

# Mick Ruhland

Mt Walker West district

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Interviewer: Robyn Buchanan

Interview available on CD



*Mick and Sid Ruhland*

## Track 01

I'm Mick Ruhland, I'm living here on the Ruhland property [at Mt Walker West] which was taken up way back in the early 1860s by my great grandfather. I was born in Rosewood in 1927 and I've been here all my life.

My great grandfather came out from Germany and wanted to settle on the land, so he was allotted one block consisting of about 100 acres. The government gave him a grant to have that much land on conditions that they improved it. In the first year they had to clear the timber on the property and make a water supply if there wasn't already water on the property... and, most important, build a slab house.

So, the old chap took the job on and he did very well; he improved the land but he found out though that that block was pretty cold to live on... a bit cold and a bit wet. So, he applied for the adjoining block and he got it. He was granted the lot. So they brought the buildings then from the first block up onto the new block, and that's where we are right now, we're living still on this second block.

*Are any of those first buildings still here today, Mick?*

Yes... the old piggeries and the horse stables, the old fowl house too I think... there might be a bit of other old buildings here too.

But when they got up here of course they had to improve this block as well and they did that, cleared the timber and built another house. In fact they built two houses, not both at the same time though but a few years apart I believe, as well as other buildings.

Things were pretty hard going those times. There was no money around, and they had to make a shilling wherever they could. They'd go out working for other people, or do a bit of fencing or something like that and then they started farming and cultivating. I think the main crop back in those days was cotton which was all picked by hand.

As years went on, things improved a bit and they had a bullock team - they broke in a team of bullocks and they were the carriers around here. They'd take a load of cotton from the Mount Walker district, in to the cotton mills at Ipswich; they had to spell the bullocks every so far, and give them a bit to eat and stop at the water courses to give them something to drink. On their return trip they'd bring home a load of groceries, because in those days there were no such things as motor cars for people to run into shops. So they brought groceries back on the wagons, the groceries and sugar and flour because they used to do their own baking.

*Did they grow any cotton themselves, Mick? Or did they just work as carriers?*

No they grew it here too, quite a lot of it.

So time went on, and they were able to buy more land, they bought the block just across the road here; and that block had been allotted to a fellow named Howshalt [sp?]. I don't know why he wanted to get rid of it but he sold it to our people anyway, and then they also bought the next block further down the road and that left them with about 400 acres along this road here which was a pretty good block, really.

Then they got into farming more they had horses, and bought implements for growing crops; and they started dairying, which meant they had to grow feed for the cows. I don't think there was any such thing as saving money - as they made a shilling, they spent it on implements, machinery and tools.

## Track 02

I think the best worker in the family would have been my grandfather. He was born in Sydney, that's when the great grandfather and grandmother came out from Germany. When he grew up, he was a tiger, he was the old worker. He could build, he could fence... timberwork was his hobby really, he delighted in doing anything with timber. As well as helping with the farm work here, he used to walk from here over to Franklyn Vale to do fencing. Now that'd be about 4 miles, and he'd get up early in the morning and take his lunch, away he'd go over onto Franklyn Vale, Mort's country. And he'd fence and fence, keep working all day and come home in the dark. Next morning, up and the same thing again.

*What was your grandfather's name, Mick?*

He had a lot of names; we kids used to call him "Pamper", because we couldn't say "Grandpa" and the nearest we could get to it was "Pamper", but it was either Harry or August, I heard people call him Harry, I heard some call him August so I'm not too sure really, I probably could look it up on some of the paperwork here. My great-grandfather's name was Adam. And then strangely enough, my father was Adam too.

*And what was your grandfather's wife's name?*

I think he married a girl from Mt. Forbes, Elizabeth Zahl.

You know those old people didn't tell us kids much about where they come from or who they married or anything like that. I can remember when I was in my 20s, I used to round up cattle here with my brother Sid. Those cattle had to go to the Churchill cattle sales. There was a drover who used to take the cattle

in, he used to charge a shilling a head as the droving charge to take cattle to Churchill. But we used to get quite a few cattle and it was a lot for only one man, so Sid and I used to take our mob of cattle over there and meet this drover and we'd go right over to the Leg of Mutton they called it, way down past Ebenezer cross-country. We'd go away down there with him until all the cattle settled down quiet and then we'd return home.

I can well remember one day we were coming home through Mt. Forbes, and there was a real old chap there with a saddle horse and a few tools, he was doing a bit of repairing fencing. We came along and said g'day to him, didn't know him at all you know, and he said g'day to us and talked a bit... and "Hey" he said, "you fellows are Ruhlands aren't you?"... "Yes," we said. "You know, we're a bit related," he said. "How'd that come about?" Well he said his name was Zahl, and he told us about the old grandfather marrying his aunt. We hadn't known that.

## Track 03

*It was your grandfather who built the big hayshed wasn't it?*

Yes, well he was the captain anyway, he was the leader in it. They had to make their own timber, the timber was here but they had to cut down the trees and split the trees up and dress out the slabs for the walls. The rafters were all split and dressed with the broad axe and the poles were all cut in the paddock and dragged in with the bullock team.

It's amazing to see [the finished shed] but I would like to have seen it done myself, to see just how it went. With a team of bullocks you've got to know just exactly how to drive them... and they've got to stop at the right time, and they've got to hold the weight while they're pulling up the post and that sort of thing.

*So they dug post holes in the ground and then put the posts in?*

They dug the holes 7 feet deep, put the poles in 7 feet. Of course a hole 7 foot deep is hard to get the dirt out of because it's so deep; my grandfather was only a little fellow and they used to drop him down the hole and then they'd drop a bucket down to him with a rope on it, and he had to scratch the dirt or dig the hole down there and fill the bucket and they'd bring the dirt out. And then he'd dig again and get some more out.

*Must have been a big hole...*

Well 7 feet deep, and they would have to be big around, too, because they're fairly deep holes... probably about 10 inches I suppose.

I don't know how they got the first pole up, but once they had the first one up, they put a pulley on the top of the pole and then they had a wire rope I think it was, or a chain from the ground right up through the pulley and then right down and they tied that onto a big heavy log so that they could hook the bullocks on the other end of the log and the log was the weight to keep the harness down, keep the chain or rope or whatever it was, keep that down while the bullocks were pulling, see? And then, well they'd have the other pole they wanted to pull up hooked on the other end of the rope, and get everything ready and then they'd start up their team of bullocks and they'd pull the pole right up, back up in the ground, see... and the same with the bearers and all the rafters and all that, all that he pulled up with the bullock team.

It must have been a bit of neat work, I reckon... because you know today they've got jibs, cranes and things on tractors and it's not hard to hook a chain around a log and press a button and then the jib'll go up and when it's up far enough you stop pressing the button and the hydraulic will hold it, but there were no hydraulics in the bullocks... they had to know what to do.

