

This is the fourth in the series of interviews on the pioneer families of the Hall District. Today I'm speaking with Mr Kingsley Southwell; descendent of Mr Thomas Southwell who came from England and arrived in Sydney in 1838, and then in 1840 settled on a piece of land along the Ginninderra Creek. G'day Kingsley. How are you?

I'm well thanks Phil.

Now what can you tell me about Thomas Southwell, who came to Australia from England, with his wife Eliza and two children in 1838?

I can tell you what my mother told me, and what I've read, and what I've learned from other people. Apparently they lived in Robertsbridge in East Sussex, England. And he was a fairly, you know, successful guy with what he was doing with his work. He was a farm labourer, like a lot of them were over there. He didn't – I don't think he owned any land in England. But he'd heard that, you know, land was available in Australia and people were leaving England in hordes. You know, to get away from the terrible conditions that they lived in over there. And it was actually a question of whether he came to Australia or to America. And he went down to the wharf or whatever apparently, and he got on the first ship that was leaving, and it happened to be the Lady Nugent and it came to Australia. It came to Sydney, Australia. So he arrived here, I think, towards the end of 1838. Settled around Cobbity near Camden for a couple of years and sort of established himself a bit. I don't know much about his life there but he heard, when he was living there, that there was good land available, and good living conditions in the Ginninderra Creek. So he decided he'd come and have a look and he came up here, about 1840 sometime, with his young family, and settled here. Decided it was good and decided to stay here. I understand he only worked as a farm labourer for some of the wealthier farmer type people around the place, until he put together some money. Because he was a very careful man with what he did with money and what he believed and just was a decent sort of guy apparently. And, yeah, he came up here in 1840 and it was then some years later before he actually bought some land. But he eventually got some land and built a house, and so it went on.

0:02:15.8

He was quite a religious man I understand.

Absolutely. He was a very keen Wesleyan Methodist in England before he left. And when he came out here he preached and believed in the same thing. He – one of the first things he did after he got land was build a church of all things. You know, he built his house and the next thing he built was a church because that's how strong his faith – his Christian faith – was.

0:02:37.9

I understand from the information I've read that he built his first place, or he bought his first piece of land, in 1854 and called it Parkwood.

Yes. Something like that. I - I - The exact date you've obviously got out of a book or something. That's fine. I'm not sure about the name "Parkwood". He must've brought it from England. There must be a place in England called Parkwood, otherwise where would he get it from? 'Cos it sounds like an English name doesn't it? Ah... it's amazing how a lot of the – a

lot of the properties around this area all had "Wood" in their name. I can think of about six or eight properties that were either started with "Wood" or ended with "wood". So, yeah it must be an English term.

0:03:14.9

Before he was able to buy land, he had some very unfortunate incidents in his life I s'pose you'd call them. In 1852 his wife Eliza died...

Yeah. You can imagine that. Living out here, in this Australian bush, full of wild men and ticket of leave guys and bushrangers and all sorts of types that weren't very pleasant. And here he was. His wife died having their ninth baby. You can imagine it. Back then imagine it. She died from emphysema or something. Not emphysema. Uh, septicaemia. And they kept the baby going for a little while. A few – a few weeks I think. But it eventually died. So here was this man that – that – well by then he had eight young children. Living on his own, in the bush. Way out in the middle of nowhere. Life would've been tough. Oh hell, it would've been tough. Anyway, fortunately a year or so later he met a widow. Ah... Mary. Mary- Mary... And he fell in love with her fortunately. I s'pose he needed her and she needed him because she was a widow with two girls and here was this lady out in the bush with two children on her own. Fortunately they fell in love and they married. And that was, that was the best thing that could've happened to him. And um, well he went on and had nine more children with her.

That was Mary Croxton I believe.

Yeah. Yes, yeah.

0:04:37.6

How do you think, you know, the family survived on the land. I mean, a lot of the farmers failed as selectors. Either they chose the wrong piece of land or the, you know, the drought conditions or whatever. Why was Thomas so successful?

Well if you think about it, he had all these children. So as soon as the boys especially were old enough, they'd be working with him. And the girls were out working. They'd be looking after the milking cow or they'd be working in the vegetable garden, or they'd be doing something or other to help. So he had plenty of free labour. And that's, I think, what made him successful. Plus he was a pretty clever guy. You know, shrewd sort of guy. And uh, you know he eventually started then with a bullock team going to Sydney. And he'd take some - one of his sons with him, half the time. You'd need always a second person to do it. And he'd line up someone to take and he'd take them down there. And he'd work on that.

0:05:22.9

You said he was quite a religious man and you did mention that the area that here was quite, a bit like the Wild West with the bushrangers and the activities. I think it was Julia Webb, 'Judy the Great', even commented – and she ran a sly grog shop – she commented that the arrival of Thomas in the area had a great effect on calming down the area and bringing good into the locality.

Absolutely. He was a – he was obviously a total teetotaller. Um... and he preached the

gospel wherever he went. As I said he built his own church in about 1860, I believe, and he invited, you know preachers in from all around the area to come and preach at his church. And he did a lot himself. And apparently, you know, every night in the Parkwood home they'd have a little service. Either bible reading or whatever. So he was very sort of strict on all that sort of thing. And that – that rubbed off on the people in the community. And yeah people did respect him for what he stood for. I mean there was one story apparently where one of these wild sort of guys held him up. And he must've been home on his own I think – I'm not a 100% sure of the story – but they wanted his money, and he said “I haven't got any”. Because he'd heard they were around and so he, the little bit of money he had, he put it in the bark of the wall of his house. Hid it in other words. Anyway when he, when these shonky blokes came to take his money he turned to them and said “I'm not afraid to die, but what's going to happen to you?” In other words, he wasn't afraid of that guy. He wasn't afraid. That was his Christian belief and that's what he – that's what stuck to him. The guy left. I think Thomas probably frightened the living daylights out of him which would have been a good thing. He left and he pinched the kids money box apparently and got a couple of bob out of that, or something or other. So yeah he was a man of standing in the community. And his descendants, well a lot of them, are still the same.

0:07:10.3

I understand in that incident he was actually tied to a tree and they threatened to shoot him unless he told them where the money was hidden and he refused to.

