

INTERVIEW NO. 15

DATE OF INTERVIEW: 1/11/91

MRS EUGENIE STAPLETON,
10 BROCK AVENUE,
ST. MARYS.

** *This copy has been edited*

by Mrs. Stapleton
[Edited changes are added
in "*bold italic*" script.]

0.21 My name is Eugenie Stapleton. My address is 10 Brock Avenue, St. Marys. Date of birth, 21st January 1911. Place of birth, Lambton, Newcastle. Nationality Australian. Marital status, married. Number of children, two.

0.51 So your period of residence in the area has been since 1946, you said. And did you come here with your family?

Yes. Len was in the Army and he came out of the Army - he got home in December, 1945. He couldn't come as soon as the War ended because he had dermatitis and tropical ulcers and that sort of thing - he was in Bougainville. He arrived on the 20th December 1945, and in the March he was appointed Engineer of St. Marys Council but we couldn't get a house for about six months. We eventually got a house in October and bought it and I brought the two children here.

2.00 So, that wasn't this house?

No.

Where was the house that you built? Did you build it?

No, we bought it. It was a new house and the owner wanted to sell it to get more money to build Housing Commission houses because there was a demand for Housing Commission houses after the War, so he sold it to us.

And whereabouts was that house?

That was in Phillip Street, which is just one back from the railway.

Oh, yes.

Just up from the Queen Street corner. It's been demolished since and a garage was built there - a Shell garage.

And you lived there until when?

1962.

Oh, right. So that's during the period of the change here. It would have been mostly in that house that you were living.

Yes.

2.52 What was the area like when you first came to live here?

Oh, very countrified. There were about half a dozen shops in Queen Street, a number of houses and vacant blocks and no electric trains and Queen Street used to cross the railway there by a level crossing which was closed when the trains were electrified and Glossop Street was opened across the railway line.

3.25 And were there houses close together? Did you have next door neighbours and was it a large block of land that you lived on?

Yes, just a normal building block. But it was deep and went a long way back.

Did you have a garden around your house?

Yes.

Did you grow vegetables?

Not much, no.

3.52 So what would your daily routine have been like when you lived there - I suppose your children were small when you first came?

Yes. John was six and Janet was 15 months when we came here. John began school and I used to have to take him down across the highway because the school wasn't big enough and the ... second class, I think he was in, were in the Presbyterian Church on the other side of the highway. So I used to take him down in the morning, put him across the highway and the teacher - she was an elderly lady, quite nice - used to put the children across the highway in the afternoon and he'd walk home from there.

Did your daughter go to the same school?

Yes.

4.47 And did you have a car?

Yes.

Did you? So that made it easier to get around?

Oh, no, because the car was for Len. He was Engineer of the Council and he had to have a car. He had one when we came here, but he got the first new Chevrolet from Lance Motors. They were the big car dealers. They moved up into Glossop Street later and had a very big business up there called - bought out recently by a man called Young - they were Lance and Frasers down in Queen Street and they got the first Chevs after the War, and Len got one, as Engineer of the Council, and Dr. Day got the other! (Laughs).

5.46 And so you still had to - how did you get around?

Oh, I could drive. I'd had a licence for many years. I got a licence when I was teaching at West Wyalong.

You were a school teacher were you?

Yes. High school teacher.

What subjects did you teach?

French and German. I didn't teach German everywhere but I taught it at and Parramatta High and West Wyalong. And English, of course, I had to teach.

So you had the use of the car when you needed it, 'cause public transport wasn't very good in those days was it - the bus services?

No. There was a bus. The bus driver lives up the top of this street now, on the other side - the bus owner - he's 83 now!

6.43 Really. And so, you were saying what your daily routine was - you'd take the children to school, and ...

Oh I'd take John to school. Janet didn't go to school 'til she was nearly six. There wasn't any room for her in the school 'til she was nearly six. I only took John to school for a couple of months of the first year that we came here, because the next year he went up a class and that was down at the school and he could walk to school.

And I suppose there wasn't much traffic on the roads then?

No, nothing like now, of course. But the roads weren't the same. Queen Street wasn't tarred ...

Wasn't it?