*And all this time they were living in these slab houses here?*

Yes, yes they were living in these houses you see over here.

*Could you describe them?*

As I said before, there are two houses there. I don't just know when the first one would have been built but they'd have to be about 120 years old. Anyway, the first one is a slab house; they had to cut the trees down and split out the slabs and dress them. It has a sawn timber floor, 6x1 flooring boards. It had a shingle roof which meant it had to have a lot of battens to take the weight of the shingles. Later, we took the shingles off because they were leaking water and we put a tin roof on it.

*Was the house lined inside with anything?*

No, it was never lined with anything, but it didn't need lining anyway when old grandfather was finished dressing those slabs, there were no cracks. It's gone apart a bit now I'd have to admit that, but when he was finished with things you wouldn't be

able to see through it. Outside that house, they had what they called the cookhouse, where they used to do the cooking. Of course back in those days they wouldn't put a stove in the house they lived in because they thought that was too dangerous, having a stove or having a fire in the house.

They didn't have an actual stove, they had camp ovens, that's what they had for making bread and damper, that sort of stuff... and they cooked up meat in tins out in the open fire. So they had that in that little building there. But then later on they did get game and they did put a stove in the end of the house, they built a stove recess there, a big thing all lined with tin in case a spark got out, and a big chimney going 30 or 40 feet up in the air so the sparks couldn't come down.

That [chimney] was been pulled off a long time ago because they made the thing too high and it got a lean on it and we pulled that down a long time ago.

*Then they built a second house?*

Yes, they built a second house... it's a weatherboard house. There are slabs in it too on the interior, but there are weatherboards on the outside; and a tin roof. That roof is still on it.

*How did you collect water off the shingle roof? What did they do originally for water?*

No, you don't use that because it'd be all stained. No that roof water just ran away. They used to depend on dams, gullies and anything like that for water.

*You said that the family had one of the first separators in the district...?*

Yes, I think it might have been the first separator. They formed a little co-operative dairy up here, and a mob of the local farmers used to bring their milk here to be separated. I don't know if they dobbed in to buy the separator or if they paid a few pennies [to use it] but instead of everybody buying a separator, we only had one. Each fellow would separate his own milk. That building is still up there, the separator block is there too but it wouldn't pass inspection today I'm quite sure of that.

## Track 04

*Did your family still follow German customs when they were living here? Did they still speak German and follow German traditions?*

I think so, but I'm too young to know that. I think so, I think they talked German, yes.

*Do you remember your grandfather speaking German at all?*

My grandfather didn't learn German. He was born in Sydney. He went to school for 3 days. That's all the schooling he had, 3 days schooling, and yet we used to get the old *Queensland Times* newspaper and he'd read it but it took him a long time. He could write, but same with that, he was very slow.

The old great-grandfather, of course I never knew him, but I believe he was a pretty cranky old fellow. I didn't hear all good reports about him. I don't think he was a worker like my grandfather.

I can remember my grandfather. I used to go out in the paddock working with him when the school holidays came round, specially at Christmas time when there was 6 weeks holiday. I was only a young fellow, and they'd send me out in the paddock with old grandfather to cut trees down with a cross-cut saw. There was too much timber, and it needed cutting down and clearing out, so we were dropping trees and cutting them down. We'd cut the post lengths out of them, bark them and cut up the top and stack what was to be burnt.

The old chap was very good to me. Even though he was an old man then I was only a little young fellow, he looked after me. But we roughed it, we didn't come home and have a meal put on the table for us, we took that with us and a 7 pounds syrup billy full of tea for each of us. That was the normal thing in those days, those old syrup billys, they were turned out to be tea billys. You'd go from here with a packet of sandwiches tied onto the handle. All we had to wrap our sandwiches in was newspaper - there was no plastic, no nothing net and pretty. Just a bit of old newspaper, had a few sandwiches put in that and away you go for the day and you had to make that last.

When you got back in the paddock where you were going to work, old grandfather taught me not to put that down on the ground; it had to be hooked up in a tree somewhere where the ants couldn't get to it otherwise you'd have ants on your sandwiches.

I know there was one good waterhole way back here, the old chap said 'Now drink your tea if you need it,' he said, 'When the tea runs out we can have a good drink of cold water.' In the clay, you know, and we used to drink the water. We had a jam tin back there hooked over the root of a log and when you got thirsty, old grandfather would put his arm right down as deep as he could in the water and stir it up, bring [the water on the bottom] up, and that'd be cold, a lot colder than on top. It was good water.

## Track 05

*Let's get on to you then, Mick... Where did you go to school?*

I only went to one school, that was Mt. Walker... the school is still standing up there but it's been closed now for many years, all the children now go into Rosewood on the bus. But, yes I went to school up there and that's where my father went to school too.

I went to school but I think they only sent me up there to get me out of the way from here, you know... I didn't learn too much, how could you when you had a deaf teacher? Yes, the old teacher was deaf! He wore a hearing aid but that didn't seem to help much... and one teacher for all the classes, through there weren't a lot of children I suppose. The most we got up to would be 30 or a bit more, in the 1920s.

I suppose old teacher knew enough but he couldn't hear us. We'd be trying to tell him something and we couldn't. You'd finish up writing it on your slate (we had no books then, no paper much in those days, we had slates to write on). So if you wanted to know something, you'd write it on the slate and show it to him, and then he'd answer. He was clever enough but he should never have been left out here in the country to teach, he should've been for correspondence or something like that. But then again he could hardly write either, his writing was bad.

Us kids used to get pretty annoyed with him, we didn't learn like we should have either. Exam time would come around and none of us were very clever because of our teacher. Yes, "Exam was coming, hey" - we'd say "We all gotta get some points, it doesn't matter who comes top in the class so long as we'd get through you know... You better study up history, eh? You study up Geography and I'll learn the sums pretty good if I can"... something like that, you know... in the one class.

And then we'd be having our exam and yes, there'd be a question come up on the writing board yeah about history or something... well you studied that, what's the answer? Oh yeah, England, yeah. They'd tell us, and we'd write it down, yes... oh good, we got through! And like a lot of the other things, kids all helped each other to get through, yeah.

But if you were out at the board there trying to do some sums or something on your own and you weren't doing too good, the old teacher'd come along behind you and he'd look at the board and

he'd put his hand up and he'd pull your hair - that used to hurt, nearly lifted you off the floor.

*Were you expected to do work around the farm while you were at school?*

Oh yes we had to do everything here first, you'd get up early, we were full swing in the dairying then, and we'd have to help with the milking and washing up in the dairy... and feed the pigs, feed the calves, have your breakfast and then off to school. You'd always be running late, you know, a lot times we walked we took shortcuts through the paddock, sometimes we'd ride a pony... later on we had an old pushbike. Yeah but we got there... then in the afternoon you'd have to hurry home to get the cows in and milk again, and you'd be milking and milking away and you'd go right into the dark, you know, and come in and have your tea and then you had to do your homework.