That's right. He refused to tell them. They tied him but eventually somebody – he got free. Or somebody come and let him free.

0:07:24.7

He built his first brick home I understand in 1860.

'63 I think. I think yeah. It's still there. The Parkwood house is still there.

The original homestead?

The original house yeah. Been modified quite a bit but yeah.

And he also gave land up for the church to establish the Weetangera Methodist church? Is that right?

No. No. He gave land to the church to build the Parkwood church, which is quite close to his house. Where he lived there. There was a 99 year sort of a permanent lease thing or something to the Methodist church. I don't know how that part of it worked. And that's all worn out – time's up now but the – it's still on that property and it's maintained. It's not used much. But it's maintained. Occasionally they have a wedding there or something. They have open days in Heritage Week and so forth. It's been – it's been preserved pretty well.

0:08:14.1

Right, ok. One of his – just on a slight tangent – his son by Eliza was Tommy. Thomas or Tommy. Now Tommy was a bit of an eccentric character I understand.

Yeah Tommy Two Sticks.

That's right.

Yeah. He had these two sticks. Nobody knows what they looked – what they were. There's all sorts of ideas of about 'em. My mother never knew. And if she would've known – if she would've known she would've said. But she didn't know. We used to talk about it and she didn't know. They weren't crutches. They were something like, something like some sort of sticks. But apparently you could get along on them. Whether or not they were just like long walking sticks? We don't – I don't know. We don't know. We don't know. But apparently he could travel as fast as a horse they reckon. Now I think he'd knock up pretty quick with anything like that. But yeah he was always called Tommy Two Sticks.

0:08:58.8

In 1858, Thomas's brother John arrived from England also, with his wife Lucy. And I think they established themselves on an adjoining property. But I'm not sure how long they stayed there.

No there was apparently four brothers that came out over a period of time. Yeah, John came out. He settled around, like where Canberra is now. Where Lyneham and some of that sort of area is. Apparently. His descendants are still in that area. And there's another one, Mark, who... he didn't have any children from memory. And there was another one. I think his name was William and he went to the goldfields in Victoria. And we never heard much about him. I didn't – I only learned about him a few years ago. I didn't even know he ever existed. Uh, but I think he – he might have even left Australia. I'm not sure.

Right.

But yeah there was the other two, that came here later on yeah. Followed their brother.

So there was quite a few Southwells established in the area by you know the late 1860s, 1870s...?

Yeah. Because this guy had these twenty children and you know they all surv – well the nineteen survived at least. The baby died. That first baby died. The nineteen survived. And they had a hundred and thirty-eight children between them. Right? So my father, think about it, my father is a grandson of Thomas. He's got a hundred and thirty-seven either brothers and sisters or first cousins. Which is a massive family. Now, those hundred and th – they all married sort of thing and, well I don't about all a hundred and thirty-eight married (I s'pose they did) but you can imagine. There's thousands of them. We had a – they had a centenary in 1938 apparently at Parkwood, and there's a famous photo there with all the people in it. I don't know how many were there 'cos I wasn't there. But we had another one in 1988 at the ANU in Canberra. And there was over three thousand people at that.

Wow.

And that's just the ones that came. We've got a photo of that. That, you know, three – I don't know - three thousand people in it? How many in it I don't know. I think some had left by that time, but yeah. But it's got that big now. You know it's almost impossible to track down. Some people try and do it but they – they get it wrong. Sometimes.

0:11:05.3

Thomas died in 1881, and four years later his wife Mary died. So that left the children to carry on the tradition of the Southwells in the area. Let's talk about Richard. Now Richard Southwell, who was your grandfather, settled here at Brooklands.

In 1877. Single man then. I mean he was only twenty-something. Twenty-four or five something. Um... whether - how much he did in the early days I don't know. But he got Brooklands. He had two hundred and twenty acres. Uh, and he would've built some sort of a house here I guess. But then he married in 1882. He married Amelia Smith, who was a local girl. And they set up house here. And he built, you know, a substantial house then. At the time. And they had nine children and lost three of them as infants.

0:11:58.4

What do you remember of Richard and Amelia?

Well, he died before I was born. They both died before I was born so I never met them. So I don't know. I've - I've talked to a cousin of mine there once who was old enough to remember him. And he said he's quite an interesting character but he didn't sort of - he was only a child and he didn't have that much memory of him. So. You know they were a long - a long way between... having children. Like, Richard was forty-three when my father was born and my father was forty-three when I was born. You know so it's a long time frame. And you know these old people die off before their grandkids know - knew them. So I don't know. But I know he was a hard working man. He uh, well he cleared this land here and set up a farm like this and he uh, he was a pretty respected man in the community like, like we said all the Southwells were. And he used to - one of his things in the winter time was driving with his rabbit cart from this Wallaroo area into Queanbeyan railway station. Where he'd - he'd pick up rabbits along the way that the young teenage boys had set traps. And they'd have them hang on a fence all the way along to Hall sort of thing and he'd pick them up and keep a score and all that. Take them into the train, put them onto the train, they'd go to some freezing works in Bungendore or somewhere, and he'd come home again. That's a fair sort of day's work I'd reckon. Uh... and you know, he'd give the money to the kids that'd picked up and he'd keep a bit himself I s'pose and whatever. He did that for a lot of years I know. Uh... because you know to make a living off the land was hard. Was real hard. You know. Sheep had a lot of - they were mainly sheep farmers. They tried to grow a bit of crop but you know most of the crop that they grew was fed back to the horses anyway. So you know that was a vicious circle. The only thing that they produced to sell off would be wool, and old sheep sort of thing, and old sheep were worth nothing. The fat on them were worth more than what the meat was sort of thing. 'Cos they didn't have refrigeration so you know that sort of thing was useless.

What did they use the fat for?

Oh making candles and soap and all sorts of things like that.

And that was all done at home wasn't it?

Yep. Yeah, pretty well yeah. They'd make callow candles. They don't - they wouldn't last long. Just out of the sheep fat. Melted down and put in a candle mould with a wick in it. I

think they get one night out of a candle or something.

0:14:12.5

How many acres was Brooklands back then?

