

Transcript of Interview with  
Lewis Hodgkinson by Andy Macqueen

Interviewee: Lewis Hodgkinson  
Interviewer: Andy Macqueen  
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Location: 'Eureka', Blackheath  
Transcript: Aine Gliddon and Andy Macqueen  
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Description: Lewis Hodgkinson was born in 1915, and has been a resident of Blackheath ever since. He has undertaken many visits to Blue Gum Forest through his interest in bushwalking, mainly with family and local friends.

ANDY: This is an interview with Lew Hodgkinson, at Blackheath on the 6<sup>th</sup> September, 1994. The interviewer is Andy Macqueen for the Blue Gum Forest Oral History Project. We're conducting interview on Lew's property 'Eureka', which Lew I believe you bought in 1937.

LEW: 37, 38, yes. I think it would have been 37 when I bought it, and then we moved in here, we finally moved in, in May 1938 from next door we lived next door in the 'Elms' which was my mother's parents' home. They bought that in 1908 or 9 and they originally came from Sydney and of course originally from England [misleading—see next para] and my father's people they had moved here a year or two before and bought a place called the Bungalow directly opposite, at that time it was known as the Bungalow and my Grandfather was a good Englishman who renamed it 'Chequers Court' so, and that's the story of how we came to Blackheath.

And your parents and your grandparents, what was their trade in Blackheath?

Well, my father's father Horace Hodgkinson, he was a carpenter, cabinet maker and my father he learnt the trade from him and he also had done a Tech course in architecture and he hoped to do some architectural work in Blackheath, like just house design and so on, but he didn't get very much work that way because he found that it was a pretty poor district and most people, or most of the carpenters up here would draw their own plans with a pen and ink (chuckle) and 3 foot rule, but that was his side of it and he, he stayed in the business until, oh until the Depression 1930 until just about a combination of, a combination of the general Depression and also there was, both my, both sides of the family had a lot of family illness and we, that interfered with his work. One way and another we started out with what we had because in the 'Elms' there was quite a bit of grass: we had a domestic cow and then re-registered that cow, so as to make it legal to sell to our neighbours and friends and from that it grew up into a small dairy and when we moved here in 1938 the Depression was still lingering around and I decided the best thing to do was to try and develop the dairy. So we had a town dairy for, we had a town dairy from then until about 1952 when under the pressure of the Milk Board we sold the, we sold the cattle and just went into milk vending, and I continued in that for some time after and eventually, eventually went back to my trade in building and I, became a licensed builder, but I operated mainly as a repair man, and you know small alterations, things like that. My mother's family - her Grandfather good old Peter Sutton, he came to Australia

about 1952 [1852] or '53 and instead of joining the Gold Rush, he did a more sensible thing, I think he bought a horse and a dray and started carting, and he built into quite a big, quite a big business, with, eventually became Sutton and Whitehead, and one of their competitors was Butty McMahon who was father or grandfather of Billy McMahon, future Prime Minister. Yes, they, they ... old Peter Sutton became quite well respected in his way. He was Major of Redfern and when he died, he died about in about 1980-something, and they tell me there was funeral procession about half a mile long (chuckle) he was quite a ?? [Additional information supplied later by Lewis: His great grandfather Peter Sutton met his future wife on board the migrant ship to Australia.]

He was quite a well-known person?

Yes well his son, my grandfather, Nat Sutton, he started out as a clerk and became an accountant, head bookkeeper and accountant with Hoffnung's and he stayed with them for, oh about half his working life, for about 20 odd years. Then he left to go into business for himself, and, it was a grocery business and he was totally unfitted for grocery business, so then he went back to Hoffnung's briefly, they called him back, and then he left again and started up an Estate Agency, Estate Agency and Estate Maintenance and that continued for many years and he eventually handed that over to his eldest son - Harold Sutton, and that lasted until the Depression, and that died out in the Depression too because, they, the old business of estates with lots of people, you know strings of houses and terraces and that, they became old and things became sold and just the business sort of slowly died out. The Depression helped kill it off.

Yes. Just a quick correction, sorry, you said that your mother's family came out in 1952, that was 1852

1852, yes of course, Oh yes, 1852

We'd better get the right century.

Yes, yes my wife came out in 1953. Yes, '52 or '53.

And she was English?

Yes.

