

My name is Phil Robson. I'm the Honorary Curator of Hall School Museum. I'm conducting an oral history program and we're talking with descendants of the pioneer families of the Hall district. Today, we're talking with Bessie Bardwell. Bessie is a descendent of the Kilby family, a well-known family in the Hall district. How are you Bessie?

Fine. Thank you.

Now Bessie, I have that you were born on the 14th November 1929.

That's correct.

You have three children.

Yes.

Glen, Jane and Steven.

Yes.

What we're going to talk about today is your memories and stories of your ancestors. Now, your father was...?

Athol Kilby.

Athol Kilby. And he married Eunice Smith?

That's correct.

His father was James Kinloch Kilby, who married Beatrice Southwell.

Yes.

And his father was Robert Kilby who married Jane Webster.

Yes.

And I believe his father was William Kilby.

Yes I think that's right too.

Who was born in 1811.

0:01:26.1

How far back can you remember stories of your ancestors? I've looked in that wonderful publication of 'The Kilby Family "Land's End", a recent release by Elizabeth Kilby, where you mention your grandparents. And visiting your grandparents at Eneagh Hill. When you were there, did they talk about their parents much? And the lives and struggles that they had when they first came into the area?

I can't say that they did when we were young. It was more... they were more focusing on what we were doing at that time. But we visited Grandma and Grandpa Kilby often and had wonderful chats. Grandma Kilby was a great reader, and she really introduced Audrey and I to reading, and we would talk about things like that quite a bit. She was a really, very interesting woman and very straightforward sort of person. Um... very kind. And fair but... expected people to reciprocate. Grandfather was a bit quieter but a very nice, gentle man, and they really loved us a lot. Which is some of my strongest memories. Lots of my friends talk about being scared of their grandparents but we were never, ever afraid of Grandma and Grandpa Kilby. When we'd go there as children and when we used to have our cups of tea after school, first thing that Grandma would do when we walked in was wipe her mouth with the bottom of her apron and give us a kiss. And we all had afternoon tea there; myself, and my sister Runa, and Audrey, and Wesley, for... for years while we went to primary school and it was a wonderful experience and something I've never forgotten. It was a really an interesting time. She would chat away about all sorts of things and Grandpa would stir his cup of tea, and he'd sort of throw the spoon into the cup and Grandma would gently lean over and take it out. There's lots of little things like that, that I remember, of the setting of where they were. She had a one - a table - with a runner and a big float bowl, with flowers, and her Bible, and the book she was reading, and that was the setting we would meet every day. And our... when we'd have our cups of tea, we each had our own personal cup. And I've actually still got mine. That was one of my special things. And I also have the float bowl that she had sitting on the table.

0:04:09.5

James - I was just going to say - James Kilby... they had tragedies. Their first home burnt down...

Yes.

'The Falls'. Did he ever talk about that?

No. No... No. ... Dad... Dad didn't either I don't think. Um... I don't think they really talked about that much. They'd talked about walking around that area down there and they knew every hill, every stone on the property all around near The Falls. And we used to sometimes go down in that area in later years. Down

to the river on New Years Day for a picnic or something. But I don't really remember much, anybody talking much about The Falls house, I must confess.

So it was all relating to Eneagh Hill

Mostly yes. There was a huge pine tree in the corner at Eneagh Hill and it was the boys' - every Saturday they used to climb that pine tree. And one of the photos that Elizabeth gave me had the pine tree in it. And I was thrilled to bits because in later years of course it disappeared. But it was a huge tree and that was - the boys every Saturday morning would climb the tree. That was part of their ritual.

0:05:27.2

James was very instrumental in getting the school built at Hall. He was probably the leader in a group of parents, who wrote to the NSW Department of Public Instruction to have a school built at Hall. Because their children were going to Ginninderra school at the time and they had to walk a long way. And so they argued vigorously over a number of years to have a school built at Hall. Do you recollect any of that sort of background?

No I don't. I don't recollect that all to be honest. Um.. it was sort of well before my time I suppose.

Sure, sure.

I know Dad used to talk about when they did have to walk right down to Ginninderra and it was a long, long way. And for little kids it was pretty hard work.

Yes.

0:06:22.4

Talking about your father then, and mother, whilst living at Eneagh Hill, and I assume that's where they lived, is that right?

Where Dad lived yes.

Yes. How did they - it was hard work running the farm. They had to experience droughts and floods and things like that.

By the time I was really old enough to register much, Grandpa used to do some butchering and he had a little paddock with all the gear to butcher animals. And he used to be the one that would, when Dad and Uncle Keith wanted to kill a beast during the winter, Grandpa would come down and cut it all up and do that.

He did quite a bit of that. But it was more really in their retiring years that, that I really remember them. I don't remember Grandpa really going anywhere to work or anything very much at all. That was more their older years that I remember.

0:07:26.4

When did they move out of Eneagh Hill?