Two hundred and twenty. In the original bit. And then you've got another seventy acres. And then you got another... oh sixty and a... forty and a... I don't – I'm not sure. I should know. Another hundred and something acres on top of that. Two hundred and ninety yeah. It was never a very big property. 'Cos the land all around was owned by big guys. And they couldn't get more. They couldn't expand. They was landlocked. They couldn't get out any further. And so they were stuck with doing what they could do off the farm type of thing. And his thing was his rabbit cart amongst other things.

And rabbits were a huge problem weren't they at the time.

Oh absolutely. They were in plague proportions.

0:14:57.9

Now Brooklands is situated in the Wallaroo parish of the district whereas Parkwood we'd probably call, what? The Weetangera area?

Either Weetangera, or Ginninderra it was.

Yeah. So was Richard also a religious person?

Well listen it all rubbed off on all Thomas's children. It'd have to. Uh... I don't think they... the children, like Richard for example was as – their faith was as strong as what Thomas's was but it certainly – they certainly had a Christian faith. There's no question about that. You know, they were clean living people. They, they were church-going people. They were God-fearing people. And they went to a lot of lengths to – to live cleanly sort of thing. Live properly.

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So was Richard involved with the Wattle Park church?

Absolutely. He would have been one of the ones that helped build it. It was built in 1882. Opened in 1882. Remember that was the year he got married see. So, he was only a young fella. But he would have contributed, 'course he would've done. Yeah absolutely. Like they all would've contributed to it. Because they built – Thomas built the church in Parkwood in 1880 which was only two years before. See he died soon after that. And that church never got used much. Once he died, and see all the family – a lot of the family – had moved away and a lot of them had come to this Wallaroo and Hall area, and Spring Range and that sort of area and they needed a church up this end of the town. Up – up this end of the country. And so, it was only a couple of years later that they built Wattle Park church. And it's-it's you know been thriving ever since. Where Parkwood church, basically, it didn't fail but you know it wasn't used much. Because Thomas had died and he was the mainstay. And so, it was never used much.

0:16:37.6

When was the Weetangera church built? Next to the cemetery?

I think it was 18... 77 I think. Don't quote me though. It's on a plaque I ended up – we took back one day. I... no 18... 1877 I think. I'm not sure. Don't quote me on it.

We can check.

Yeah we can check. It was only a slab church though. It was a pretty rickety sort of a slab church. And it was actually moved down from down near where Lyneham is today in Canberra. Somewhere down there on the old Yass Road. And they moved it. So it was never a very permanent sort of a structure.

0:17:11.8

But it's interesting the cemetery that's adjacent to where the church was; that's where Thomas and Mary are buried.

Yeah. Well 'course, he was one of the ones that helped establish that church, as well as his own, but this one – the Weetangera one was more of a central area, where a lot more people were. Parkwood was sort of down, down towards the river, where the country was a lot rougher and so there wasn't many people down there. Where they sort of all lived around this Ginninderra Creek and all that. It's a bit more into that Weetangera area. Uh, but he was one of the main ones and he – I think there was two acres or something of land that would have belonged to the Methodist church for years and then it eventually... you know the Uniting Church took it over and it was apparently the last bit of freehold land in the ACT to be converted from leasehold to freehold. And the Uniting Church got a bit of money out of it. But it still sits there today. Um... the land's there. I think there's about two acres thereabouts. The church's on one acre piece, and the cemetery's one acre. And Thomas apparently went along and sort of measured a – got a centre of it all and put his heel in the ground and said “Bury me here in the middle of it”. And that's where they buried him in the middle of, right in the middle of the cemetery portion of it. And Mary's right next to him.

0:18:21.8

From your mother, and she's a noted, not only family historian, but also a local historian for the Canberra region; did she talk much about your Grandmother Amelia?

No. Not much about Amelia. You know. They used to call them Dick and Milly. Richard and Amelia, but they were Dick and Milly always. You know. Uncle Dick and Auntie Milly I s'pose or whatever. Uh... no... she spent more – she talked more about her mother. My mother and her mother – my Grandmother – her mother Beatrice had a very close relationship apparently. You know it was a loving, caring relationship with these two women. That you don't apparently see all that often sort of thing with mother and daughter, when it was. But no... so apart from just a bit of general stuff, no she didn't talk much about Amelia. But she, I'm sure she had every respect for her. She was – she was quite a lovely lady apparently. Only a small lady you know. Had all these children and she was a bit sickly. She had a hidatid operation I know not long before she died in Sydney which would have been a traumatic experience then. Lost three children you know, as infants. Life was tough.

Very sad.

0:19:29.7

Alright well we'll move onto your father Cedric. Now Cedric inherited Brooklands from Richard.

No he paid for some of it.

Did he?

Yeah he paid for some of it. Yeah. The Brooklands he might have inherited, the two twenty acres. But the rest of it, I know he paid some money for it. Yeah.

What was the farm like when he took it over? Quite a viable farm?

Well... see Richard died in 1933 so he didn't – he wouldn't have officially taken it over until then. He would have been like a lot of us. Worked for their father. But – but no, Dad got land down the Murrumbidgee river. He got nine hundred and something acres down there. And he bought that in 1923 when he was younger. He was only twenty-three or something at the time. So it wasn't bad. I don't know where he got the money from. I mean he obviously borrowed some of it but you know he'd have to had some kind of deposit. He must have made a bit trapping rabbits and he used to grow vegetables and sell pumpkins and all sorts of things. Uh... but no he had land down there which was only two or three mile away from here but he had a little hut down there. He camped there sometimes for the night, but mostly he'd come back here. So that was his land from – from... He sold that in about 1950 or something or other. Because some of this land around Brooklands became available for sale so he jumped in quick on that. So he had that land down there and he worked for his father as well. So yeah it was productive land. But what – what he – one of the things he always used to say was he bought seven hundred and something sheep to put on it, and in that year he lost... like half of them or something. He used to quote the figures. He lost a large proportion of them to liver fluke and black disease. Which is a terrible thing that sheep get that's control – we can control it nowadays, we've got vaccines and all sorts of things for it now – but back then they didn't have much and the sheep just up and died. It affected their liver and they'd – they'd, they'd just up and died. Nothing much they could do. They'd – they'd drench them in something but it didn't work half the time. Once they got vaccines for black disease it – it uh it's one of these diseases that sheep get – once they got on top of that, you know it was right. So he had it tough too. And he – but anyway, yeah. Yeah.