No - a dirt road! And I had to heat up the copper to wash the clothes, and heat up the copper when we had a bath, and all that sort of thing.

7.56 You had a chip-heater or something, did you?

No! I used to boil the copper to get the water at first?

For a bath?

At first.

8.03 And did you have to collect the fire wood too?

Yes.

What, from around about - or did you buy it from a produce store?

Oh, no. We used to get enough. It didn't take much. Well, for the copper ... I don't know what we did. I forget now what we did for that. We got a chip bath-heater later and used to ... tore up cardboard and bits of wood and that.

8.36 A good way of using up bits and pieces. And did you do all your own cooking and housework and that sort of thing?

Yes. Until I - some years later I got ill - I wasn't ... I got Lupus actually, and that wasn't diagnosed until 1956. It's a genetic disease and that was diagnosed by Dr. Sir Thomas Greenaway in 1956. I didn't know what was wrong with me, but I used to get things wrong - muscular problems and joints. And Len got help for me once a week, a woman to do the washing and ironing.

9.37 And, talking about that sort of thing, did you have good medical services nearby?

One doctor in St. Marys.

Only one!

And his daughter. His daughter had just graduated and she went and practiced with him. So I had Dr. Day to begin with, and then when he died, Prue carried on the practice and I had Dr. Prue Day.

10.10 And so what did you do about any medical emergencies? You had to call on Dr. Day? There was no hospital nearby?

No-one else! No. Penrith was the closest. I had one emergency. I'd been asked to afternoon tea by the bank manager's wife, Mrs. Minns, and I took Janet with me. She was only 18 months old at the time, and John came after school and I was having afternoon tea and he said "Oh, Mum, Janet's funny!" And I went quickly and had a look at her and she was choking. There was a screw-top jar there with stuff in and ... so I pushed my finger down and made her

vomit, about three times, and they rang Dr. Day and Prue came. She said "Oh, she'll have to go up to hospital - it's something that she's drunk from that jar!" And Mrs. Minn said "Oh, that's Roger's spirits of salts!" He'd left it on the table nearby, and Janet always had her orange drink in a screw-top jar when we went out. She got confused and must have thought it was orange juice. So, we rang Len and he came and took her up to Penrith Hospital and they said that there was no sign of burning in her throat, but that there were a lot of pieces of galvanised iron in the jar and she could possibly have swallowed a piece. So they X-rayed her, but she hadn't! And they said that the pieces of galvanised iron had killed the effect of the spirits of salts!

Oh wasn't that lucky! How old was she then?

Eighteen months! I hadn't been here long and I didn't know anybody, and I was quite pleased to be asked to afternoon tea, and that's what happened! But it was all right!

12.32 Did you find it hard to get to know people when you first came here?

Well, there weren't many to get to know! I joined the Mothers' Club when Janet started school, but not 'til then. I got to know people there and I was appointed President of the Mothers' Club, and ...

Did you feel isolated?

No, I've never felt that!

I guess the community was a fairly friendly one, because it was very small?

Yes. There were very few people!

13.19 And what made you decide to come to Penrith to live?

To St. Marys?

Oh, to St. Marys!

Len got the job of Engineer of St. Marys Council.

Oh, that's why you actually came here!

He had been Engineer of Oberon Council, before the War, and John was about 15 months old when we went to Oberon, and it was a very bitter winter climate.

That's near Orange isn't it?

Out of Orange, yes. And ... oh ... no house to live in. I had to share a house with another family, the owner of it, and then they took in another family - it was hectic - who came up there to get away from the bombing of the Japs in Sydney. And I didn't really like Oberon - living there - and then I got the house to myself. They got tired of living there and they decided the bombs weren't going to worry them, they went back to Sydney, and I had the house to myself. It was a very new house, but they hadn't put in any power points because electricity in Oberon's so dear. So I used to have to use flat-irons to iron, boil up the copper to wash the clothes. The teatowels used to be frozen when I'd hang them on the line in winter. It was very bitter!

15.50 So you probably enjoyed moving to St. Marys then?

Yes.

So did you have electricity in your house there, in St. Marys?

Yes.