Well, you've got a lot of stories to tell about Blackheath I suppose, and maybe that's for another day, because we are here to talk about Blue Gum and the Grose

Valley mainly to day, and um, perhaps we could kick off by a, asking when you first went down to Blue Gum Forest, Lew?

Well that, that started, that was, that'd be 1933. I know, I can only fix that by the fact I know I was 17 at the time, and at that time we were living in the Elms and there were two cottages in there, a Caretakers Cottage and we were living in the Caretakers cottage, and the big one had been let and the tenant, during that summer holiday was Rev. A. P. Campbell from Killara and his family and his youngest son Don, said to me would you like to come for a walk with him, so or, we call it a hike these days. So I nominated Blue Gum Forest and as far as I can recall, that was the time we went to Blue Gum for the first time, that would be January 1933, shortly after the it was handed over to the Nation again. I had been following the newspaper reports of what had been going on, and there was also a, quite a feature in one of the local papers. I think it was written largely by Myles Dunphy and he founded what they called a National Park, National Parks and Primitive Areas Council and they had virtually the whole of the local paper, had a special feature and in that they outlined the purchase of Blue Gum and also the, what he proposed as the future development of the Blue Mountains as a National Park and a primitive area.

So all that publicity was..

That like brought Blue Gum to my attention, emphasised it because my father had heard about people going down Dockers Ladder but he had never been down there, and he, you know, we were just sort of saying well this is interesting, must get to work on it. Do you think many Blackheath locals would have ever been down there? Yes, odd ones, odd ones, for instance the, many cases, the visitors say for instance the family of Professor Wood, they owned Rostherne, that's just a bit further on the road here, and I know the Woods boys, in particular Bill Wood, they were great ones for exploring and going around, and they'd been down there and they'd walked through to the Grose to Richmond and in the case of the Campbells, they were friends of the Woods, and they were also friends of Professor Sir Edgewood David, and I think that Sir Edgeworth David stimulated to some extent their interest in it. But Donald, Donald Campbell himself was a very interesting chap. He, as a school boy, he and some others they, well he would perhaps say as a parson's son he was a bit wild. (Chuckles) He, on one occasion he and some friends they were, before they stayed at the Elms they stayed at another place in Blackheath near the railway line and he and some

mates, they we're exploring around and found some detonators. So they were picking it out with a pin one day, and of the course the detonator went off, it blew away half of Donald's left hand. He only had an index finger and thumb left, and that was a great shock to the boy because he had just started growing up then. But he became, as therapy, a friend of theirs introduced him to woodcarving and he became quite a, quite a, really competent wood carver. And he continued that, to his, right into his, time of his death.

Right

But that was the, and then the, like the Campbells would always come up here, when they could have the loan of the Wood's place they would stay there and if they didn't stay there, they would stay at the Elms.

And this would have been back in the 20s would it?

No

Very early 30s?

Well yes, the very early 30's. Yes, so that I am not sure if it was the first or second time, I think it was the first time they stayed at the Elms that I met Don Campbell and we formed like a lifelong friendship from that on.

And when you went down to Blue Gum with, with Donald Campbell was it his first visit down there as well?

Er ... No. He had been down there, I think he'd been down the way of Govetts Leap, but if I remember correctly he said we'd go down Perry's Look down and he went out the day before to, like locate the way down because at that time there was no marked track and he, he found that, if you went straight down the little gulch, like there is at present a sort of a direct gulf with a, a .. about a 100 feet long you go dead straight heading down toward the valley. That finishes in a sort of a cliff, about 40/50 feet high, and then, but if you don't go down that and you turn to the left there was a good scramble down the valley, quite easy. So he, he carved with his pocket knife, which he always carried a pocket knife to use often for woodcarving. He carved a big arrow in the tree so as to indicate to others how to get down.

Oh I see, yes

And that was I think the first time he was down there.

Right. Just diverging a moment. I think in the 40s there was some money spent on the track, upgrading it.

Yes.

Was the route taken by the new track much the same as the original route? Yes, exactly the same, yes. Yes, it would be the same. Ah, Donald said to me, I don't know where the ladder came from, he said, the ladder could have been ah, if there was ever a ladder there, it could have been down this, over this cliff, or it could have been just, perhaps the term ladder in the sense that people say, well, you know, I can't think of an instance, but there are cases where a steep climb is referred to as a ladder.