0:21:41.5

He was a religious person too?

Yeah.

A strong Methodist?

Yeah, absolutely, yeah. Didn't talk a lot about his faith but he was. Yeah. You could sense it. You knew it was there. Teetotaller and you know, clean living guy. Did work for the community. Did a lot of work for the community.

What sort of work?

He had forty-four years on the Yarrawlumla Shire council for example. And now that to me's a

lifetime of punishment. He was Shire President for a couple of terms I think. Back in the early fifties. He had, oh I dunno how many years, as a director on the Yass Pastures Protection Board. Um... he was all involved with the Canberra Show. He was all – he had lifetime involvement there. 'Course, involvement with the church. Uh... he was one of the ones that started the Wallaroo Bushfire Brigade for example. And he had a long involvement with the bushfire brigades, in their early days. When they didn't have any equipment much. But somebody had to start and he was one of them, along with a couple of others. Oh he did a lot of other things for the community. You know, more than I can remember. He used to run – ran a ewe competition in the sixties I can remember. All sort of, you know, farm-related things but – but good competition in the district. You don't see that anymore.

0:22:50.6

When, of course, you're talking about the Canberra Show, it would've been the Hall Show.

Oh yeah, originally yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

Held in the Hall Showgrounds.

Yeah, but he was involved when it went to Canberra of course. He stayed there for a long time. He was a sheep steward and, oh all sorts of things he did in the show.

You mentioned his time on the Yarralumla Shire Council which is, you know, pretty valuable...

Well, he took over – well he took over - he had to be elected of course from his father. Richard had spent sixteen years I think it was, as a councillor, an elected councillor. Then, when he, well when he died... or he dropped out long before he died I think, uh... Dad then stood and had to be voted, you know, elected of course. And uh got himself very well respected in the Yarrowlumla Council. They had a lot – the staff and that in there had a lot of time for him. I used to go in there with him occasionally and they had a lot of respect for Dad. He uh he did a lot... He did a lot. He didn't think – you know everybody said “oh, you know, there's all these councillors, they all tar their own road and all these things”. But Dad wasn't like that. He did a lot for this local area because we're out here and Yarrowlumla Shire then was based in Queanbeyan, and you had Canberra in between them. And this was sort of a dead end thing out here. And he used to fight for this area yes. But not – not for his own road type of thing. Yeah.

That's an interesting point that you touch on. What was the impact on the farm, on your family, when Canberra started to grow? And you know, as we sit here at Brooklands, and look over we can see suburbs of Canberra not that far away.

Yeah well apparently both my father and mother I think went to the naming in Canberra in 19 – what was it? 1913. So you know, they watched it grow right from day one. If they weren't there, they weren't far away. Or they went – they went to the opening of Old Parliament House and all those things. They went to that sort of thing. And so you know they watched it grow so sort of, they grew with it. Um... this sort of area we look at across at Belconnen and that now, that was only established in what? Seventies? You know, and by then Mum and Dad were sort of winding down. But it was there. Yeah and it's – it's totally – but Canberra – the offshoot from Canberra is that that all this land in New South Wales is freehold land. It's all been sub-divided now up into hobby farm-type things. There's no – there's no genuine

farmers at Wallaroo anymore. They're – it's all been sub-divided. Some of them think they're farmers but they're not really.

0:25:16.7

Your mother and father. Did they both go to Hall school?

Yes. Mum was in the first intake in 1911 when it started, and she, she did all her education there. Apart from I think one year at MLC in Sydney. At Burwood in Sydney. Um... Dad started at this Brooklands school. And he stayed here until the end of 1911 when it closed. Then he had to ride a horse to Hall. 'Cos he was the only one left here of that age to still go to school. So he rode a horse to school at Hall until he finished his education.

That's an interesting – another interesting – point that the Brooklands school was on the Brooklands property.

Yeah well apparently there was a lot of children in 1882. When Richard got married so (at that stage) he didn't have children. But there was a demand for a school. And there was a bit of local discussion. They decided that where the Brooklands site is, which was then the Wallaroo school, was the best central sort of spot to have it. And that – the parents built it apparently as a provisional school, and it outgrew that and by 1895 or something they built a proper school. You know a public school, a Department of Education funded thing. And the teacher – it was always a one-teacher school, and the teacher had to board with the parents around the place. And yeah so it went til the end of 1911 and then, as I said, the children were all gone and it was all over.

As an aside I understand Sarah Gordon who's one of the teachers eventually married a Southwell.

Yeah, yeah. Well that was inevitable wasn't it. These girls, these female teachers coming out of Sydney and all sorts of places sent out to the bush, I reckon ninety percent would've married a local farmer's son or something. That's the way it is. Fair enough.

0:26:59.5

Your mother Beryl is from the Kilby side of the family.

Yeah.

We have spoken to Wes Kilby and Bessie Bardwell who are descendants from that same family. Now, Beryl's parents were James Kilby and Beatrice Kilby. You mentioned before that she was very close to her mother Beatrice...

Yeah.

Were they still around when you were young?

Yeah she died... Grandmother died in 1947 so you know I was... I think she died – don't know what time of year she died... You know so I was only four or five. I can remember when she died though. I can just remember it sort of thing. I remember going up there in the cart, and me and my two sisters were in the back, and my mother was crying. And I sort of couldn't

cope with that. I thought why does my mother cry? Only children cry. You know your mother doesn't cry. And she was crying 'cos I mean on account of her mother's... I don't know if we were going to her funeral, whether it was the day she died or what. I dunno. It was a pretty sad time for her, I do know that.

Yeah. They lived at 'The Falls'.

Originally yeah.

And that was burnt out in the bushfires of 1905.

The property was. The house wasn't.

Oh right?

They saved the house I think. With a bucket of pig slops or something, so the story goes. So I think they saved the house, or most of it, pretty well. But the property was burnt and most of the stock would have been burnt.