Oh I better tell you what we did to old teacher one time too, it just came to my mind... Yes, he caught us smoking at school. Us boys, you know, the bigger fellows, we made our own pipes; we got half-grown lemons, green lemons you know and cut the lemon straight through, half... then scraped out all the inside and let it cure a bit and then we drilled a hole in the side and put a pencil holder in it, and that was our pipe for smoking. And of course I couldn't get any tobacco because our oldies didn't smoke anyway but some of the other kids, well their parents had tobacco at home and they'd you know, steal a bit of tobacco and bring it to school... and we'd load up our pipes and go up in the toilet and have a smoke. But old teacher found that out anyway.

Us bigger fellows we got the cuts for that and it hurt too... and then we reckoned this was no good, let a bit of time go on and we can get level with old teacher, we'd hide his cane; yeah, where are we going to hide it? Well the school is only about two feet off the ground, and up under the school there was a lot of dust, dirt, you know... and we reckoned we'd hide it away up in the middle up there underneath the school. Who's gonna put it there? Well if you tell one fellow to do it the other fellows would all tell on you... We'll all have to be in it. So boys and girls and everybody had to get hold of this cane and we all went crawling up underneath the school and in the dust you know, except we left a few little ones out, 3 or 4, they were only beginners... we reckoned oh they won't tell on us anyway.

So they were out of it but us others all went under there and when we got under there we scratched out a hole as deep as we could and put this cane in

and covered it up. And walked out again, and that's good... but then for the next few days or a week or so the old teacher he'd be walking in school and look behind the press or open the door and look back in the corner or something, and we knew what he was looking for, he was looking for his cane, you know! And anyway, he wasn't long, he called all us bigger ones, bigger boys in the school one day and he told us he knew where his cane got to and he'd got it... and of course we all had to line up and got a cut for it. But us kids woke up to it to, what happened, like we found out that old teacher was pretty friendly with the parents of one of these little fellows we let of it, and they played tennis together you know, and this little fellow must have told his parents, you know, what they did with this cane; and they would've told old teacher, yeah that's how they worked it out.

## Track 06

*Did you have any picnic days or breaking up days in school?*

Oh yes, yes, every year we had a picnic; school picnic. Normally about - oh, a bit earlier than this - September/October. Always had a picnic...

*Did the parents come to that or was it just for children?*

Yes, the parents came, or most of them. Well anybody in the district or anybody that wanted to go. Oh yeah we used to get good crowds up there and because us kids we used to practice for the picnic, having running and jumping and whatever, you know. Egg and spoon race, three-legged races and sack races, you name it ... and as well as playing cricket - we used to have a game of cricket. Of course I was no good, I couldn't run hardly run at all when I was young because I was too fat; yeah I used to wobble, I was a fat little fellow; I couldn't ever win a race until I grew up to... before I left school about I suppose, 11-12 and that... I got thinner and nobody could beat me then, I got real fast and good! So that was all right.

We had good picnics and they even had events for the grown ups you know, the fellows who had been to school or anybody at all as far as that goes, young fellows up to 20, 30 or 40 or whatever, they'd have a race; which was good. Even the old duffers, 50 and over, they used to have a race... always good watching them, some of them used to fall over. One poor old fellow, he thought he could run and he hit the

ground, he come down and I think he broke two fingers. You could see the fingers sticking out, bleeding... oh, looked cruel. So anyway they bandaged him up and off to the hospital with him. Good old fellow, everybody there felt sorry for him.

*What else went on in the district, any other sort of entertainment, or what did people do?*

Oh, there wasn't much. No, there wasn't much sport - they reckoned if you wanted a bit of sport you had to make it yourself.

Getting back to the school there wasn't much to do up there because you couldn't talk much to old teacher, although he used to like playing cricket a bit but some of us kids thought that was too hard but we used to fight a lot, of course old teacher didn't know, he wouldn't let you fight - if he saw you fighting you'd get the cuts for it. But we used to go down behind the play shed you know, and we'd have a fight or a wrestle or something, and we'd line up a couple of the little kids up at the school now, and 'You watch, see that the teacher isn't coming cause we want to have a fight, if you see him coming sing out.' And they did what they were told, sometimes we'd be at it having a good scuffle be on the ground wrestling away or something and these kids'd be singing out 'Teacher coming!' because you had to stop then... put the fight off for another day. Oh we did a lot of that, a lot of fighting and wrestling. I was no good at fighting, I was pretty good at wrestling though, many a fellow I put down.

*Did you have ponies to ride?*

Yes, we had ponies, I had a little old brown fellow, cunning little devil too. He'd try to bite you or buck you off, try to do something wrong you know, I used to get busted off him. There was a paddock up there up past the school, a horse paddock, that's where we used to keep the horses. We'd put them in there and catch them of an afternoon and ride them home.

I can quite well remember too the old teacher, I should've told you he lived near the school, they had their school house there... he and his wife lived there and he also used to do a bit of gardening over across the road over in Murphy's place, grow a few vegetables or something, you know... and of course us poor little devils here we used to do the same we'd be growing stuff here; but we had a whole big cask full of rosella jam and we were eating away at that and we were proper sick of it, you know, and didn't want to see any more of this rosella jam, the cask was getting empty and we were happy... because we'd get into syrup or something next which would be good.

One evening we went up to the paddock and caught our horse and brought him down to the school and we were just about to leave and old teacher come along with 2 sugar bags full of rosellas, come up to - well there was us three brothers, Sid, and Arthur and myself we were there ready to come home and old teacher come along 'Hey children here take these rosellas home, get mother to make some jam for you.' Oh we thanked him, yeah good... and we got on our horse and we're coming home with these rosellas... and we're 'What are we gonna do? Dump them in the river on the way home?' We didn't want them. Yeah, we felt like doing that, no, better not. If old teacher found out we'd get the cuts again. Brought them home, made more rosella jam.

## Track 07

*What sort of meals did you have, Mick? What were the typical meals for the day?*

Meals? Oh at home? We were well cared for, but of course back in those days there was no refrigerators... but we always had cooked up meals, and the women used to bake, you know, cakes and that. We had enough to eat, yeah. It was all right.

*So how did you keep meat?*

Keep the meat? Well, mostly it was corned, salted.

*Did you kill your own meat or was it from a butcher?*

Oh, both. In the wintertime we'd kill our own meat, there'd be a few neighbours around... there might be at least four. We'd kill a beast and each take a quarter. All helped butchering up, we'd kill it like late in the afternoon. We had the gallows down here, big post up with a big roller on top, big windlass thing... yeah, kill it and pull it up and skin it, take the belly out and that. And 'cause you'd try and pick cold weather for this, you know, and leave it hang overnight, let it get cold. Next morning, early, fellows would all come along bring their carts, whatever, cut their quarters off and away they'd go, take it home and well they'd cut out the roast and steak, whatever they could... but wouldn't be much of that because it wouldn't keep long, you know.