And did you have sewerage?

No, we didn't have sewerage when we built this in 1962!

Didn't you?

We had to wait another year or two.

15.26 Really! And what about electrical appliances? Did you have vacuum cleaners and refrigerators and things like that?

I got my first refrigerator - a kerosene refrigerator - down at Phillip Street, but they were just coming in.

You had the ice-chest before that I suppose?

Yes.

15.48 And how did you manage for shopping? Did you have ...

Well, you didn't have to shop. You rang up the grocer.

Everything was delivered! Those were the days!

Yes. Your milk, the bread, ice, your groceries, meat ...

So you really hardly had to go to the shop at all! What about clothing? Did you buy that locally or did you go to the city?

Oh there was nowhere here to buy clothing ... no. We used to go to Parramatta or Penrith, occasionally. We didn't shop much.

Did you sew yourself at all?

Yes. I knitted a lot.

Did you?

Oh, yes. I knitted for everybody.

16.52 What did you do for recreation in those days?

Oh, I played tennis - and golf. The Dunheved Golf Club was just starting. It was just nine holes then. There was no Club House. But I belonged to the Golf Club for a while, and the Tennis Club, and later on I got - that was about 1958 or 60 - I joined the League of Health, which was wonderful! And they had classes at Penrith and I used to go up once a week to them, and when they folded, I joined aerobics and yoga. I loved that!

Was that in St. Mary's?

No.

Penrith?

Yes. And then they got into trouble and started on exercise classes. Remember that?

Yes... John Valentine's sort of thing, you mean?

I don't know who it was, but they closed down all the exercise classes. Then I joined a University literature class and I studied all sorts of books. I wrote a bit.

Which University was this?

Sydney.

So you did it by correspondence?

No the girl came out and gave us the lectures. *I don't know what her* name was. She was very good.

And this would have been when your children were grown up when you were doing that?

When they were at high school.

So you did have some time to follow your own interests, which was good.

Yes. I went back teaching for one year. I got a phone call from Parramatta High in 1956 to say they were one French and German teacher short. This was in March, and I was at home doing nothing, and they wanted me to keep an appointment at the Education Department. So I thought, "No, no". And the next day a woman knocked on the door, a Dutch lady, and asked if I had any work for her. And I thought perhaps I was meant to go back teaching! And I thought, "Oh, well I'll go in and keep the appointment and see what they have to say". So I went in to the Department and they greeted me, five or six elderly gentlemen seated - and I had no respect for the Education Department - I had too many experiences when I was first appointed. If you want to hear about it I'll tell you, but it doesn't affect this history. You know, they'd move you - move you

Right out ...?

Not only that! They moved me. I had appendicitis and I came down from Tumut and had an operation and they sent me to Ashfield Intermediate Girls' High School, and ten days before the May holidays they moved me to Bathurst High, and I thought "Oh, ten days! And then I'll be back for a fortnight!" Of course I thought they could wait ten days. So I told the headmistress about it and she didn't want me to go. I said "I'll give them a ring" but she said "That won't do you any good. You go in and see them. I'll take your classes this afternoon" which was very good of her. So I went in and told the man I didn't want to go to Bathurst just for ten days, and he said "Oh, no, that's all right. You needn't go, but you won't be going after the May holidays, and I really don't know where you'll go then". And I thought mentally "Broken Hill!". I said, "All right, I'll go to Bathurst." And I went to Bathurst for the ten days and all the next term, and I had fifth year boys and girls with their Leaving Certificate coming up, and they moved me! And I couldn't understand it.

Where to?

To Penrith. And I realised later it was because I was in a full high school. I'd been teaching two years which meant I went up if I was in a full high school. If I was in an Intermediate High School I didn't get a rise in pay! And they moved me to save a few pounds.

This was in 1950.... or was it earlier?

It was 1940 ... 1935. And I lost all respect for the Department when they moved me from my fifth year class just before the ... and when I went to Bathurst, ten days before the holidays, I found they hadn't had a teacher for seven weeks!

Goodness me - they couldn't have cared about the pupils!

