they dug it up, one chap came up, the leading hand of the Council workers, came up and told him about it and they had one chap working in the Council crew who was part-aboriginal.

He said, "You'd better be a bit respectful about this. Just put the bones." Grandfather at that time was Chairman of the Council, said, "Put the bones aside neatly and when you've dug it all

out and put the culvert in place just put the bones back as near as you can to the way they were and fill it in.”

A footnote to that is, when the NBN work was being done in that area there was a brief report that they had uncovered Aboriginal remains and I just wonder if it was the same lot; whether they had been dug up a second time. As in the first instance, the report said that they had been replaced in the same manner.

Not far from that in the vicinity of where there used to be a Moreton Bay fig tree, between the road and the beach on The Bluff side, Grandfather said that it was very probable that the last chief of the tribe was buried there. He remembered seeing on a brilliant moonlit night, a woman he recognised as a relative showing another man directions, taking a line on rocks out in the water, with the islands, pointing out landmarks and pointing down at the ground.

In fact, where the three-level units are alongside the creek Grandfather and uncle were digging a hole to bury a dead calf and they dug up a skeleton there so they took it in to the Police Station in Victor. Sergeant Opie was the Police Sergeant at the time and his son told my sister Helen, “Oh it’s in a box out in the garage.” I don’t know what happened to it.

Another time when the fishermen were sitting at that fishing point, looking, just watching for schools of mullet, and it must have been holiday time as a couple of young lads came and showed them some shiny things that they’d found round by the jetty. The fishermen said, “Where did you get these?”

“Where that pole is, going in to The Bluff.” They had a couple of detonators from explosives so the fishermen took them and one of them went up to my Grandfather’s and showed him.

He said, “We’d better do something about this in case they dig up more and happen to hit them with a stone.” So he rang the Council to bring out the outside work gang and he went up also and started work on it. It was down by the road edge going to the jetty and the site is still there; it’s a bare patch of earth going up almost vertical in The Bluff at road level.

They’d started driving a shaft into the copper mine up on The Bluff to come out at lower levels to make it easier to bring stuff out. They’d got part of the way in and the copper price had collapsed and the other mines going up around Burra and Kapunda so the mine was abandoned and they didn’t fill it in. They got to work with a pick and shovel and after a time they had it closed up. You can still see where it is by the bare patch, with nothing growing on it because it’s too like an upright wall.

OK, I think we’ll finish there. Thank you. I so appreciate your effort and your stories and they will certainly add to our local history.

JB: One other thing, I thought of just then. When the breakwater was constructed at Granite Island, my Grandfather had a dairy herd then and on his way to school, his son, Will, William Thomas. William Thomas I think it is; he later went to Meningie after being at Mintaro and Middleton. I know he was at Middleton in 1901 because the foundation stone on the old Middleton Hall is dated 1901, must have been a Federation project, and in the Tavern there is a photo of a collection of men who were quarrying stone for that Hall and one of them, with a bowler hat on of all things was Uncle Will.

You were saying when the breakwater was being built and Will was on his way to school?

JB: Yeah Uncle Will on his way to school had to deliver milk to all those that wanted milk in the tent camp because a lot of the men working on that had their wives and families with them in a temporary tent camp along the foreshore where the car park is now, adjacent to the Victor Hotel. Will said to him, "How long are we going to keep supplying these ones that are not paying, with milk? Shouldn't we just stop giving them milk?"

His Father said to him, "You keep giving them the drop even if they don't pay. It's the children that will suffer."

That's a nice note to finish on. Thank you!

Post Script:

JB: Will, he had other enterprises.

So what did they carry? A carrying business to Adelaide?

JB: (Adjusting hearing aid). He took produce, whatever there was to carry with a horse team and wagon. He had premises, I believe it was in McKinlay Street, and he used to hire out a horse and cart or horse and buggy if anyone wanted one. Like the hire car business now I guess.

As well as the haulage, it was a three day trip to get to Adelaide and back, he also bought a Section known as the Gibson Section in Mill Road, Encounter Bay. He used that Section to spell horses. That Section also had a butter factory on it. That butter factory was located behind where the Montessori school is now. Right up until the time an ex-policeman called Maple sold that Section for subdivision, the old boiler, the old steam boiler for the butter factory, was still standing there.

Terry Sweetman bought it and it went to scrap. I remember him loading it onto his truck. That was operating still, I can't recall the exact date, but on the back of a postcard with Encounter Bay Football team at the time, quite a quaint picture. On the back of it, my Grandmother had written to her Father Hans in Mitcham that they'd, that day, done so many pounds of butter that week. That I think is probably referring to that butter factory.

He also had a horse works which was three horses I think it was or it might have been four, going round and round in a circle pulling, each on an individual pole arm driving a big crown wheel with a pinion long shaft out with a pulley wheel driving the chaff-cutter. That used to travel around the district cutting up chaff, cutting up haystacks. My Grandfather, when he left school, probably after he left school, when he was sixteen, he was put onto that to take that around. In those days with the horse teams they would pull in, cut up half a stack, sometimes they might stay there and do the whole lot for horse feed and cow feed. Feeding cows in dairies, horses in stables.

It was actually a portable contract chaff-cutter?

JB: Yes. Worked by horses, no motors at that time, they were pretty rare. Of course, steam engines would be too much trouble to cart around to do the work. With that horse works, it must have ended up at his son Will's place at Meningie and when William Junior, Meningie Bill's son, when he died the place was sold and at the auction my Father and I picked up the horse works and took it back to Tilbrooks up at The Bluff. Tilbrook had set it up there in working condition again.

Of course, when Tilbrook had the auction after that, three acres had been sold for the development, apartments, that was dispersed somewhere I don't know where. But that three acres where Tilbrook was, was part of the Jagger Section. There must have been a shortfall in the Survey; they gave them that three acres separate and Tilbrook got an agreement from Brook Jagger that when he died he'd be able to buy it. His son, Hope Jagger, he honoured the agreement and that's how Tilbrook came to put the buildings up there. They were all knocked down when the apartment development was done. Things like that were started out with the intention of being of benefit for a long time, turned out to be different.

That's right. OK Jeff, thank you. It's been good. Excellent!

JB: I'm sure there'll be more.