Even though it was cold weather, well that helped a lot, but they corned most of it... they'd salt it and you know put it in cask or some fellows even had old logs cut out into troughs; in fact I cut one out for an old chap up here, he had a cask which had worn out or something and he asked me if I'd get a log for him and cut it out so he could put his meat

in it. I did, I did that. Made it about 6 feet long and a good deep log... and you'd salt your meat and put it in there and put bags over it. And it's surprising, that kept really good. But when you went to cook it, it used to get hard and dry and you would have to soak it overnight and then when you wanted to cook it you'd bring it to a boil and you'd see all the salt coming to the top - salty water, you know, tip that out and get a fresh lot of water. You might have to do it 2 or 3 times.

*Where would you get the groceries from?  
Rosewood?*

Yes, yes. ?Down here at Rosewood.

*Would you have gone into Rosewood very often?*

Well, way back in the real early days, no. But later on, yes, they'd go in the sulky, you know. They might go in every couple of weeks or so, or even oftener. I know I used to go in a fair bit with my father in the wagon, taking pigs into the pig sales in Rosewood. Yeah, but we'd leave here early in the morning when it was cool, you know, put your pigs in the wagon and take a couple of buckets with them when you got near water you'd pull up and get buckets of water and splash them on the pigs to keep them cool. And you'd keep going then into Rosewood and into the sale, unload the pigs and then drive around the line down to the crossing and around to Ruhno's store and pull in there and there was places there where you could leave your horses in stables, and then you'd go to the sale and see the pig sale and then you'd go up the street and buy your groceries or whatever you might want to buy, and then when you wanted to pick them up you'd tell them you'd be driving past in your wagon soon and they had to have everything ready, you know.

I used to delight in that, but coming home, look, I'd be lying flat on the floor sound asleep, you know, even though the floor was dirty and the wagon was rough you'd get tired, I was only a young fellow. I can well remember when I was real little, I went in with my father one day... and we never had any cats here and I didn't know much about cats, you know, going into Rosewood and we're walking up the street and I knew where the ice cream shop was and the old chap said he'd buy an ice cream for me, and then we went and I got my ice cream and... I got a chocolate too that day, I must have been well-behaved that day, I got a chocolate, a little chocolate. Anyway I'd eaten this chocolate, and I had chocolate all over my fingers and all round my mouth and everywhere... and we walked and there was a cat sitting on a bit of a shelf there, and I went

up to him and grabbed his tail and well, he took off! Left me with a handful of fur... I still was trying to eat this chocolate and old chap looks around and saw me in a hell of a mess, chocolate all over my fingers and mouth and hair... he picked me up and took me to where there was a tap there. Turned the tap on and washed me off.

## Track 08

*What happened if you got sick, Mick? Would you have any doctors out there?*

Doctor Brown in Rosewood, but we didn't go to doctors much. If you got sick you sort of stayed at home, got right yourself. But I can remember there used to be a doctor come to the school occasionally, oh not much, but if we had to be needled for... what would it have been... measles, whooping cough, or something anyway whatever it was. The doctor would be there and we'd all be lining up around the table and he'd give us a needle in the arm.

But we didn't get much doctor's attention when we were young... I should've told you this a long way back but my father had a brother and two sisters, and his brother got sick... he was real sick, he was down the yard lying around in the grass down there, and he couldn't eat, he was sick... and they didn't do much for him, they just left him lie around and he was getting really bad and someone asked him would he like to see a doctor? Yes he said, yes. All right, we'll take him into Rosewood.

So they caught the horse, put him in the sulky and his father - that's my grandfather - he took him into the doctor in Rosewood, Dr. Brown I think; and got him in there and doctor had a look at him and felt him and that, and he was all swelled in the stomach and doctor said 'Look, he's got appendix trouble, he's in a bad way, ready to burst. We need to operate immediately.' He said to the old fellow and 'What'll we do, can we operate on him?' Well the old fellow said 'I don't know, I'll have to go home and see my father about that.' That's the old fellow, old Adam, great grandfather. He was the old captain... anyway, he come home in the sulky then, saw the old fellow and told him about the other fellow; Henry was his name, Henry was in there and needed an operation well what'll we do about it? Are we going to let them operate? The old fellow give it a bit of thought, 'Yes,' he said, 'Let them operate.' So he had to drive back into Rosewood then to tell doctor - there was no phones, no mail service, nothing like that - but

oh, too late. He died. He was only about 20 I think.

*So did they consider your great grandfather to be the head of the family to ask him?*

Oh he was the captain, yeah, he was the head of the family, yes. It would have been better if they took a lot less notice of him I think

## Track 09

*When you finished school, Mick, did you work on the farm?*

Yes, I stayed at home here, worked on the farm. But oh it was all different then, all these places along here was a dairy farm, every place was a little dairy farm. Some of them only had about 15-20 cows to milk, some had more; milked them by hand, you know, and well, in the early days there used to be a wagon come along, pick up the cream and take it into Rosewood, and it was rail from there onto Booval I think.

*So it was cream you produced...?*

Cream, not milk, cream. Later on trucks came, and then we had trucks running, picking up the cream. They didn't make much money, there was no money much around, you know this is getting into the depression years. There was very little money to be made, but everybody seemed to be happy enough, they weren't making much and they weren't spending much. They were living. Yeah, it was all right. Different today, everybody's fighting. Everybody wants more or is not happy with something and there's strikes and all those sort of things. You never heard of strikes back in those days.

*Did you ever have milling machinery or was always hand milking?*

No, milking machines, they're still down here; but we only got them about... in the late 50s I think. The late 50s we put in milking machines. Before then it was all hand work.

*But you did have some machinery for cutting chaff...*

Oh yes, the chaff cutter up there, and well, in the early days they had a horse gear for turning the chaff cutter; it's still up there too... which was good then, but time went on and engines were being used more and they bought an engine for up there; that engine's still up there now, and I still use it and that's really top... and it would be worth a lot of money now too.

*Did you boys helped with the chaff cutting?*

Oh yes, well we nearly killed one fellow there too one day. Arthur, my brother. They used to cut a big heap of chaff on the Saturday when us kids were home from school. It was our working day at home and they cut a big heap of chaff, and I can remember I was only a little fellow, a bit too little to work really... and Arthur, my next brother, he's dead, he died 18 months or so ago, he had cancer. But his job was scraping the chaff away from underneath the chaff cutter as it was cut and making a big heap there. Horses in the horse gear, those times, two horses going around and around and my other older brother Sid - that's the fellow down the road here - was driving the horses and my father was feeding the chaff cutter, pushing the hay through the cutter; he wouldn't let anyone else do that because he thought they'd get their fingers cut off... he was the captain there... and the girls used to be working - I had three sisters - they used to be there bringing the hay in with the hay fork...