Well, they didn't. Grandma died there. I think that was 1947 and at the time, that was one of my very strong memories. I was the eldest grandchild and I was allowed to see my Grandmother in the coffin. And that was a new experience for me. It was actually quite a wonderful experience. It took away my fear of death completely. She looked so peaceful and so beautiful, and it was the best thing that ever happened to me. A lot of the younger ones weren't allowed to do it, but I was in my teens and that was quite an experience. Grandpa died in about 1950. There were people with him there, looking after him. As far as I know that's where he was. He didn't move out of there at all.

Right ok.

0:08:25.2

When your father took over the farm, running of the farm...

He and his brother had a soldier settler lease, after the First World War. That's what they took over. They didn't take over Grandpa's farm at all, they had their own soldier settler lease, after the first world war. And they became partners. Athol and Keith were A.C. and K.K. Kilby and they were a very good partnership.

I've read and I've seen where they both went off to the First World War. Together. They were - went off to Egypt I believe.

Yes. Dad put his age up I think. To go. He was a bit younger than Keith, and he put his age up. But they - they went from Fremantle. They were in the 12th Lighthorse. Dad was a very keen horseperson, and Uncle Keith not so much. But they went to Egypt. They didn't actually see fighting, I don't think. But they had some fairly harrowing experiences and Dad caught that awful flu that a lot of the soldiers caught. Every morning Uncle Keith would go and look at the list to see whether Dad had made it through the night. That was a... that was a very hard time. Dad always thinks he went bald after that.

0:09:58.6

And what was life like for the children, for you, growing up in that time?

It was simple but it was lovely. We had a lovely, happy home. Dad and Mum were certainly a very happy couple. They had quite a few traumas before they were married, because they were first cousins. And that was frowned upon, very much. And a lot of talk went back and forth. In fact they were writing love letters to each other when Dad went to the war. And that was 1918. And they didn't get married til 1927. And a lot of it was because of that. But they certainly were meant to be together and our home was a happy, a very happy one indeed. And our life on the farm, was just ideal as far as we were - we children - were concerned.

0:10:56.6

We're very spoilt these days, with modern appliances. microwave ovens and electronics et cetera. What was it like, what was home life like, you know, for your mother, and grandmother? You know, with cooking and managing the house?

Well we had a fuel stove of course and that's what I learnt to cook on too. Um.. no sign of... we'd have drip safes in the early days. I don't think we ever had a, an ice chest because there was no way to get ice. But eventually we had a kerosene refrigerator, and that was out in the dairy area. And um... tilly lamps and kerosene lamps were what we had. And they were - we looked after them. It was sort of our jobs to trim them up and do things and never thought much about it. We didn't actually get electricity to 'Homeleigh' until into the 50s. Because even when it came to Hall, we were still out of the range of it.

0:12:00.4

And what about your school life? Well, let's go back to... Both Athol and Keith went to Hall Public School. Did your father ever talk about his time at the school? He would have had Charlie -

Charlie Thompson

Charlie Thompson as his (teacher).

He was a pretty hard man I think. From what Dad used to say. And yet - I've got a book where Dad won a prize for being the best student in the school. And it was voted on by his fellow pupils, which is something I had never known. Dad never talked much about things like that. We found quite a few things like Dad and Mum's love letters and things like that, after they died. They never talked about it much to us when they were alive. There are lots of things I wish now I could have asked him.

0:12:51.6

Yes, yes. That's always the case. You said your home life was, was simple. But nice and lovely. What sort of occasions were - would you celebrate? You know, would you have family gatherings? Would there be local community balls or gatherings or things like that, that you would go to?

When I was very young, not so much. I wouldn't have gone to balls and things, Methodists didn't dance in those days. But we used to have - well, we belonged to Wattle Park Church and most of our activities were centred around that. And we had concerts there called Band of Hope which were temperance things. But we had concerts and socials and Sunday school anniversary, and Harvest Festival and some quite big occasions. Mostly centred around our church. But as far as the village went we'd- there'd be socials and things down there too. Uh... we had quite a lot at the end of the Second World War when some of the soldiers came back and things like that. And, Colin Southwell my cousin used to run a picture show every - whether it was every fortnight or every month - but that was a sort of... everybody went to that. Um... those of sorts of things. We celebrated Empire Day and various things from school but it would be down in the hall. We didn't ever do anything very much at the exact school. But we did - I can remember - standing up and doing things down in the hall at Hall.

0:14:26.3

You mentioned being Methodist. And I know that - the Kilby and the Southwell families are staunch, were staunch, ARE staunch Methodists. So there was a big association with the Wattle Park Church, and I suppose that dictated a lot on your lifestyle.

It did.

Did you feel that was a problem? Or was it something...?

It was, it was good training, it was a good get together, a real close feeling of family, of caring for one another. We had lots of cousins and people, and we'd meet up. We had lots of fun at things like those as well as the services and things. There was lots of fun. But that would have been more our actual social community than the wider one if you know what I mean. That would have been it. But it wasn't a hamper to us. It was only when I grew older, when I came into my teens, that I went to things called Crusader Camps, where it broadened my horizons quite a lot. Because we were nearly all related at Wattle Park Church and in some ways that was good, but in other ways it was a bit confining.