No, not a bit. And I lost my respect for the Department. Anyway I had this interview and they greeted me with "Oh has your husband left you?" and I said "No, he hasn't", and I said, "what's more I don't really want to teach. It's eighteen years since I taught, and I've only been asked to come because I teach those languages and they can't get another teacher. But if I come I will not teach first period or last, because I have a daughter at home who's in fifth class and I will not leave her alone in the house when I go in the morning, and I will not have her come home to an empty house!" And they looked at me ... anyway, they said "All right". So I did it for - I thought it'd be a month - it was all that year. They appointed me the next year, but I said "No, thank you!"

23.31 You'd had enough! And have you worked at all since then?

Only for Len. I did his typing for a few years.

When he was ...

Oh, he was Engineer of St. Marys Council and then they amalgamated with Penrith and ... Penrith ... the four Councils - Penrith, St. Marys, Castlereagh and Nepean Shire - and he was appointed Engineer of the amalgamated area and he did it for four years, and it was hopeless.

It was a big area!

And they had no money and they wouldn't plan anything and they wouldn't buy plant for him to use, and he thought "Oh, well, I'm going to leave" and so he left and went into private practice down here as a licensed surveyor, 'cause he had that ticket to, and he did that until he was about 74 or 5! (Laughs). He subdivided all St. Marys!

24.45 That's interesting, because there would have been a lot of subdivisions at that time.

Oh, yes. They were all five acre blocks.

When you lived here, were they?

Original grants and then they'd been divided into five acre blocks.

25.00 And what was here? Was it poultry farms or ...?

Poultry farms out there, and pig farms and horse studs and ... oh, all sorts of farms.

Market gardens I suppose?

Yes. And then of course the munitions had started. They were built and a lot of people were working there.

And the munitions factory was down near the railway was it? Was it down near the 'duration cottages' are down there?

No, it's out on the other side of the line.

Oh, I haven't ventured that far yet!

Oh, no it's out along the end of Glossop Street.

25.59 So, I suppose you noticed the population increased enormously then?

Oh, yes, and when they came here there were no homes for them. All the immigrants who arrived - they came to nothing! There was one day, one Friday afternoon - John was in sixth class - it would be **1951**. The train pulled in at the station - we lived just near and we could see it - and a boy ... there were 12 hundred people got out of that train - filled all the platform. And they were taken by bus out to the area and they made some of the factory buildings into living area for them.

And they were all migrants from Europe?

Migrants. And on the Monday morning 124 new children arrived at school!

Good heavens!

With no preparation, no extra teachers, no extra classrooms, nothing!

It must have been absolutely chaotic!

It was terrible for the headmaster and the teachers! John was given six of them to teach in the shed, knelt on the floor and put their books on the seats, and ... he did no more work that year - he was only eleven - so he repeated sixth class the next year to get to Parramatta High.

27.30 So they had the students teaching the young pupils? Goodness! So you must have noticed the great change with the subdivision of the land and the extra population. How did you feel about it when it happened?

Oh, good.

You didn't mind?

I thought it was time it started!

27.59 And was the shopping centre at St. Mary's ... it was very small ...?

Well the Western Road had always been the shopping centre, originally, and then they changed it to Queen Street, but then there were no buildings for them to use, and they gradually pulled down the houses and built shops. But, of course, it was a long job.

28.32 And did you have much to do with the migrant people who settled around here?

No. Not much. Most of them, as they could, got work out in the area. There was one lady that I got friendly with. She had two little girls and I got quite friendly with her.

What nationality was she?

Oh ... I forget. Roumanian or Austrian ...

I thought, with your German and French, maybe you'd been able to communicate with them.

No.

Not that there'd probably be many French, but quite a few Germans came out to the West. So, you didn't notice that the influx of the migrants made much difference to the area apart from the population? You didn't notice their culture influencing the area at all?

No.

And I think they used to tend to stick together fairly much too.

There was a Dutch lady that came to see if I had any work for her. She worked for me for quite a while because the year after I was teaching at Parramatta High I had to go to see the specialist, 'cause obviously there was something wrong with me, and he sent me for skin tests, and blood tests and things like that and they said I had Lupus, which was quite unheard of at the time, and he said I'd have to take cortisone which was the only thing to treat it with, and that was in 1957, and ...