They were working away there one day and everything was going good. I was watching Arthur there, my brother, and he was scraping the chaff back and he got hooked up in the drive shaft, it had a universal on each end and he got his shirt hooked in that... on a hook there or a split pin, and that grabbed his shirt and wound his shirt up tight and then he started spinning round and round and round on this shaft... and the chaff cutter going right beside him, there was no cover over the chaff cutter wheel either, open blades spinning around there. I was standing there watching thinking 'Hell, he's putting on a bit of a turn today, he doesn't normally do this!' And then all of a sudden the others saw and whoa! Everything had to stop, horses had to stop and everything... and just when they were about to stop, when the damn things did stop, he fell to the floor anyway. The shaft had ripped the shirt off him, see. He was wearing a big heavy flannel shirt, one that my mother used to make, you know a big strong shirt and that was ripped completely off him.

Anyway, they dragged him over against the wall there and sat him up and oh, he was white, he was really pale looking. Next, 'Run and get him a drink of water, go on!' Go down to the shed tank, there was a tank down by the shed there and always a jam tin there for drinking... and I got a tin full of water and brought it up and he had a bit of a drink, and he was puffing there, puffing away, puffing and sweating... Yeah, have a bit more water; and he had a bit more water, and he looked to be coming around and father says to him 'How are you, are you all right?' He

nodded his head, yeah, he was all right. 'Oh, he's right,' he said, 'Yes... Mick run down to the house and get another shirt for him.' I come down and got another shirt for him, took it back and put it on him and back in business. But you know he could have got smashed up in that...

**Note: at the end of the interview, Mick was asked to explain again how the horse gear which still exists in the farm yard was used for chaff-cutting**

*Would you explain how the horsegear outside worked?*

Mick: It is like a big turtle shell sitting on the ground with a cog all around under it, driving another cog which drives a shaft. Up on top of the turtle shell is a place to put a pole so that you could turn the turtle shell itself, and that was turned with two horses. We yoked up two horses and attached them to the end of the pole with swindle trees.

They had to be walking pretty smart to get the most speed you could out of the cutters.

From the turtle shell, there was a shaft running through a hollow log just under the ground, over onto an intermediate. That was like two sets of gears – a big cog about two feet in diameter driving a little one about 4 or 6 inches in diameter.

Sid: The idea was to get the chaff cutter spinning fast, to build up the speed, to go from big down to little.

Mick: Then the shaft running from that onto the chaff cutter, a couple of universals there. That drove the cutter but it wasn't all that good. You didn't get as much speed as you should have been getting to get the best out of the cutter. You had to speed those horses up as much as you could, make them walk fast.

When we were kids, we had to be there to help. They used to cut a big heap on a Saturday when we kids were home from school. Sid used to be over at the horses, his job was driving the horses. Arthur, the other brother – he passed away about 18 months ago – his job was scraping the chaff back from the chaff cutter as it was cut, making a big heap on the floor. I was a bit too young to do anything sensible except muck around watching these fellows, but I'd be there anyway, all the girls used to be. My father was on the chaff cutter, he wouldn't allow anyone else there because he thought they'd cut their fingers off in the chaff cutter. All the girls used to be there too, bringing in the hay in and my father would be putting it through the mouth of the cutter.

## Track 10 (4.04mins)

We did a lot of hard yakka in those days; like today if you're going to go and plough you get on the tractor, you get a good seat to sit on, and rubber wheels - everything's comfortable. Those days, well, you had to walk behind the plough; with horses pulling the plough.

*When did you get your first tractor?*

My first tractor, I've still got it... December 1949. That's nearly what, 50 years old; it's up in the shed, yes it still goes but I don't use it much. It's an old Ferguson T20 6 volt... 6 volt system. But it was a good tractor, I've got a newer one now but yeah that's when I got the first tractor.

*You don't dairy here now, do you?*

No.

*When did the dairying stop?*

It would have been about 24 years ago I think, I stopped dairying.

*Why did you stop, Mick?*

Oh... I deserved a spell, I think. No, dairying used to be all right; except when we had the depression years, butter price went up a bit, money wasn't too bad... well it was about the best thing going on the land, dairying. But then beef cattle got dearer, and we found out there was just as much or even more money in beef cattle than dairying, and you didn't have to milk them... and not only that, there was only me left here; in the end I was milking by myself as well as running the farm, and that was too much work so I got right out of it. The best thing ever I did; that was a lot of work, milking cows, feeding calves... and I had pigs too, the old piggeries were worn out too, I had to build new piggeries or stop so I stopped the pigs too.

By the time I stopped dairying there wasn't too many left in the cream any more, most of them had gone milk. And today there's only a few dairymen around here and it's all milk.

*The family sound like they could do almost anything, very good with tools and very good at adapting things, is that right?*

Well, we got by anyway, didn't we? Look at my fingers you can see I've been in the wars a bit. I was out somewhere the other night and somebody said 'What happened to your thumbs?' They look pretty bad, look at the nails, yeah well I said 'Bumps from the hammer I suppose, and I know I had that fellow

jammed in a header cog for about a half hour one time, yeah and he was pretty flat. I think it was that one, he was the worst. But I've had a lot of bumps, not many of those fingers haven't been broken, or stitched... I can see scars...

## Track 11

*It must have been a lot of hard work.*

Yes well hard work and rough work, we used to break in horses here; and you get knocked about with horses, you can get a bad one. That wrist there was completely broken; I was riding a young horse and he was a mad devil, I couldn't feed him much because the more you fed him the more spirit he had in him. I rode him down the bottom paddock there one Sunday afternoon to have a look at the cattle, I was with the cattle there, looking at them and counting them up and holding him at the same time; and he took one dive to get a bunch of grass because he was hungry, and pulled the reins out of my fingers. As he got the mouth of grass he put his foot on the rein, pulled his head up and broke the bit. There I am on a young horse, young mad horse, with no bit and he didn't give me time to think of anything - first thing he did was give a couple of good bucks and I went spinning up in the air and came down like that and broke that wrist... and the horse run over to close near the road down there, horse run over to the road. I knew immediately the wrist was broken, I could feel it.

Anyway, I went over to catch this horse, and getting over near the road and see an old chap coming along, chap that I knew well, an old German fellow - I don't think he come from Germany but his parents must have, he nearly talked German, you know. Kynoch [sp?] was his name, Dave Kynoch. Anyway, he saw me coming over and pulled up and I told him what happened, 'Dave,' I said, 'I've got a broken wrist here, this horse tipped me off. He broke the bridle and when he knew I had no control he up and tipped me off.' I told him to catch that horse for me... he caught him, I said 'What's all wrong?' he said 'The bit is broken.' Yeah I said 'You get a bit of wire off the fence there, a bit of plain wire.' Like the one side of the bit was broken, needed a new side on it. I said, 'Repair it for me, so I can get home. I can't do it I've got too much pain in this wrist, it's broken.' He felt my wrist and said 'That is not broken!' he said 'It is all right, that is not broken.' And I said 'It is broken, I can feel it.'