But they then moved to 'Eneagh Hill' at Hall.

Yeah, well. I mean look - I think the fire was only part of it. I mean they had – they had... you know what? Three or four children before that. And you know they were of age to go to school and there was no school down there. Down the back blocks of Ginninderra Creek. So James decided he'd better go to where there was a school to get his children educated. And so he went up there. I mean and then he went – you know the older children went to Ginninderra school of course. Then when Hall opened they went to Hall.

0:28:57.2

Yeah you mentioned before that your mother Beryl was a very active family historian, and also did a lot of work with the Canberra District Historical Society. She contributed, I believe, too. To the history of the Wattle Park church and projects like that.

Well they had a lifetime at Wattle Park. Yeah. Did all the things that you did. Got involved in all the things. Worked hard for it. Which was what was the thing to do I guess. Yeah she was keen on the Historical Society. She was one of the founding members of it I believe. Was very involved with Blundells Cottage and all that sort of thing. Used to organise excursions out to properties and all sorts of things. Yeah. She was involved in that. That was her thing. History and stuff. And her home and her family of course. They came first. But you know as the family grew up and there wasn't as much demand on her sort of thing, she got more involved in this history sort of thing. Was her thing.

With the Wattle Park church, there was a lot of activities going on there. There was Sunday school. There was Band of Hope. There was all sorts of little sub-organisations. Were you a member of any of those?

Yep. I was. I was. I went to Sunday school from when – Day One almost. 'Cos I had two older sisters. They went so I had to go. I mean I was only a baby. But you know I eventually ended up going to the Sunday school. I went to Sunday school til I was about twenty-one I think. We had a good teacher I think. And there were six or eight of us. We had these Bible

study groups and we got on well. It was good.

Who was the teacher?

Stan Nowlan. He was a guy that worked on a property and then ended up managing it and so forth. He's gone from this area now but. He... uh... he was a good honest guy. And did a lot of good. Um... and then soon after I left there, I ended up going back as an assistant teacher. I sort of - actually I think it overlapped a bit. Sometimes I'd be an assistant teacher. Somehow. Probably at the kindergarten or something like that. Wasn't doing much but I was there. Um... and then I've had a lifetime of it. I've, you know, been going ever since. And then, like the Wattle Park Sunday school for example has only had four... four? Or five... four Superintendents. Which is the person that sort of runs it. The first one was old Samuel (Southwell). And then there was Samson Southwell. Like Samson's son Sam, at Wattle Park. Then there was Dad, Cedric, then there was - no there was five - there was Thelma, and then me. And under my tenure, it basically collapsed. But I don't think I can take the blame for it I think. Kids don't go to Sunday school anymore. We tried and we tried to get them there and you know it eventually wound up. They still try to run a thing up there now, but there's only one kid goes half the time. So I don't think you can really count it now. But yeah I had life involvement with that. This Band of Hope was one of these so called 'Temperance' things but we didn't - we didn't promote that part of it much. It was - it was an excuse to have a good time. We used to put on concert things... a couple of times a year maybe. You know a bit of simple play acting stuff. And anybody who could play a musical instrument or sing or something'd get up and do something. And we'd have a couple of social nights up there at the hall of the church. That sort of thing yeah.

When your father passed on, you inherited Brooklands. Is that correct?

No, no, no. It went to my mother.

Right.

She inherited it when he died.

And then I inherited it after that. From my mother when she died in 1988.

And you spent the last how many years on the farm?

All my life. Never lived anywhere else.

Seventy years. Seventy-one.

Seventy-one years. I had four years at boarding school.

Well we'll get onto schools in a moment.

For all the good it did me anyway. So yeah when I left school at sixteen I started work on the farm. And... then basically the only work I've ever done, the only - I went and did wool-classing. So I'd - I - I used to go away wool-classing a bit. Just as a break to do something different in life. And... I drove a - drove a dump truck down a river for a sand-wash gravel

crushing place there for a good while. As a bit of sideline thing. Just for a bit of fun. Bit of money. But it was dangerous work. I probably should have never've done it. Anyway that... that and I used the polling booth up here for the election. Those three things were the only things I think I ever got – only other, only other paid work I ever did. Apart from working on the farm.

The farm, I mean, is looking beautiful at the moment. We've had a good shower of rain, and everything's looking green and lush. You're obviously proud of – of the place. And you've put a lot of time and effort into it. Do you have any stories that you'd like to share about life on the farm? Uh, things like, you know, we've talked in the past about the shearers' dances, and the running races with the shearers and all sorts of activities that you would organise.

Yeah. Yeah that's something Cynthia and I'd sort of organised in through the eighties mainly. We had these shearers come from Condoblin. There was a lot of young fellas that came down here and had never seen the lights of a big city. And if they – and we often thought if they get in there, they'll run amok. And so we thought we'll keep them at home. And so we decided to put on a bit of entertainment for 'em. On a Saturday night we'd put on a wool-shed dance. And though – 'course all the shearers were invited. And anybody who ever worked on the property during the year for any reason at all was invited. And we'd invite as many females as we could get here of course. 'Cos there wasn't many here so we'd bring all the girls we could get. And we'd have a dance. We'd get a band. We were in the Country Music Association then and we'd get a little band out here. A coupla young fellas with guitars and some drums and stuff. Have a wool-shed dance. And then on the Sunday we'd run a foot race. These things took a lot of preparation. A lot of cheating, a lot of fun. It was all just simple fun. That's all it was. For that yeah.

There were many years where you know you were drought affected and the farm wasn't as productive as it could be. How did you manage?