It's a muscular disease is it?

It can attack any part of the body. It attacks each part of the body in turn, the lungs or the kidneys or the liver or the muscles and joints. It attacks women in the child-bearing years they say. I had a miscarriage when I was first married and I didn't know why, and I went to a woman doctor in Newcastle and she examined me and said "There's no reason for it that I can see. So give yourself two months and try again and take vitamin E and wheatgerm oil." So I took gallons of wheatgerm oil and I had John! And then I had Janet. Well Len and I were in Bougainville. It was a very nice experience, I don't think. The specialist said that I was very lucky to have any children with Lupus.

Really! You'd had it then, but you didn't know?

32.24 Didn't know. And he said I'd have to go to bed and take cortisone. They didn't know much about cortisone. It was new.

END

SIDE A

SIDE B

0.08 I went on as before, you know, and when I got bad again last time I went to my doctor and he said he'd send me to a specialist and she said she'd have to do a kidney biopsy - it was attacking the kidneys. So she did that and put me on a massive dose of cortisone, so big - 60 milligrams a day - that I was gar-gar. I couldn't walk straight.

0.46 **This was in the '50s?**

No. This was three years ago.

Oh, recently?

That's how it's changed. See, the cortisone I had to take in 1957, I had to go to bed for a fortnight while I was taking it. This time I took 60 milligrams a day and I didn't have to go to bed, but I was completely gar-gar. And I'd been in hospital ten and a half weeks and they let me come home - they didn't expect me to live, of course - and I got better!

Isn't that good!

I'm still on prednisolone - that's the cortisone - on seven and a half milligrams a day, and she says I shouldn't get the Lupis anymore. So I think I'm very lucky!

1.38 **That's good that they have more medical knowledge now than they had in those days.**

But they still don't seem to be diagnosing it. They don't know what's wrong with them ... I've heard a lot of people lately who've had Lupis diagnosed.

2.01 **And were there dental services in the area too when you came too?**

Yes.

There were? There was a dentist - so you didn't have to travel too far.

One dentist - he's been here as long as we have! (Laughs) There's half a dozen dentists now, but there was only one then.

2.22 **What about industry? The industry that grew up in the area, was that started mostly during the War with the munitions?**

Yes, the munitions.

And since then more industries have moved into the area?

Yes. Into the buildings that the government made available, and they built a new factory area.

What sort of industries are they - not heavy industry?

I don't think you'd call them heavy, no. I don't know much about it.

3.08 So did you have any family living nearby for helping you with your children when they were little?

Len's parents lived at Westmead, and his father retired and came up to work with Len. He had been Overseer of Works at Holroyd Council, and he came up and helped Len. But my parents lived at Sans Souci.

They were too far away to be of much help?

Well it was a bit of an effort with the steam trains, you know.

So how did you manage if you were ill or if any of the children were ill or anything like that, or if you needed a babysitter, did you rely on family or friends?

I didn't use a babysitter. Janet was eight months old when I came here. I didn't need a babysitter.

So you didn't go out much, or you took her with you when you did?

Mm.

4.21 And did you go to much theatre or concerts or anything like that?

Oh, no.

Or the movies?

Well, there was no picture-show. They had pictures in the Protestant Hall on the highway on Saturday afternoons for the kids, and then - they didn't build it - they altered a shop I think for a picture-show in Queen Street - Crown Theatre they called it - which lasted for 15 years. They started it just two years before TV and it lasted for 15 years which was pretty good I think.

And that was mostly used as a Saturday afternoon ... children's ...

Did your children go there?

Yes.

5.28 And there wasn't a public swimming pool here or anything like that?

Not for a long time. The one that's here now was built ... oh, I'm not sure what year, but fairly recently.

And so did you go on picnics or to the beach anywhere for holidays?

Oh, we had a house at Palm Beach.

Oh, did you?

Oh, yes. We used to go down there every Christmas, for Christmas. It had been owned by Len's people since 1930, and then we went down there at Christmas every year.

In school holidays. That was a nice change then.