Anyway he patched up my bridle for me and let me

out on the road, I got on that young horse and I said 'Thank you Dave, I'm heading for home.' And I put him in full gallop, this was way down the road, all the way home and held this hand as high as I could to keep the pain out of it... and I thumped that horse along. Anyway I went into the doctor next day, into the hospital and told the doctor this wrist was broken; I could feel it... and they X-rayed it and he got the X-ray and came out and said 'You said it was broken; not just broken but completely shattered, you've burst all those oil bags in there.' I said 'What can we do about it?' and he said 'We'll plaster it up, hopefully it'll come right.' It's right. Took a long time, though.

That same horse he threw his head down going down the paddock down here one day and thumped my knuckles down on the saddle like that, and he broke this finger... I can't get him down anymore... that hurts... damaged that knuckle, gone out a bit, can't get him right over. He was a rough horse, that fellow.

## Track 12

*You were telling us a story earlier, Mick, about when you were going over to Mt. Mort at night to pick up an axe. Could you tell us that story?*

That's a long time ago too now. This was back in the 1940s, back in the late 40s, because I was only a young fellow then and we decided we needed new yard down here for the cattle, the old yard was worn out, rotted out. Posts rotted out and rails were finished... so we reckoned we'd build a new yard; so we split posts and rails and got everything ready to start fencing.

Anyway we're in here one night having tea and Pop asks when we're going to start this fence job, I said 'I'm ready. Tomorrow, do it tomorrow.' He asked me would I mortice the posts I said I'd never morticed a post in my life, but I said I suppose I'll learn. I said you got morticing axes over there.

He said 'Look, I know where there's a far better morticing axe than anything we've got here. It's over at Mt. Mort, over at Arthur Clark's place. A little thin blade, it's a real good little chopper. If you go over and get that thing, you'll chop the holes a lot quicker. If you're going to start tomorrow fencing, you'd better saddle up now and go over and get this axe; the old chap will lend it to you 'cause he doesn't use it.' He knew this old chap very well. This is late at night, after tea he told me this. So all right I had to

go over and get this axe, and it'd have to be nearly 10 miles over there.

So I went out and caught my horse, and away I went. Cross country, through some of the paddocks we know over there, then out onto the road. I got over there, it was late and old Clark was in bed, I went to the house and sang out and he got up and come out, and I told him who I was and he was an old proper Englishman... and I told him who I was and he always called me Miggy. 'Is that you Miggy? What brings over here at this hour of the night, Miggy?' and 'Well Mr Clark we're going to build a new yard and Pop told me to come over and get the lend of your morticing axe, have you got your morticing axe here?' 'Yah,' he'd never say "yes", 'Yah, it's here, you can have it Miggy.' So we went up to his tool shed and he found his morticing axe and he gave it to me, I come riding off home again. Got home about midnight. But it was a good little axe, real sharp and thin-bladed little fellow.

*And you were up early the next morning fencing?*

Yes, fencing next day. Oh I made a good job of it I reckon, but very hard on your hands; and they've got a long blade and you've got to have you balance just right otherwise it'll twist in your fingers. But we built the yard anyway.

## Track 13

*And this house we're in now, Mick, when was that built?*

This house was built just when I was born, 1927. I just missed out on the old one.

*Did the family built any of it themselves or did they get a builder?*

Oh no, a builder, a fellow named Muchke from Marburg. He was a good carpenter, he had a good name, and he built this house... and I can only remember like 30 years or more ago now, that old builder finished up in the old fellow's home in Laidley. In one of the homes, there's two there I believe; he was in one of those homes and my father knew he was there, and he told me he wanted to go over and see him; so I had to get him in the old truck, the old Chev truck and take him over, and saw the old chap. That was the only time I ever saw him. Got over there and old Muchke didn't know Pop then... Pop told him he built a house for him at Mt. Walker, old Muchke said 'I only built one house over at Mt. Walker, you'd have to be Ruhland.'

*Did you have electricity in the house here when it was built?*

No, we haven't had the power here all that long; in fact I got it here. Well nobody had power, there was nobody; it only came to Rosewood a few years ago until about... probably getting towards 40 years now that the power went up the valley here, linked on Rosewood up to Boonah. They linked the lines together. Nobody had power then, before that, and I think it was necessary to link the lines up in case of breakdowns, if the line broke down here they could draw from Boonah or vice versa.

Anyway the SEA people [Southern Electric Authority] went around all the farmers all up the valley, they run the line up the Bremer, see? Crossed up there... they went around and interviewed all the farmers and said 'Hey, we're wondering if we should bring the power through and connect on to Boonah.' If we do, would they use the power? Because they wanted the line to pay. Oh yes, we'll use the power. What're you going to put in? Electric motors for milking and fridges and electric in the house, you name it, we'll get everything. Oh yeah, good. So it looked all right, so they put the line through and everybody was connected and everything appeared to be going good...

And I said to Pop, 'Hey, they've all got power down there, all up the river right through to Harrisville. Why don't you put in for it here?' He said 'Do you want it?' and I said 'Well, they're happy with it, it must be good; yes.' So he applied for it and an old chap came out and pulled up out on the road out here; and he wasn't interested in power, just talking about properties and fishing and whatever, and then he got onto the point about the power, he said 'Hey, you fellows want the power here, did you?' 'Yes,' Pop said, 'Yes. Better put it up here, other fellows got it.' No, we can't. Why? You're too far off the main line, it'd cost too much to put it here. Pop said 'That's a pretty mean excuse, do you know the other fellows have got it and they're enjoying it. We've been here always, longer than a lot of them other fellows anyway. Why can't we have it?' Oh no, it cost too much. Oh well, no power.

So then we put in a generating plant. We had an engine for running the milking plant, a Lister engine, and we bought a 32 volt generator, a second-hand one, came from Mort's over here. Got a set of batteries and we had everything set up, oh it was good. But of course that didn't run a fridge or anything, it was only for lights... and a washing machine, run a washing machine but you had to run the engine while you

were washing. It was all right though. Anyway, time went on and I was about to take over here then, Pop was finished with the place. I said 'Look, I don't want the place, not unless I get the power.' Well he said 'You know I tried for you.' and he couldn't get it, so try again. I said 'You get the power on, I'll take over.' He wouldn't, he said no, 'You try yourself.' So I hadn't taken over, nothing in writing at all; and I thought righto I'll try anyway.