0:15:47.5

We've spoken about Hall school. What are your recollections of your time in Hall school?

I was happy enough at Hall school. I don't think I had any, any great problems. We - one thing I do recall is we never ever were given a ride to school. We walked, and I walked from 'Homeleigh' to Hall school, and when Audrey my cousin started, we'd meet at the bottom of the hill, sort of, and walk up through together. But it would be a very, very rare occasion that we were ever picked up. In rain, hail or shine, more or less. Mum didn't drive and Dad often wouldn't have been there and we - but we just walked and that was, it was a fair way when we come to think of it and we didn't cut across much. I was thinking of that this morning. There was a quiet sort of, a bit of creek, and things we had to be careful of. So we didn't cut across paddock much. We walked on the road. Which was - we always used to have a bit of drama going home from school one way or other. There'd either be magpies swooping us or plovers or something like that and we'd make a bit of a drama of that. And there'd be a bit of crawling or something just... it always was just... a way to add a bit of fun I guess. We used to stand and hurl our suitcases down the road to see how far they could go. And when I think of them, they were Globite cases which was glorified cardboard. I don't know how long they lasted and what they thought about it but when the road sloped down we used to do that and think it was a great joke.

0:17:26.6

Could you describe a typical day? When you arrived at school, what would happen?

Good question. I think we had a seat and some hooks to put your bags on. And we would be playing about. On a Monday morning we always gathered and we, together in a sort of assembly. And we'd put the flag up and we'd say "I honour God" and "I salute my flag". And we...that was a weekly ceremony. We did that every week. Then we'd go in and um... Play time, we'd just, it'd be, nothing was ever organised. Or there was never, ever a teacher out there. We just did our own thing, we might play rounders or something like that, depending what was the, 'in' at the time. You know, games are things that go round in a cycle a bit. Sometimes it's marble time and another time it's something else time. And you'd go around in a bit of a cycle. But I don't ever remember Mr O'Sullivan being out there very much with us, as far as that goes. Maybe he was some of the time but I don't remember that. Lunchtime would be, we'd all sit around, under the trees and we'd get called in again whenever time came. Sometimes he'd still be up in the car and we'd, we'd go in. And as we got older, some of we older ones used to help some of the really younger ones with reading and things like that. I can remember doing that when I was in sixth class, going in and helping kids in first class with reading and things like that.

0:19:16.5

When you sat in the class room, in your desk, and you looked up, what did you see?

Oh, a table, a desk at the front, and him in his wheelie chair and a big black board. Um... couple of bookshelves and things at the side and... not an awful lot to be quite honest.

We've been trying to re-establish the old school as it would have been. We've got an old clock on the wall, and we've got the plaque that was commemorating Charlie Thompson's period of service there. Picture of the Queen, and a couple of prints.

It would've been a King in my day you see.

Well, that's right. King George the 6th I'd imagine. So, I understand that it was later on that they built a weather shed. Was there a weather shed there?

I remember the weather shed. I think it was there when I went there and that's where he used to park the car, and where we used to go if it was wet. Something in it had seats around inside it. But that's a fairly vague sort of memory but I do remember it. If kids wanted to be silly, if they wanted to smoke or something, they did it behind the weather shed.

And the loos... I think we've established where the toilets were and they were some distance from the school. For obvious reasons.

Yes, I don't really remember it much, that much at all, I must confess.

0:20:47.9

Did you find the actual, the level of the schooling that you were learning; the arithmetic, the geography and english, difficult? Or did you, did it come easy to you?

Oh, I was fairly average I think, with a lot of things. I must say I did get a shock when I went to high school. There were a lot of things that were expected of me there that I'd never even heard of. And things like that. That was a very big shock.

0:21:14.5

THE WAR

Yes Dad never talked very much about his time at the war. He - he used to talk with Uncle Frank Southwell over in the shearing shed at times, and Frank was older than Dad and he'd been to the Somme, and all sorts of things, and been through some very bad experiences. And as a kid, we used to go in and we'd sometimes listen to what Dad and Uncle Frank were talking about. And that was

how we learnt some of the things that did happen in the war, when we were children, and it wasn't pretty what he'd been through with trench feet and all sorts of things. Dad used to be able to draw him out because the men never talked about it. And they didn't even for the Second World War I don't think. A lot of these people, what they did, what they did over there was there and that was it. And that was always very much a closed subject. Dad used to talk about some funny things that happened and things like that. But nothing much that I can remember. He was on a donkey once and was in a bit of a dangerous situation and suddenly decided and sang out "Paleeoosh!" or something. And he had no idea what it meant but it meant stop and the donkey stopped, and it was ok and he was ok. But he was in, going in between where there was some big guard dogs and he wasn't meant to be there at all. Little things like that I remember, but nothing very dramatic as far as that goes.