6.20 So when the place started to develop, when the population increased and more houses were built and the land was subdivided, how did you feel? Did it make you feel any different?

Different from what?

From before when it was more open and less built up.

Oh, no. I liked it.

As it was?

No, I liked it.

You liked having more people around you?

No that so much, but I liked to see the development. Of course I was attached to it. It was Len's work.

7.02 Yes, of course. So you think the shopping area has been improved and so forth?

Oh, yes. No comparison.

And I suppose you had neighbours all around you in the '50s and the '60s? You moved up here in the '60s didn't you?

'62. Yes. Well we had no neighbours then really. There were only two other houses here and then the others started to be built.

And you've got a nice area of parkland just near you here. That was foresight wasn't it to leave that like that?

Yes. (Laughs).

7.51 And this road just nearby, Stapleton Road, isn't it?

Stapleton Parade.

Parade. Is that named after your husband?

That's named after Len. As the first Engineer of St. Marys Council - they'd never had an Engineer until they appointed him after the War - and the first Engineer of the expanded area after the amalgamation, they named it after him.

8.22 So you must have been quite instrumental in the changes that took place here then, building the area up?

Oh, yes.

You must have been very busy in that period. And was there a lot of Housing Commission development here too?

Yes. A lot of it's been sold to people. People who lived in the Housing Commission houses in the beginning have since bought them.

So I suppose it was quite exciting for you to be part of the development of the area?

Yes. We were invited to travel up on the first electric train and had lunch in the - what's now the Q-Theatre, the Railway Institute then - with Mr. Cahill! (Laughs)

Of the Cahill Expressway fame!

9.18 And I suppose you had to attend lots of community functions and that sort of thing did you? With your husband?

Oh, we always attended the Mayoral Ball and attended the two Church Balls, the Church of England and the Catholic. And ... what other Balls have I attended? And Len joined Rotary in .. we came here in '45 ...'46 ... about '49 he joined Rotary I think. Penrith Rotary had only just started and he joined Penrith Rotary, and the following year I joined Penrith Inner Wheel. And then St. Marys formed their own Rotary Club and Len transferred to it. He was a Charter Member of St Marys Rotary Club and I transferred to St. Marys Inner Wheel Club the next year. I've been President of it twice, and I've enjoyed the company of the other members of the Inner Wheel very much.

10.40 So that's been quite a big activity in your life?

Oh, yes that's been one of the main activities?

10.47 And what about ... did you belong to any other community organisations?

We formed the St. Marys Historical Society. Len's the President and I'm the Research Officer, but we're pretty nearly the whole Historical Society now because they were older people. Well they weren't old when they joined but they've got older and they don't - two of them have died - and they don't want to come to night meetings. So we don't meet, we just handle it by telephone now.

So you don't actually hold meetings?

No.

Are there no younger people interested in coming along?

No.

11.32 What about the local churches in the area?

There was only one church in the beginning. That was St. Mary Magdelene. That was built in 1840 and we had the 150th Anniversary in 1990.

That's Anglican isn't it?

Yes. The Roman Catholics had a priest here. The history's a bit vague. I've written an account of his life in one of my books and - I don't suppose you want it?

I'd like to have a look. I'll look at that in a minute.

I wrote this one for the first book and then photostatted it and did the drawings, and it contains a very brief history of St. Marys.

Oh, I'd love to have a look at that.

The Council, a few years later, said they wanted to put it out as a textbook, so I gave it to them and gave them copyright and they published it as that book.

Oh. "South Creek, St. Marys - From Village to City". I'd be fascinated to read that.

It gave a very brief history of St. Marys from the beginning. And there was nothing published on St. Marys - not a thing! So, after I wrote that one, I thought "Well, I'll keep on going". Well I wrote on six women and I had the life of four of them reproduced together recently. Annah Josepha King, the Governor's wife, who lived out - she didn't live there but she was given a grant of land out in North St. Marys. And then Harriet Lethbridge King, her daughter-in-law, she married Phillip Parker King and lived on Dunheved Station and she was a wonderful woman! And then she went back to England with Phillip Parker King when he finished his explorations. He had three boys and the fourth boy born on board the little ship going back to England. She had four little boys on that ship going back to England. She had two more boys in England, and he went off to survey the coast of South America - Magellan coast- and she came out and lived on Dunheved and her seventh son was born a fortnight after she arrived. She had seven boys. And then there was Elizabeth Marsden and her daughter, Anne Marsden Hassall. I had those four bound together because they were connected with St. Marys' history. And two others I wrote - Sarah Maria Suttor.