So I went into town and I told them there was going to be new management, I was going to take over only if I could get the power on though. Everything was going to be different, everything had to be more prosperous-looking; going to run a bigger dairy herd and everything, use more power, use a lot of power. So the chap listened to me and he got his book out and said to get this power 'What're you going to do?' I tell him I'm going to run a big herd of cows and electric motors and fridges and everything that you'd want in the house. He was writing everything down, what I would need and what I should have and all that... 'Hot water system, do you want a hot water system?' Yes, we'll have that, yeah. Stove? Well hey I was starting to wake up, what if I was to buy all this stuff, I'd run out money. I said 'Well, a lot of wood around the place, let me use up a bit of the wood first, and get a stove later.' Anyway he wrote down so much and 'Righto, I'll send this off to Brisbane, that's where they make all the decisions.' ...and I'd hear from them.

So I come home and waited for a reply. I didn't get any, no reply, so I had to go to town again and into the SEA office and saw the same fellow, and he saw me coming. He said 'That application of yours is no good. I worked it out myself, I didn't send that to Brisbane. You're not going to use enough electricity, we can't put that in for you.' I said I thought I had things pretty good, and was looking forward to getting that power. I said 'Where'd I go wrong?' He said 'Well for instance, look here, you haven't agreed to put in a stove.' I said 'A stove, we put that on the list, didn't we?' 'No, we talked about it, you said you'd too much wood to burn.' I said 'Leave the wood lie there, we can put in a stove.' 'Will you put one in?' he said. 'Yes!' I said. So he went and wrote "stove" on and asked a few more questions and 'Leave it with me,' he said, 'I'll see what I can do for you.'

I come home again, in a couple of days I had the OK in the mail. It was right, but I was on a guarantee, it was \$55 a quarter for the first 6 years, and then after that I paid for what I'd use. That wasn't much of a guarantee anyway, that wasn't much money

really. I run over it a few times, I didn't have to pay it though because they averaged it. But yeah that's how I come to get it. I bought the stove anyway, that's the same stove, that's how old that stove is. I thought to myself when these 6 years are up it'll be out and I'll use the old wood stove. You know that wood stove has never been lit since I bought that one... and incidentally talking about wood stoves, we're talking about one being in the old house, this is it. Yeah it's around the corner there. It's still good, still a good stove, oh a bit of paper and stuff on top of it but it's good.

## TRACK 14

*You mentioned before about an old Chev. When did you get the first truck on the farm?*

The old Chev? Yes, it's under the house here, it's still good... my father bought that in March 1947. He had it ordered for two years, everything was going to the war effort then, all the vehicles. Us kids, being kids, told him he should have a car or a utility or something; he couldn't drive anything, nothing mechanical. Anyway he ordered this Chev utility and two years went by and they started releasing them. One utility came to Faulkner's in Ipswich, this is old Jack Faulkner, on Brisbane Street; a creamy one, and that one went to Ernie Christensen up at Tarome. Wasn't long another one came, another creamy one, and it went to Artie Boettcher, the butcher in Ipswich, you know Ian Boettcher Motors? His father. Yeah, he got the second one. Wasn't long, another one came, a blue one. This is it under the house here, Pop got it. The thing came, and no drivers; I couldn't drive, I was only young anyway, just old enough to drive. Sid had never driven anything, this is before we had the tractor, see. No tractor, we didn't even drive tractors, we had horses for our job.

Anyway, it was in there and Pop said 'Hey Mick, you better go in and learn to drive that truck.' Asked me would I go. I didn't know quite what to say, I thought I might smash the thing up. 'Right, I'll go in.' I said. So, I got on the cream truck and I went in and they had to teach me to drive it. I stayed in Ipswich overnight and next day I came home, not in the Chev though; it was wet weather, pretty boggy - there was no bitumen roads here then. Anyway another young chap drove with me of course, to teach me. We drove up to Rosewood the second day and I got my license. Brought it home. That cost him £600, that was a fair bit of money then; a lot of

money. Waited 2 years for it, cost him £600.

*Did that make a difference on the farm, once you had the utility?*

Oh yes, it was good, we used to like driving it. The old chap wouldn't let you drive much, it cost too much.

*So you still kept on with horses after all that?*

Oh yes, going to Rosewood or something, even when he had the old Chev.

*How long would it take to ride into Rosewood?*

About an hour and a half. Depends on your horse, if you had a horse that was well-fed and shod; they could canter most of the way.

*Would it be the same time in the sulky?*

Sulky would be slower. They have got to pull the sulky.

*So it was a fair effort to go into Rosewood shopping, and back again?*

Oh yes I was going to tell you too, we're talking about the price of the old truck, £600. The war finished up and there was people just down the road here bought an old army truck, an old International; with a steel body, a 4-yard body they called it... tip truck. They bought that to do contract work on the roads, gravelling jobs and they'd tender for jobs and if they got it then they'd have to put the gravel on. They used to put their tenders in, they got jobs... and no men, no men to work and shovel the gravel, so they'd come to me and Sid. 'You fellows come help us with the gravelling job.' And at that time we were still milking cows by hand, you know how soft your hands from get milking? You'd milk your cows and then go shovelling gravel all day... oh, you'd get blisters.

There was a quarry just down the road, still down there, no good now it's too soft, but there were more quarries around and in those days. It was all pick and shovel work; no tractors or loaders or anything. Shovel the gravel on and I tell you we worked hard on those jobs and they paid us the council rate, which was 2/3 pence an hour; that was the rate, that would have been well in the late 1940s, after we had our truck, getting up to nearly 1950. 2/3 pence an hour, that was the price then, that's what the council used to get. That's what they used to pay the workers. [Note: 2/3 was 2 shillings and three pence - about 23cents - a small amount even in the 1940s.]

## Track 15

*Were there any troops around here during the war? Soldiers?*

Yes, we had the Yanks down here.

*Whereabouts was that?*

They had a camp down the road about 6 or 7 miles, at Lanefield, that was when the war was still going... The Yanks set up a camp down here, and they took all this property all right from ours here, right down for an ammunition dump. They had mountains of ammunition, shells and I don't know what-not.

*Right up to here?*

Well they took our land, what'd I tell you about our property... up to 400 acres, well we kept on more after that then. Pop bought another paddock up here, too 250 acres and then another 800 acres behind that which was part of Hiddenvale. It was part of Hiddenvale, that 800 acres; and they took that, they took that paddock off of us, the Yanks. They did a lot of clearing back there, cleared the timber; so they could put the ammunition down. The fences were all flattened, dozed down and pushed together, right down to Lanefield;

We asked about our cattle, we had cattle back there, and they said we could leave them there at our own risk. I think while we're talking about it, one got hit with a truck and got killed before we had discussed it. They paid us for that one. But then after that we had them in at our own risk... and another fellow got killed back there too, he was feeding in the treetops there, like in the fork, he come feeding, feeding right up here and when he got up here he jumped over the log and cracked his neck. Instead of walking back... and that was our loss.