0:22:48.1

We were talking before about your time at school, and the walk that you had, the long walk from 'Homeleigh' to Hall Public school. Before you went to school, and we've heard from other pupils of the time, that there were chores that had to be done.

Yes. I don't remember a great deal that I did. As I was older I had to practise the piano, I was learning piano. And I had to do that for a while in the morning. And that was always a bit of chore because especially in the winter time when there was no heating or anything in the room where the piano was, it was fairly cold. I think we had a porridge or a cooked breakfast and maybe we'd have had an egg or something would have been breakfast and I guess make our beds or something like that. I don't think we did a great deal. I don't think we were very hard pressed to be honest. Lunch was fairly simple and we didn't have fancy plastic sandwich holders. It was an Ovaltine tin with a bit of grease-proof paper your sandwiches would have been wrapped up in. And I suppose we had a piece of fruit or something for play lunch. But it would have been, I think my favourite sandwich was cold meat and relish. Everything was mutton and we didn't have much else. But that, that would have still been one of my favourite sandwiches to be quite honest. Tomato relish and cold mutton. But it wasn't anything very glamorous. We might have had a little bit of cheese or something but I don't think there was anything very startling. Dad used to talk about when he went to school, the fillings for sandwiches were even more sparse but his mother used to give him that sort of thing, a bit of meat or something like that. And there was some of the students that went to Ginninderra who would only have bread and treacle. And it used to intrigue Dad and they'd sometimes swap their nice sandwiches for bread and treacle, which Grandma didn't approve of very much at the time I think. But when you think about it, bread and treacle would have been fairly rough fare wouldn't it.

I think so. You said that you were learning the piano. Was that something that Richard O'Sullivan gave you as an incentive to do? Because I understand he was interested in music. Is that right?

Oh yes he was interested. We sang and we did things but it was nothing to do with him. Mum - Mum played the piano. And I think Grandma Kilby taught piano. And it's gone right down the line as far as that goes. But I learnt from Miss Morris, Kath Morris out along the road, as did many of the young ones. Any of the young ones I think, that would've been in Hall, would have learnt from her.

Yeah, Kathleen Morris she's well known .

Yes, we used to laugh when we'd go to her because she was, they were Jehovahs Witnesses and every time we went we used to get a little sermon, as well. And Audrey and I, we'd play duets sometimes but I learnt from her for a long time. And she was quite good. But I always remember one particular day she got cranky with us and she hit me on the fingers with a pencil and it really hurt. And Audrey and I were so disgusted that when were walking home, when we left Audrey went to her place and I had to go over the hill to my place, we used to stop and turn and poke our tongue out at her. But I don't think she ever knew anything about it. One other day I rode a horse to a music lesson and I had to go through a gate. And when I went through the gate I got a splinter under my fingernail. And it was awful. And when I got down there, to the music lesson, I had to be brave enough to let them pull it out. Because I couldn't have had a music lesson with this thing stuck in my finger. But I was, that was a big deal as far as I was concerned in those days. But she was pretty good really. We did exams and played at Eisteddfod and various things like that and I did ok.

0:27:17.7

That's great. What did you do on the weekends?

As little kids I think we just messed around the place. When we were a bit older we used to go down to the village and play tennis or things like that. I don't think there was anything terribly exciting. We often had friends out, as I was in my teenage years. There'd be people who'd come out and visit. We'd go for a big long walk or something like that.

When you went down to the village, what do you remember? There would have been the store of course. Still 'Southwell and Brown'?

'Brown'. 'RH Brown'.

Oh, so it was Ross Brown's store. Do you remember what it was like? You know when you walked in there, what did you see?

Oh yes, the big - He was behind the counter. The big counters went all the way along. And there were all the various bits and pieces there. There'd be things of sweets, p'raps on the, on the counter. On the other side, there were, there's another counter but on the opposite side there'd be bits of manchester and hardware and things like that. Some of them were quite intriguing. He had a few centre things too with other things on, but it was a really typical old store with big containers of whatever. Fairly simple.

And when you came out of the store, across the road was the garage?

Across the road was the garage and then the hall, and then next to that, down a bit further, was another little old shop called Gudgeons. And they had sweets and sorts of odds and ends. But we didn't go there very often. We'd go there when we went to the pictures because they would open at half time and we could go down there and buy some lollies or something like that. But it was, I can't remember much about the inside of that, but it was a fairly quaint little place. And you might say it was a bit of opposition to Uncle Ross.

0:29:34.9

With the garage, was that when Jim Rochford had it?

Yes, most of the time it would have been Jim's, as far as I can remember.

Down on the corner, I understand there was a guest house at some stage, run by Mrs Hollingsworth?

I don't really remember it. I do remember Mrs Hollingsworth.

'Granny' I think they used to call her. Granny Hollingsworth.

I think that might have been a bit before my time actually. Or that I would have registered. Old Ebb Brown lived next door to the, to the shop.

That's right.