You just had to keep going. I can remember those droughts in the sixties. Now you know I was still young then, and I seemed to spend all my time carting water to sheep. And cattle. We had creeks here that I could pump out of with a tractor and a five hundred gallon tank on a trailer thing. Do that all day. Cart it up and put it – dump it in the dam. Go back and get another load. You did it all day. Nonstop. I mean it would take about ten or twenty minutes to fill the tank so you'd have your lunch while you were doing that. And you'd go again, and you just went all day. Um... but after a while with droughts, I believe you get cunning. I know a lot of farmers don't do it. And I reckon that's wrong. I used to – well my father was the one who taught me basically, but I modified it a bit – I used to grow crops here. Not to sell but I'd put in an oat crop every year; and we used, the ewes used to lamb in May. And you'd put them on that green crop. Get the crop in early, the right variety of oats; get it in early in February or March. And by the time it was time to wean the lambs in June - not wean I'm sorry. To – to – the ewes were finished lambing. You could – you could put them on this oats. Green feed in the winter time. 'Cos it was good feed. And that'd feed 'em all through the winter. Then you'd shut it up about the end of August. And either make hay out of it in November, or harvest the crop in Christmas time. And put that away. So I used to have the silos here. Used to fill the silos with oats. Hay shed full of hay. And feed it back out in the drought. I do that all the time. Every year I do that. Only a couple of years did it ever really fail that crop. Actually fail and I got nothing out of it. Uh – but I pretty well always had some yes. It's only about twice that I ever bought feed and then I only bought it because I panicked I think. I didn't really

need to. So you know, I was sort of looking after m'self like that. And – and I reckon that's the way to survive. Well now people think 'oh you know we've gotta go and buy feed'. You know as soon the feed – you know as soon as the paddock looks a bit dry. You gotta rush out and buy a feed. And you pay a lot of money for it. And you know it keeps your stock alive. Yeah.

You have relayed a story to me in the past about; you had a visiting archbishop come and you had to shoot three hundred sheep.

Yeah. Yeah. Back in 1991 I think it was, in Canberra they had the the World Council of Churches conference where all these big time church people came to Canberra. For this conference. And I was teaching Sunday school out at Wattle Park and we usually had the kids singing along, and next minute this – I mean I knew the people were here sort of thing but I didn't realise at Wattle Park... yes wait I'm sorry I did yeah. Yeah 'cos he'd spoken at the church. But he walked in the door of the Sunday school sort of quite unexpected and here was this great big black shining man with this big red cape on. And we had to entertain him for a little while and that was alright. Anyway we invited him home after. He was interesting. He was interested to learn all he could about farming in Australia and everything else so I invited him home. And I've got a 1961 Cadillac and I remember I took him for a ride in this Cadillac and he thought that was pretty good. But we got talking you know, and that week I was going to shoot a heap of sheep. I ended up shooting 435 sheep in one go. Put 'em in a big hole in the ground. That takes a fair bit of doing. But he – I told him about that. And he was, what'd he say... the Bishop of Nigeria. That's right. And – and he had all these starving people and he cried when I told him I was going to shoot all these sheep. I said it was good meat, you could eat it. He cried. I said, "well you can have 'em. I'll give them to you. They're yours. You take 'em away." I said, "it's gonna cost me money to shoot them". And he cried to think he had all these starving people in his country and here was all this meat, all this food, and what could we do with it? Couldn't do anything with it. I then went on and suggested to him that his people should practice a bit more birth control but anyway. I don't think that went over real well but. I said "you're better off with a plane load of the pill or condoms or something". But he didn't like that.

Alright, we touched on your early life before. You spent time at a boarding school in Orange. Prior to that you did go to Hall school and I know that's been subject to another interview which was the Voices of the Past series done in 1990 I think it was, by the children at Hall School. But just to give us a short summary of your life at Hall school; what, you know, what are the highlights and the lowlights?

The day I turned six in November 1948 I think I went to Hall school for the first time. I might've. It was the day after. I don't know. So I started at the end of '48. Why my Mother sent me at the end of the year I don't know but it seemed like a good idea. I went there til the end of 1954, when Dick O'Sullivan was the teacher. One teacher school. In the old building up there. Um... we – we learned to read and write yeah. We learned to the tune of the hickory stick as they say. You know if you got it wrong you got yourself into strife. But we – we learned to read and write. We learned – I s'pose... I mean in some ways he was a shocking man. I can tell you some terrible stories but I won't. But he – we – we learnt. We learned. We had to learn. We learned. He'd have a couple of hours in the day when he could – he could teach ya. And you learned. You had to. And I know when I went to boarding school at the high school, you know I know some of the teachers said... you know could see that I could

do the work. I mean it didn't happen like that all the way through. But yeah but we basically had an education up there. Such as it was.

Well apart from the education what was school life like? You know how did you... you know what was – what was the school like back in the fifties?

When you hear about what kids do now at school and how much they're supervised and all this sort of thing, you know, we had none of that. You know play time and lunchtime there was absolutely no supervision. You could do what you liked. You went where you liked. But if you got into strife, you copped it. So you knew you didn't play up too much. But you know you had you free run of the school grounds. You'd play games, you could do whatever you liked. You couldn't leave the grounds but then why would you want to, there's no point. Uh... so you know we made our own fun.

The facilities were pretty basic weren't they? You had a weather shed to have your lunch in case it rained...

If it rained yeah, but mostly we'd sit outside. If was raining yeah we'd be in the weather shed yeah.

And basic toilet facilities?

Yeah they were pit toilets I think, when I first went there. Then they got these fancy whiz-bang things that never worked. They weren't a septic tank thing. They were something else. 'Hygienia' or something they had written on them. But they were a disaster. Stinkin' things they were. Yeah. So it was all pretty basic. But it did... like by the time I got there the school did have power. Which we didn't have at home at the start. So that was a big thing for me to have lights and all that sort of thing. But no heating. There was - well, when I say there was no heating, there were two little electric heaters that were next best to useless. The fireplaces that're up there now were closed off. We never had a fire going. Ever, ever did I see that. 'Cos it was blanked off. Um... yeah so life was tough. It was freezing cold in the winter time remember. Stinkin' hot in the summer, but it was cold in the winter. That was the hard bit. And boys then all wore short pants to school see. You never had long pants at all. Never had – didn't have - didn't own a pair of long pants I don't think. When I was a primary school kid. Then I'd ride a bike home. In the cold and the rain and the wind and whatever.

I was going to ask you how you got to school.