Farmer George's wife.

Yes, George Suttor brought a garden out on board a ship - Joseph Banks - and they were all dead when they got here!

And Rose de Freycinet - this one I wrote purely for myself. She was a Frenchwoman.

Who was she?

Rose de Freycinet. Her husband was a surveyor and he came out here twice. Once in 1804 with Baudin's expedition and then in 1817 with his own expedition, and she stowed away and came with him. I knew no-one would be interested in that, in St. Marys, but ...

You had to write it!

Yes. Then I did "Old Times, Old Tales" which is a story of some parts of St. Marys. For instance, the naming of the streets of ... what's it called up there?

Glossup Street?

I didn't know why it was called Glossop Street until I did that. Do you know why?

No. Why?

He was the Captain of the 'Sydney' when she sank the 'Emden'. And they named all the streets after the battle ships.

Really!

People thought they were after the capital cities, but they weren't, they were after the battle ships.

What's that? (indicates book)

The Inns and Inn Keepers.

16.50 Oh, the next chapter ...

17.06 Well isn't that interesting. They were naming streets, just after the First World War, out here then.

Yes. And the other streets, the few little streets up there that were named later, were named after V.C.'s - Victoria Cross holders - and they named some in the War Service Homes on the other side of the highway after V.C.'s too.

That's Charles Hackett and the *Woolpack Inn*. (Indicating photographs in book). Does that still flood now?

Yes.

17.53 There's the church. It's a lovely old church. Did you go up there to that church?

Yes.

And did you find the church played a big role in the community in those days?

Yes.

And then I wrote this one (indicates book) - that's a more general history of St. Marys and then for the Bicentennial Year I wrote "Eleven Ships Came Sailing".

You've been busy!

Yes. History of the First Fleet, its journey out, what happened to all the ships out here, and the journey back - those that got back.

And so when did you start to write these books?

About 1980.

Oh, so you were looking for something to do, or ... ?

No, Len's work was so interesting. He was cutting out the old grants and the old subdivisions and I found they were very historical, and I started looking into the history and I realised there was a whole history here that had never been written about.

It's wonderful that it has been documented now isn't it?

Yes. It's appreciated now. Nobody took much notice for a while, but lately ... I did this one - "Reverend Robert Lethbridge King". He was the fourth child of Anna Josepha King, and he was the brainy one of the family and they sent him to Cambridge University. When he came back he was Rector of St. Phillips Church in Sydney and then St. John's Church in Parramatta and then he was made the Principal of the Moore Theological College. I said in the introduction ... what did I say? There was a boy who lived in St. Marys, an English child, and I put in it

"Train up a child in the way he should go
And when he is old he will not depart from it.
Proverbs."

And then Len and I did the "150 Years History of St. Mary Magdalene Church".

My goodness, you've certainly been very busy in the '80s and '90s haven't you?

And then I got cataracts. Had them out. So I can see again, but I can't write ... my hands ... so I type.

Do you?

20.59 I noticed the picture of the horse and carriage, or the horse and sulky - early transport.

Yes.

Do you remember those days, or I suppose that was earlier?

That was earlier. The Minister had a car when we came here.

That's really interesting. I'll have a look at all of those. I'll just think what else there is to ...

21.23 Did you have any .. keep any animals?

Oh, yes.

Did you? Pets? Or did you keep cows and chooks?

No.

Just pets?

We had a lovely dog - Australian Terrier - 'Jimmy', and he was killed in Queen Street one day.

Because of the traffic?

No. There was no traffic then. And the men laughed when they killed him!

Oh, really?

Yes. He was seen to be knocked by a car in Queen Streets. So we went and got another one - a female. We called her 'Puppy' - and she lived to be 15!

Quite old isn't it!