And then that's where Jean Southwell ended up. And then 'Choisseul' was down behind that. And that was Uncle Ross's and Auntie Grace's house. And then next to that were Gordon and Maudie Brown. Um... and on the other side of the street, up behind Gudgeons, and up that way, it was along that street that facing the park there was 'Glenona' and that was where my mother's Mum and Dad spent the last years of their lives.

That was the Smith's place wasn't it?

Yeah. They moved from 'Woodgrove' which was down nearer the river. And they moved up. And they lived there until they died. But they died before I was born. About a year before I was born.

And then on Sunday of course, church?

Yes. Often it wasn't till the afternoon. Or else, for a long time we had church in the morning and Sunday school in the afternoon. So our days were pretty much taken up. But we - we were... Wattle Park was associated with Queanbeyan. We were near New South Wales and so we were, it was Queanbeyan we were connected with. And the minister from Queanbeyan used to come out to Wattle Park. We didn't - we were, we bypassed Canberra at that time.

0:31:35.5

Do you remember in your younger days any sort of exciting events that happened in the district?

Don't know that I really can... just off the top of my head.

There was the annual show, the Hall show that went for many years. Did you or your family become involved in that?

Yes. And I actually became a steward when the show was still at Hall. And I'm still one.

Right. And you've obviously been quite fond of being involved in that.

Oh very much so. I've always been involved with the cookery. I've always liked cakes. Grace Brown used to be one of the ones, and Thelma Southwell was the Chief Steward in those early days. And we all sort of worked together and then when it came into Canberra, Thelma was Chief Steward for a while, then she passed it onto me and I was Chief Steward for quite a few years. And then it all got too big. And for example the cake decorating and things like that became big time stuff and so one of the other lasses took it over from there. I still go over and do one day with the stewards for the show. And Chris is - she's the one who took it over from me - is still the Chief Steward, and she's very kindly said that all the while I'm able, I'm welcome. I really appreciate that. It's very special.

So you'd be an honorary life member.

I'm not a member. I haven't been a member. Dad was a member. He was an honorary life member. But my husband wasn't so interested in things and I just went as the steward. I didn't actually join when it was like that.

Right. Okay.

HIGH SCHOOL

One of the memories, most important to me really, was when I went to high school. I went to high school during the war. And petrol rationing was on and there were no buses from Hall into town. I went to Canberra High school so I had to board in town during the week and come home at weekends. There was a workman's bus which ran at 6 o'clock every morning. So on a Monday morning, I would leave on the 6 o'clock bus and come into Ainslie to Hargreaves Crescent, put my things in, catch another bus to school and I'd be there all the week. And I'd catch a bus at 6 o'clock on a Friday evening to go home. And I stayed with a family who had three boys and two girls, and the three boys were all at the war. So she had room in her home for me and then when Audrey started, she stayed there for a while. So did Runa for a short time. Then they eventually did run a school bus in the latter part of... I think it must have been 1944, because I had '42, '43, '44 at high school. And then I came home to help on the farm, rather than go onto my leaving and so forth. But it was quite a big jump to go from a one teacher school at Hall into Canberra High School. I was absolutely flabbergasted by the whole procedure. Apart from the fact that I wasn't at home during the week, and then you go on a bus, and there's a huge building and all these different classrooms and all these different teachers. You know I'd never even heard of algebra and things like that and it was pretty scary for quite a long while. I mean I did make friends, and I did do fine, and Mrs Dunner the lady who looked after us, she really cared for us. She had her two daughters at home and one of them was six months older than me. And she was in the year above me at school. But she was a bit of a... a scamp and she used to lord things over us. And we were in her house and we would do what she said. She was a bit like that. And so we were little innocents and we really were very green you might say. We just didn't - we should have stood up for ourselves more but May used to put it all over us. And we used to go to the pictures down in Civic and she had a boyfriend in a part of that time and we walked down to Civic from Hargreaves Crescent. And she'd make us walk home in front of her and the boyfriend so we couldn't see what they were doing. I've often thought about her. She married that boy and she went to South Australia and she didn't have a happy marriage. And you wouldn't believe it, she's back here in one of the retirement units now and I've actually met her again which was quite funny. But she really... she gave us a bad time in lots of ways. Where her mother was a lovely lady and her sister was a lovely person, but May was very dominating. That was one of the funny parts of my high school life.

0:36:54.2

When you were growing up, apart from your siblings, who were you close to?
Who were your friends?

Well I was very close to Audrey my cousin. She was only a year younger than me and we did just about everything together when we were growing up. We um... well we went to school together then when we left school we went to music lessons together. We went to tech together. We did all sorts of things. We were very close. Then when she married, she moved away for quite a few years. But then she came back again and we're back to our old relationship now. Which is really nice. I had other friends in the village who I would have gone to school with and the tennis club and the groups like that, you know I had lots of friends around.

0:37:42.2

Was there anyone in the village that as a youngster you were a bit fearful of? Were there any stories?