My parents used to drive me to – well I had two older sisters remember. We'd get driven to school mostly in the morning because it seems to be all uphill. You ride a bike from here to Hall and it seems to be all uphill. I don't think it really is but it appears to be. And you know we couldn't do it. You just couldn't do it. I mean you could've done it. I did ride my bike to school a few times yeah but they'd take us up there. And on Mon – on - on Tuesdays and Fridays we'd get a ride home on the mail run. The shop used to run a mail run, a grocery run and your job there was to open the gate for the driver and that. You know there was thirty/forty gates on that trip. So you – you earned your keep there. Um... the other three days I ride the bike home. As I got a bit older. Yeah.

Apart from school life then, what do you remember of growing up? I mean you're on the

property here at Brooklands but you went into the village? You went to movies? Went to the hall?

Like primary school time you're talking about? Age sort of thing? Yeah?

Yeah. Yeah.

Apart from school, church, Sunday school... um, not a – I used to ride my bike to Hall on Saturday afternoons sometimes. Just to meet up with a mate of mine. We'd do something together. 'Cos you know I was down here on me own. Only boy on me own you know.

Who was your mate?

Harvey Brown was my mate. He's my cousin. He and I were good mates. Did a lot of things together. Even as adults we did a lot together. You know as young adults sort of thing. On holidays and all that sort of thing.

What was Hall like then? In those days?

Hall was totally different to what it is now. Because it was a sort of a temporary dormitory thing for Canberra. There was older houses up there and things with people living in them. You know migrants came out here after the war and they had to have somewhere to live. And they'd live anywhere. After what they'd been through, they'd put up with anything. And it was a transient population. Living in all these old houses and half-falling down places. Until you know then it was... what was it? The late sixties or seventies when you know it all changed totally when the freehold thing changed and all that. So you went up there and made your own fun. You know, played around. Whatever. Didn't get up to too much mischief.

I get the sense though that Hall was quite a community. I mean you had the Hall show, you had the Hall hall – for want of a better word – where you had the dances and...

Yeah we used to run them. Like that was after I left school though.

Yeah.

We used to run dances in – in, where the antique shop is now. Did that for years yeah.

Well, you went to boarding school then. Ah just going through the timeline. You went to boarding school after Hall school at Orange.

Yep.

For four years was it?

Yeah.

And, and that finished off your education and then you came back to work on the farm.

Yeah. I went to tech and did wool-classing though. It was only further education I did.

Right. And that – you slotted straight into the farm life? You enjoyed it and... ?

Yeah... it's a big change though, it was. You know you're – you're at boarding school with a hundred other – or whatever – hundred other boys. You know and so you were with people all the time. You know of your own age sort of thing. You had friends and enemies and all the things that you do at boarding school. And all of sudden it's all over. When you come home to a farm, you gotta – only person you mix with – like as far as during the day, was your father. And your mother yeah. But you know. So Dad and I had to get on didn't we. And we didn't always get on. Clashed a couple of times but we basically got on. Um... but you know sort of lonely life. You know you're straight into work. Straight into it. You know you had to learn quick and expected to do all this sort of stuff. You know you work long days and work hard and... yeah but we survived.

For time off was... your entertainment was going into Hall, meet Harvey Brown and... ?

Yeah that'd be like I said, Saturday afternoon. If nothing else was on. Yeah I'd work Saturday morning, and go to church on Sunday.

Yeah.

And wash the car or something.

Yeah. And you did this for many, many years? But you're also involved in community. I mean you're involved with the Methodist church. You're involved with the Wallaroo Fire Brigade. You're involved with the Rotary Club of Hall.

Yeah. That was all later of course. I mean, church was the main thing you were involved in, as a regular thing. After we left school we started this thing called the Monomeath Club in Hall, which was just a youth group for want of a better thing. No connection with anything else, not a church thing, nothing to do with anybody else. It started just as a – because there was a heap of teenagers up there, sort of, within four or five years of each other, and we were all involved in Wattle Park anyway, we just wanted to do things, and we did. We formed this club and we – we had a president, secretary and all this sort of thing. And we used to run dances up here every now and again for a charity – we'd nominate a charity. Sometimes the dances were a disaster and nobody would come but sometimes they did and we'd give a bit of money away. We'd organise a bus trip or two every year. We'd go somewhere down the coast or somewhere else every year to caves, every year in a bus – charter a bus. And we'd have a meeting once a month and we'd just have a good time.

How many members were in the Monomeath Club?

Oh gee, I don't know.

Because you used to meet in the old Hall School, didn't you?

No, we'd meet in someone's house. Always in someone's house. I don't know, it would vary a bit. There might be ten or a dozen or fifteen. Not a lot. They'd come and go a bit. And then we all sort of got married and moved away and whatever and it all fell over. But it did it's

job at the time.

So your family have grown up on this property as well, and now they're making their own way?

My children, you mean?

Yeah.

Yeah. I had a first marriage that didn't work, from '67 to '76 or whatever. Yeah. And I've got two children from that marriage. Then I had a couple of years on my own, then I married Cynthia, with her two children we set up a house here.

Now, you're both very involved or you have been involved – to get back to what I was saying before – with the Wallaroo community. You are both extremely active in the Wallaroo Fire Brigade.

Somebody had to do it. The decent thing to do was be involved in that sort of thing, because – somebody's got to do it, in other words. So we did it. I suppose I got involved in it as soon as I left school, in some form or other. It wasn't a terribly organised group then. It was just a bit of a free-for-all. When the fire started you all went and fought the fire. Eventually I started to delegate jobs sort of thing. And all the fire-fighting that was on private trucks and it was all a bit mish-mashed but anyway it worked reasonably well. Eventually, you know, it became more structured and we got proper trucks allocated and all this sort of thing. We had one here for – twenty years, was it? I don't know. I used to drive that. Cynthia was my crew, I trained her up because she didn't - she used say – I'd got to a fire soon after we were married and she'd asked me when I got home “where are your crew?” I'd say, “Oh, I'll pick up somebody along the way” and you'd work it out as you went along, and she decided she better learn to do it, so we – I trained her up a bit. We made the best crew in the district, I don't care what anyone says. We used to get there – if the fire was anywhere in this area we were there first. We had a smallish truck that'd go, and I'd flog it along pretty well. We'd put it anywhere – four-wheel-drive thing, it'd go anywhere. We put out a lot of fires before the other people even got there.