Yeah we had cattle back there, we reckoned they took the land off us for the dump, we've gotta go in there and look after the cattle. We had to get a permit to go in, so we had to ride down the camp down there and went into Captain Sherriff, he was running the show down there. Told him who we were and we needed a permit to come in and look after our cattle. We got it. And then they had guards, fellows on horses; we might be riding away down there somewhere and the guard would come up to you, 'Hey, who are you and where are you heading for?' 'We're looking for our cattle.' 'Have you got permission to be in here?' So you'd pull your permit out, and you were right.

But there was a lot of Yanks down there, there was

black ones there were yellow ones and brown ones and white ones. No end of trucks and jeeps and things. They put a road right through, right up to the top; straight over to here... long way, a good gravel road.

*What do you do on the farm now, Mick?*

Whatever I have to. I'm mainly growing stock feed. I grow a fair bit of lab-lab [sp?], that's for grazing or for making hay, whatever. And oats in the winter for grazing. Keep the breeders well fed and keep them in good order. If you've got a good breeding herd, and you look after them and you feed them well, every cow will have a calf every year. But if you don't feed them well, some of the cows are going to miss out on having a calf. That's when they become unprofitable.

*So you've got beef cattle still, too?*

Yes, well I've got Charbray cattle, pretty well bred, they're white. That's their colour; because a Charbray is a cross between a Charolais and a Brahman. They seem good, quiet cattle. Good to handle. I wean them and grow them up and sell them for stud cattle. But I don't have enough of my own, I still have to buy some cattle. Buy store cattle and grow them up and fatten them.

*How many acres would you have on the farm now?*

A bit over 1500 acres, all up. Things are looking well now, we've had good rain and the cattle are doing well. We've got a bit of tick problem, but we're sorting that out too, but we have to change our dip a bit.

*Had few bad years of drought up until now, haven't you?*

Yes, we've had some bad years; all through the 1990s we've been pretty dry; and I would reckon that now, this spring and this summer, would be the best we've had for at least 10 years, anyway. I've had a bit of trouble with blackleg though in the calves, I lost a couple of good calves; found them dead, died from blackleg. That's the germ that they get out of the ground that kills them. When they die they swell up in the front quarters, around the shoulders and if you feel them you'd think they were stuffed with paper, they really crackle. That's how you tell that it's blackleg... you've gotta get busy with the needle, needle them. So I did that about a month ago and now I've got to give them a booster, to make them properly safe. But they get this germ, it's generally in the ground like on the flats, on the lower ground, wetter ground.

*A creek runs through here, doesn't it?*

It's what they call the Black Gully. It don't run too much, it's been too dry; but sometimes it does run and there is a lot of water there. But I don't depend on it for water for the stock, they do use it but I've got underground water, wells and bores. Equipped with windmills. Yes, there's plenty of water.

## Track 16

**Continuation of interview - Mick Ruhland joined by his brother, Sid.**

*Tell us about when the Light Horse trained here.*

Mick : Oh yes, that's a long time ago, they would have been training back in the 30s. They were set in over here at the river on a little flat. They had tents and they had all their gear there, equipment for shooting and wagons and guns. A lot of horses, and they'd come and they'd tie their horses up; I often used to watch those soldiers, the way they tied their horses up. I've never ever seen it done before and never seen it since; the way they tied them up. They'd hammer a steel peg into the ground and they'd tie the horse to that peg from his fetlock onto the peg. One horse on each side of the peg, and a whole row of horses.

Sid : Side by side, they didn't take up much room.

Mick : No, but it looked very neat, and it was well done... and it was a pleasure to see those soldiers, the way they hammered those pegs in; two hammers going on the one peg. Didn't take them long to put those pegs in. So, those soldiers used to practice shooting from Mort's country here at Franklinvale into the range here.

Sid : Little Liverpool Range.

*So they had artillery with them?*

Mick : Yes, and we'd see them going over across the road there... they had six horses to a gun; the soldiers used to ride the near side horse, three soldiers, one on each horse and the other horse on the off side was coupled on... and they used to trot along the road, the dust would be rolling up, a lot of noise, and the other soldiers would come along riding. They'd get over there onto the ridges and they'd dig the guns in. Had to trench them in so that they wouldn't buck away when they fired.

Sid : The canons had wooden wheels and iron tires, pretty rough going... no rubber.



*Training near Rosewood, 1934*

Mick : Yes, no rubber those times. They'd have about six guns set in; and they'd fire from - they had a number - and whoever was in charge would call out number so-and-so had to fire, and the soldiers would put the shells in the cannon and when the fire order came they'd shoot - bang. The whole cannon would jump and if you were there with them, you'd get a hell of a shock yourself, it'd make you jump too.

*Sounds like you went up there and watched them?*

Mick : We did yes, different ones went there.

Sid : Took our dog with us, too, and blew him over backwards.

Mick : Dogs would fall over when they fired the cannon. They'd shoot and you'd see that cannon shell go through the air and you wouldn't see it fall on the range but you'd see a puff of smoke go up and that was where it landed, you'd know that and you'd hear the echo - bang - of the explosion come back. They did that for years there.

*How long was each camp? Would it be weeks or months?*

Mick : Something like 2 weeks. But then that was

only little 12-pounders. Later on they got bigger guns and they'd done away with the horses. They had trucks and Bren Gun carriers and things like that, pulling the cannon, they were a lot bigger and heavier... and I think they were on rubber by then, too weren't they?

Sid : They were.

Mick : I think so, yes... and the bigger guns, 18-pounders, they'd shoot further, so they dug them in just down here on the flat right against my fence down here. We went down, we used to go down and watch them shoot there, and there was a lot more noise there than at the 12-pounders, I can tell you that. Anybody who wasn't used to it would have to hang onto the fence or a tree, or the concussion would knock you over.

*Are you likely to find any ammunition down in the paddocks?*

Mick: Yes, the range is full of it. [showing a souvenir]This brass cap, that came off a 12-pounder.

Sid: They had bigger ones too, 25-pounders.

*Did that continue during the war?*

Mick: No, that all finished up. There used to be a lot of soldiers around, you would see them out in the paddock driving around. This was before the war, when they were practising, in the 30s and right up in the 40s, they were still shooting over here in the early 40s.

Sid: Where they used to shoot from, half way over they had a dugout and they had men in them where they could see where the shells landed, they had telephone cables up to them and they had to report back to the guns.

*Sounds a bit risky.*

Sid: yes it sounds risky, but they were in a dugout,

Mick: Yes, it was dug out and logged in They had a premature landing one day, blew up a cattle dip.

Sid: Yes, it went a bit astray.

Mick: It belonged to Hidden Vale. I suppose they were compensated, it wanted blowing up anyway, it was old.

Sid: Yes, they built a new dip after that.