Oh well there were a few funny people down there. We used to make a bit of a drama if we ever went through the bush in case somebody would grab us or something like that. And there was a little man that lived in the village, and he was a very small man and we always heard that he was a homosexual and we had no idea what that was, and we were always a little bit scared of that to be honest. But I met him years later and we used to talk to each other and really, there was nothing wrong. But as a child he was a bit odd. And a few people like that. Some of them, a few older men that were drunks and things like that but they were ones we were always a bit wary of. We also used to be scared of tramps or swagman. And there were quite a lot of them around. And there was nothing to be scared of really but we used to make a bit of a drama about that. And there was a saying that if they had a good deal at somebody's house they'd leave a stone on a post. And there was a stone on the post at Grandma Kilby's and I can remember being at her house when a man called and she was kindness itself to him. And I can remember her getting pieces of newspaper and putting tea and sugar and flour, and she'd screw it around in a heap, and she'd give him that. And anything she had, meat or anything, she often gave them that too. She was always very kind in that sort of way. The other thing that she always did was she made a pie for an old man down the village who lived on his own and she did that for years and years and years. And I don't think anybody else ever took much notice of him. But they were things that I remember about her. And swagmen, they were usually ok. Dad used to sometimes have them helping in the garden or something like that. They'd earn a bit of money. There'd be people coming. One funny one that I do remember; we had a man digging our garden once, and we had a potty lamb that used to butt us a bit and our toilet was a way up, out, quite a way away from the house. And I got stuck in the toilet one day with this sheep ready to butt me and I had to sing out to this man to come and help me. Which was rather humiliating.

You mentioned the families in the village. That we've sort of come across. Ebenezer Brown, Ross Brown in the shop. Morris the Bootmaker. Jimmy Rochford in the garage. These names keep coming back. George Kinlyside.

Coultons.

Do you remember George Kinlyside?

Very vaguely yes.

I think he left the village in the late forties or mid to late forties.

I mean I have just a vague recollection of him.

This book, again, 'The Kilby Family', that Liz Kilby as just recently written, there's a nice article that you wrote about memories of your father, Athol. And you talk about - well, there's a number of things - but you talk about the bushfires in 1939, and how that affected you on your holiday.

That's right we went down to Kiama and we were in a funny little cottage down there with a dear little lady who was sort of looking after us. We had this - the walls were actually brown paper in some of the rooms. They were very thin. Mum was pregnant with Melda at that time and I can remember the fires quite clearly. There were big trucks rushing up and down the highway all day. And Dad got word, Miss Windsor had a phone, Dad got word that there were fires threatening 'Homeleigh'. And he left to go home. We had a '35 Chev, and he took several of our little buckets with water, because the pedals were metal, and they were hot. And he drove, and he was, he drove up Macquarie Pass to 'Homeleigh'. And it was - a fire in Macquarie Pass as well. And he was the last person to go up the Pass that day. And then our dear little Miss Windsor heard on the radio that nobody had been able to get up Macquarie Pass, and Dad didn't come back. And she sat on that news all day and didn't know what to do. And finally, late in the evening, he phoned. And he had had arrived home. And just as he arrived home at 'Homeleigh', the wind changed. And it was about to roar up the valley there just onto the house. But at the last moment, the wind dropped and it changed and 'Homeleigh' was saved. But then Miss Windsor told Mum what she'd heard during the day and she'd worried about that all day long. But that was quite a, quite an event and Dad always thought the old '35 Chev was a pretty good car after that.

You also say in that story, how kindly your father was. And he befriended a lot of people.

He did. He did indeed. He just had a way with them and a way with young boys and things like that. He used to have a lot of people working for him at various times. I've actually had a letter this last week since my sister died, from the wife

of one he befriended many, many years ago. And we've still kept contact. But he had, he always, thought the kids had a - had to give them a chance in life. And I think I've told in the book, there was one story, there was one boy that he was very disappointed in. And he could never find him, and then he'd find him down in the shearers' huts, laying on one mattress with another mattress on top of him. And Dad was really disappointed when he left and he felt as if he'd failed with that boy. And it really hurt him because he tried very hard. And quite a few years later, when we were on our way down the coast, and we'd pulled up at the Punt at Nelligen - that's a long time ago - and a young man came up and said 'Hullo Mr Kilby'. And it was this boy. And he said "I wanted to say thank you Mr Kilby for what you did for me. You really turned my life around." That was like giving Dad a million pounds at that time. And he couldn't have been nicer. I've often wondered what happened to him afterwards but um... Dad always used to... that meant a tremendous amount to Dad. There were a lot of people that seemed to gravitate to 'Homeleigh'. I don't know...Dad always had an open, happy work for them and give them a bit of a job. And we had the same shearers year after year after year and all that sort of thing. So I think he must have been a fairly amiable fellow. He loved the land and he loved what he did. He was always - he had these funny little quotes and he'd walk out in the morning and "wish it was Monday morning" and "we were up and at it". And then he'd walk out and say "not a cloud in the sky and sheep for miles". That was the best thing. And he used to say there wasn't a day's work he didn't enjoy. And that's saying something for someone on the land because they had a lot of pretty awful things to deal with. One way and another. But he just loved everything that much. And then we'd go down to the coast, and once we came up over the mountain and he'd take a big breath and say "Good old Monaro air". That was... and I still quote these jolly things because they still, they keep in my mind, very much. That's the sort of person he was. That and his whistling. He used to whistle. And Mum used to always know where he was. But it was a fairly untuneful whistle, but he whistled loudly all the time. That was part of him. So he was a really happy man and he was really - became ill too soon and um... didn't live to be as old as he should I don't think. In this day and age it would have been different.