What was the worst fire you ever had to fight? Were you involved in that big fire of -

1979 was a shocker, that one that started Hall and went through to Gundaroo Road somewhere, or the highway or something. My truck broke down though and I got it up, way up a hill there somewhere in the middle of the night and did the universal joint and we were into all sorts of strife but were were able to get another one and get it in for the next day. And we got it going again. That was a shocker but I was certainly involved in it and close to some of it – it was such a horrific wind. But then there was another one I went to at Wamboin. I was in these pine trees that just exploded. And another one at Parkwood we were in, it wasn't so horrific the fire but we got stuck in this smoke and you couldn't see a damn thing and it – but no, I don't think my life was ever in danger, that I couldn't get out of it somehow or other.

I know you're not one to blow your own trumpet, but I understand that you have received some acknowledgement for all the work that you've done.

Well, Cynthia and I got a national medal here a couple of years ago, few years ago. I got three bars on mine for forty years of service or something. She's got one for fifteen or something. But you do that sort of thing. If you're going to live in a community you've got to be involved in it.

It's a very big thing with a farming community, isn't it? What about the Rotary Club of Hall? You are one of the charter – or the founders of-

Yeah, charter member. There's six of us left. We're a great bunch, doing a lot of good in the world.

When it was established in the late eighties, I believe -

'89 yeah. November '89.

What was the idea? Just a group thinking it would be a good idea to set up a Rotary Club or -

No, Rotary's got it's own identity sort of thing. It's got it's own rules and regulations to a point, to a point. I mean, every club is autonomous – what's the word – every club is on it's own sort of thing, but there's Rotary guidelines that you sort of follow. And there was one guy in Hall that was in Belconnen Rotary Club that had a business in Hall and decided that Hall was a good place to start a club, because there were a lot of guys here that they thought were suitable – it was men only at that stage. A lot of guys here that were suitable, and he worked on it for a while along with a few others in Belconnen Club and we got Hall off the ground. You had to have twenty-five members then to start. We had twenty-five. Two or three of them never showed up much, but anyway, we got going. We were eighteen, nineteen members there for a while. I was president '91/92, second president. We learned a lot fast, about Rotary, how to work it. It was all good fun. And so it goes on, we've gone from strength to strength and given away hundreds of thousands of dollars now.

You are also a trustee of Weetangerra Cemetery.

Yes I am. It's a pretty loose term now, but yes I am. Whatever that is, I mean, we're there to care for it a bit, you know, we go over there occasionally and have a bit of a clean up and mow the grass a bit, whatever, do a bit of maintenance on some of the graves. Try and – hopefully the vandals don't get in there too much. It's had a lot of vandal damage over the years but it seems to be a bit better now.

Was your mother a trustee at the Hall Cemetery?

No, no.

I just see her photo on the heritage board there.

That's because of the family history thing. No, she wasn't – Hall Cemetery didn't have – I don't think really had trustees. It had – somebody kept a book, one of the Kilby's kept a book and, you know, if you wanted to be buried there you had to put your name in the book and that was about it. Nothing was too structured with it I don't think. I don't know whether it was sort of surveyed as such, or how it worked. But then when the ACT Cemetery Trust took it all

over, of course, a different thing altogether now.

What other roles have you taken on in your life as far as community activities – you've done a lot for the church. You've done a lot with the Wallaroo Fire Brigade...

Yes, I've – been a Sunday school teacher for years. I was on the Property Committee up there at the church for years. I've been involved in that all the way through, whatever. I've been... yeah in the Bushfire Brigade. I was the Secretary Treasurer for years and years and years. I got to be Senior Captain there and then I was offered the Captain's job but I declined. Um... I got involved with the Show. I had, you know, on and off years involvement with the Canberra Show but I'm not involved anymore. Um... I ran the wool section and built that up from nothing. The old guy that was running it before me was getting older and worn out, tired. And I built that up from next to nothing up to quite a decent show. But they took that off me and gave it to somebody else. And it's never been the same since in my opinion. But we used to run a thing called Farm World and that was a good education program. I enjoyed that. But I'm not involved in that anymore. I was on the board of the Historical Society for years. Uh... wasn't really my thing mixing with the public servants but I experienced it. Was something I experienced. I, actually, was the Chairman or Convenor or whatever it was of the Blundell's Farmhouse Committee for years. I was in – heavily involved in that for years. But when the government sort of took that over and the Historical Society didn't want it and the government took it back I said "I'm not going to be a volunteer for the ACT Government" so I dropped out of that. Um... oh I don't know I've been involved in other things as well. I was a Director of the Yass PP Board for eleven years. When my father got too old for that I got elected to that and... got elected to it a few times.

PP meaning the Pastures Protection Board?

Pastures Protection Board. Pastures Protection Board it was then. They've since changed it's name a couple of times and it's almost non-existent now. But anyway. It was – it was a thing sort of under the direction of the New South Wales Department of Agriculture. Where it was administering... uh... like grant and, and earmark sort of things. Looking after travelling stock reserves and we had a vet, in-house vet that would look after, you know, commercial stock.

Um... that sort of thing yeah. But it, you know, it finished up now. Run by somebody else.

Now you have an important role nowadays, that you're one of the wonderful Volunteer Friends of the Hall School Museum. You've taken on that role very well.

Oh do you think so?

I do. I do. You've been very generous in loaning some of the items some of the items that you have here at the farm for our displays and exhibitions, and also we're fortunate to have a wealth of your mother's historical material here that we've been able to borrow and copy. And I think without that we would have some very, very strong gaps in our historical side and the cultural heritage of Hall.

Yeah I keep finding more of my mother's stuff. I don't know where I find it but I unearth another box and find something interesting. Perhaps I've seen it before but hadn't realised it was there or whatever. Yeah. But that – yeah alright I've been involved but that my theory in

life is that you've got this stuff it's no point sticking it in a box in the wardrobe is it? If you've got it, flaunt it. That's what I reckon. If you've got and people're interested in looking at it, let'm look at it. Let'm experience it.

Well that sounds like a wonderful note on which to end this little chat. So thank you Kingsley for your time. And is there anything you'd like to add?

Thanks Phil.

OK.