22.09 So, just on reflecting what the place was like then and what it is like now - or how it changed after the War - do you think it's been for the better, and do you think it's made life easier for the people living here? How do you feel about it?

Well there's no comparison! It was just a little village - now it's a busy town! I think it's a good town. I like it. I know there are some very bad types about.

You get them everywhere!

Yes. But, no ... I like St. Marys.

23.04 Do you find that - now that it's bigger - that you don't know so many people when you go shopping and that sort of thing?

Oh ... (laughs). You'd be surprised the number that say hello to me! I don't know who they are, but ...

23.20 They know you!

What industry was there in St. Mary's? [THIS QUESTION NOT RECORDED]

23.26 The first tannery started in 1857 out on the end of what's now Pages Road, and then gradually more and more until there were 12 tanneries, two of them very big - Brell's Tannery on the Western Road and Thompson's Tannery just off the Western Road. The Bennet Wagons began to be built in 1878 and the brothers had a different opinion about something and separated and formed adjoining factories, and one built light wagons and the other one heavy wagons, and that became a very big industry and only finished in 1954 wasn't it? They weren't building wagons then.

24.50 I haven't asked you about finance. How did you manage your finances back in the old days in the '40s and '50s?

I had a bank account.

Yes.

And called in and paid my grocery bill every week, and paid ...

Were you in charge of the household finances or was your husband?

He gave me the money and I spent it, or saved it.

There was no credit or anything - no credit cards or plastic cards?

No. Nothing like that. I don't like them anyway. I use them a little bit, but nothing much.

25.32 Well I think that's about all. Is there anything else that comes to mind when you think about how the place has changed and with the ...?

The High School. The High School's made a big difference. They used to have to go to Penrith High after they'd finished primary school. A lot of the people in their 60's here remember me teaching them at Penrith High, because I'm 80 and I taught there in 1943 ... no ... yes, '40's we were married wasn't it?

You came here in '46, so ...

1930 ... 1935 to '37 I taught at Penrith Intermediate High School, and some of the people here were in my class. (Laughs)

Really.

But it's very different having a High School here now ... and besides I had to teach out my bond of five years with the Department.

Oh, did you?

I didn't get an appointment straight away after the Depression - during the Depression they didn't appoint anybody - left us without a job at the end of the year. I got a job in a private school, St. Gabriel's Girls' School at Waverley.

Oh, Waverly - that's where I live!

Oh. Yes, well St. Gabriel's is gone now. It used to be there. I was resident French Mistress there. Got it in March for a month and at the end of the month they made me permanent and I said I'd stay until I got the Department's appointment and then I'd leave. The Department appointment came in the September holidays, and it was fortnight on, fortnight off at Darlington Girls' Primary School. The first lesson was tables about which I knew - half a dozen tables - that was all, and the next was civics about which I knew absolutely nothing!

What's civics?

I made it up I think, talking about the government and one thing and the other, you know. I didn't know what civics were. I didn't know they taught it. I never learned it! And then I got West Wyalong Intermediate High School.

28.22 And so with the High School coming here I suppose it's been a lot easier for the children not having to travel for miles?

Oh, yes. It's getting hard now, because there are too many pupils. They've made St. Marys into a High School which takes only from Year 9 upwards - 10, 11, 12 - and they're still building it. And then there's Dunheved High School which takes all years. One place up there ... and one girl is in Year 9 at St. Marys but the younger sister is at Dunheved High

School - she couldn't go there. And St. Clair ... they have to travel quite a way to get to ... you know, too many children.

It's still an expanding population - still growing!

Yes. And Penrith now is a selective high school, they say. It doesn't take anybody. You've got to get into it. Of course when I went to High School there were only five High Schools in Sydney - two Intermediate. Sydney High - I went to - Fort Street, Parramatta and North Sydney *and St. George*. Five High Schools. There were more, yes. There were two near Sydney Girls' High School - Crown Street and Cleveland Street - but you had to sit for high school entrance examination and you had to pass it well to get into high school.

30.27 Well I think we have just about covered everything, and we're getting near the end of the tape. The warning signs on here - so thank you very much for your time.

30.34

END OF INTERVIEW