0:46:22.1

Do you think his character came down his father's line, or his mother's line?

Yeah, I reckon... well I think all of his brothers are the same sort of people. I think they had a very good, strong family relationship. I mean there were six boys and two girls, and they've all been very good members of their community. And all very much the same sort of person - bit different personalities I suppose. But Dad was an animal man, Uncle Keith was a machinery person. And they all blended very well. They were all very upright gentlemen.

Well certainly what I've read about James Kilby, you know being very community spirited and I don't know a lot about his wife Beatrice. Her role in the community?

It was fairly strong I think. She was one of those people - she was very open and honest with people and one time I remember there was a mission thing came around somewhere, where they had tents and things in the village. Grandma talked to these people and she was straight out said "Who are you" and "What do you belong to" and all the rest of it. And then she went to some of their meetings and everything else. And then she found out that they weren't quite what they were cracked up to be. And she, she told them so I think. You know, she was a very strong personality. But very kindly. They were - but they knew where they stood in their community and... open in that regard.

So overall, your reminiscences, your life growing up in the area were good.

Yes.

Positive and pleasant and -

Yes.

And despite the natural disasters of the flood, fire and drought, you all managed.

Yes. I think Dad and his brother were good managers. And we - we did have a good, a good, well grazing property. They grew some crops and things. But we had various paddocks sort of spread out. It wasn't all in the one close area. And they had the lease for a lot of the ACT land. And then eventually you know the government took it over and that was, that was the only disadvantage. Um... when you had leasehold land they paid you when they resumed it. They paid you for the improvements you put on but not for the land itself. Because it was only leasehold. So, a lot of people who, wanted to shift away and buy land didn't have enough money to do that. Where others who were on freehold in New South Wales, when they wanted to move, they got good prices for it, which made a big difference. There were some people that were very bitter about that. But Dad knew that was what it was all about. And he was kind of prepared for that.

0:49:32.0

Was your father part of the Farmers Union or the Progress Association or...?

He was... uh the PP Board. The Pastures Protection Board. He used to go into Yass and he was also a member of Legacy. And he was P&C and all sorts of things around Hall. He was very involved. And in his young days he played cricket and he played football and he was members of all that sort of thing.

For Hall?

Yes. Rugby Union.

I think I also read that he played ping pong as well.

Yes. Part of his courtship of Mum was, was ping pong. They had lots of fun and there were always jokes about when they had injuries there was Zam-Bucks and Sloane's Linament and that's what came into everything. When they were - they had jokes about if anything was injured Sloane's Linament or Zam-Bucks could cure anything.

Oh I see.

Except love.

Thinking earlier about, you know, illnesses in the family and where the nearest doctors and treatment were...

In my young days we used to go to Dr Moya Blackall and she was in Canberra, in Braddon. Um... there's a drive through McDonalds just as you come into town on the left hand side and it was just in that block there was where she was. But her father was in Queanbeyan, and he was the doctor Mum and Dad went to all the time. And when she no longer practiced, we went into Queanbeyan then to a doctor. But it was Queanbeyan that where all of them and Mum went and in our very young days. But Moya Blackall was our doctor and then there was Dr James, another one, and he was up there in Braddon also. There the ones I kind of remember.

0:51:29.9

Did you ever feel isolated?

I don't think so. I don't think we ever thought of that. We had the usual illnesses and things. Both the sister and I had whooping cough which kept us, we were home from school for six weeks. And that wasn't very nice. And there was nothing much you could do about it. Mum had some funny little blue lamp that she'd burn that had something that was supposed to help us but it took a long while. That was one of the worst things that we had. But we had various other... mumps and things too. You know we'd just stay at home and played about the farm when we did that.

Did you lose any of your school mates when you were at school? Through illnesses or accidents?

No, I don't think I did. No, I think... you know people went away but no there wasn't anything very dramatic when I, at that age. Some of them when they, when I was a bit older died very young which was a bit sad.

0:52:33.7

You mentioned earlier about going down to the Kinlyside or Rochford Hall, which was the movie theatre, which we have recreated somewhat, in a simple manner at the museum. What films did you see?

Lots of cowboy ones. Anything that was on the go then. But there was this one, one revolting thing called Manmade Monster. I was a little kid and I can still see this person being carried through a swamp all glowing and everything else. And it scared the living daylights out of me. And I don't think I ever felt the same since. But it was a, it was very much a fun evening when we went down there. I don't know how we actually survived with those dreadful heaters that Colin used to put in there with those drums of coke. When you'd first went in, it nearly smothered you with the smell of it, and then after a bit it'd all settle down and it'd be very warm. It was very nice. But um... I don't know - nobody would be allowed to do it these days. But no, it never, ever caught fire and nobody ever got burnt and I don't think there were any repercussions from it at all. But he'd have a couple of them sitting on the floor in the hall. That was about all the heating that there was. But we'd all come ready with rugs and things anyway.

And at half time you'd pop to the shop?

That'd be when we'd go to Gudgeons to get our little bits and pieces. There were always two movies. And it was a decent night. A lot of newsreels and things like that.

We did hear that the hall was also used for fundraising during the war.

Yes, yes.

And community gatherings.

They used to play cards down there. And they'd have dances and community gatherings every now and again. In the early fifties, when these Dutch and the German people came out, some of them were very good dancers and we had quite a few, really good social evenings down there then. And they were really good fun because they were really good people. When we used to - we never danced very much - but when we used to go to a dance, Dad would always come with us. And he'd just stand up the back and he never did anything. And I never understand why he did that. It was never - something I never understood. Then one night, I was down, I was down there at one of things, and one of the guys came. And he was very drunk. And he came up and started being really, a

bit fresh with me. And I didn't know what to do. And I knew then why Dad was there. Didn't say anything much but he just was there and that was, I knew why then. But one of my cousins, a man, used to - he was very critical of us dancing and he used to stand up in the corner with his arms folded and stare at us when we did it to make us feel guilty. And I never appreciated that much but I think his mother had had a bad time when she worked at Duntroon House or something. That was what had started that off.

0:56:01.9

You mentioned the number of the migrants that came into the village in the fifties. What sort of impact, apart from their good dancing, did it have on the community?

Well they joined in a lot of things. And as far as we - our family was concerned - we had one family came and lived in our shearers' huts. And that was Elizabeth Kilby's family. Her mum and dad, her and her sister and her brother. They lived in the shearers' huts. And when shearing was on, they actually moved into our house with us. And lived - we all lived together in there for about three weeks. And you know, it was really, it was accepted. Dad and Peter, we used to laugh at, because Dad couldn't speak Dutch and Peter couldn't speak English and you'd see them walking down the paddock poking their fingers at one another. Trying to tell each other the same thing. But we were very close to them. And you know we accepted all the other - other men. They were working in a nearby place and they used to come up to our place and have sing songs and things, we were... we mixed very well with a lot of them. I actually used to play the piano for the Dutch Australia Choir for a while. Because Peter Kruithoff was the conductor and I learnt a little bit then, what it felt like. Because I'd go in there to play the piano, and they'd be all talking in Dutch. And I didn't know what they said. And then he'd say "Play it again Bessie" and that was all I understood. And I learned a little bit what it felt like to be somewhere where you didn't know. We had a lot of good friends from the Dutch people.

What was the happiest memory in your childhood?

Oh....

When growing up?

That's a hard one. I think you know when I - when my little - when Melda was born, when I was only ten. And that was a sort of, that was something very special. I wasn't so aware of it when Runa was but ... that part of it? I think... I don't know that there's anything terribly outstanding that I can think of, off the cuff.

Things like, you know, when you grow up, you're looking forward to Christmas.

Oh well, we were always looking forward to that. We had very happy times. We always - at Christmas for example, most Christmasses we'd, on Christmas afternoon we'd go up to Grandma and Grandpa Kilby's, up to Eneagh Hill and that's where we met with all our uncles and aunts and other cousins. And we'd have a bit of a romp round with the, with our uncles, where we got to know them a bit. One particular year we had a fancy dress party there. And we all dressed up in all sorts of regalia and that was a very special occasion. But it was always a very happy time those things. I think one of the reasons was that, none of them were drinkers, and so there wasn't anybody that got drunk and unpleasant. And I thought about it afterwards. Everyone had fun but there wasn't any of that element in it. And I think that was one of the reasons perhaps.

Does it make you sad going past Eneagh Hill nowadays?

Oh yeah. I guess when I think about it, I think of the happy times. And you know, there's lots of good memories there so. When we went to visit a while back there, Audrey and I could rattle off where everything was in the house. And exactly what it looked like. I couldn't exactly remember the pictures and things on the walls so much, but a lot of the other, where things were and so forth, we could remember. And their garden and things like that was always unusual and I could remember she had a big gooseberry bush. And we used to top and toe gooseberries, that was one thing. And things like that you just, that were very clear in your mind as a child, I think, that mean a lot.

Yes. Well thank you Bessie. It's been wonderful to talk with you. And spend the time with us this afternoon. Is there anything you'd like to add before we close up?

Oh. No, I don't know. I've quite enjoyed doing it actually and I hope it works out alright.