Yes

Just like Cook's Chimney.

Yes, yes

It's not a chimney, but it is a narrow gulch. Yes, yes that was the first time I went down there and I was greatly impressed with it.

And, and how did you get out to Perry's?

Oh we rode bikes out.

And was there a trafficable road at that stage?

19 ... I think there was, there ... I'm not sure if there was a trafficable road or just a track. Old, old Tim Wallace the chap we'll also refer to, he'd been scouring around there cutting firewood and he'd made a lot of tracks out there, but I think there always was a bit of a track out to Perry's Lookdown. Like it was a surveyed road. But the development of the track down to Blue Gum, that was sponsored by the Blue Mountains... Blackheath Council, before it was Blue Mountain Council, Blackheath Council. And the driving force there was, ah, Sandy Phillips, C. C. Phillips. He was, he was Blackheath's Health and Building Inspector and he was also in charge of the sites. And he was a chap who had a lot of, a lot of sort of initiative that way, about, about the bush. He was one of those chaps, he had lots of enemies in the town, he could make them as fast as he could heal them, but at

the same time he did a lot of good I think. I could tell you some stories about him.

But he, anyway, when it came to make the down, he decided, I don't know where the money came from, I think the Council donated some, or had a bit of money. And he said to Mick Boyd who had worked as a ranger for the old Sites Trust up here. And he knew Mick was capable of doing the, doing the track. So he said to him, would he do it. And he said, and he offered him like over award wages to do it. Mick said no, he said I'll do it on a contract and I can work in my own time and that meant that he could go out there, camp on the job and work from daylight to dark if he wanted to and he wanted to come back to Blackheath he could come back. And I have an idea that the sum agreed on was 80 pounds. I have another figure in my mind of 130 but I think that refers to, the track, the contract for the track down Govetts Leap, originally, at an earlier stage. I think it was 80 pounds for the track down to Blue Gum and he made quite a good, quite a good serviceable job of it. Like he, the steps, like he would use, find stones that were handy to where he, to the line of the track, or he would just cut down, go away from the track line a bit and cut down a sapling, or 30 saplings, use wooden pegs and push them in. But he made quite a decent track.

This is, this is the effort that was, his effort was in the 40s, wasn't it?

Yes, I think that was probably about 1942 or something like that.

Yes.

Yes I would think. Ah, Mick worked for us clearing land here in 1945 and this happened sometime before that, about, probably about as you say about 1942.

Alright, well let's get back to that first visit. So you, so you went down Perry's and it was still a bit rough then I guess

Oh it was

And you went down to the Forest, and you camped down there?

No. Just a day trip.

A day trip. An do you have any recollections of your impressions of the area? Well, just the, just the remarkable, remarkable sort of purity of the forest. It's almost a natural monoculture. That's the thing I remember, and also the fact that

it was quite park-like because at that time there was still cattle there, quite a few cattle, and they, they kept the under-scrub down. So you had this park-like effect, and the, and the beautiful tall slender trees. I can't remember a lot of detail about it, you can get a whole lot of impressions when you are there for the first time.

Sure.

But that's the main, that's the main recollection I have.

Mmmm.

Then of course then I came back and told them, it was years and years before I got my father down, he was, oh it must have been about 1960, no 1954 before I took my father down. Really?

Yes.

And in the interim you would have made a few more visits? Oh yes, yes. Yes because having once been down there, I didn't go very many times until, probably 1945 or so.

Yes.

I can't remember how many times, just occasionally, if Don was up here on holiday every year we would always go for one or two walks while he was here. I can remember going to Blackwall Glen and going one time, we went to Surveyors Gully, Surveyors Gully, and then up the ridge on the other side to Lockley Pylon and we were unaware of the, that a track existed so we went up that rather broad-looking ah break in the cliffs which you see from Govetts Leap.

Oh yes.

It's about a, Oh 50 yards wide, I suppose. And to get up to that we had to scramble up quite a few steep ledges. And Donald Campbell had a little fox terrier dog with him, on occasion, he just tied a rope around the dog and hauled him up whimpering from one ledge to the next . But we got up to the top.

You did get up did you?

Oh, we got up to the top yes, and then ...



Just to clarify, that on the, on the Govetts side of Lockleys, is it? Ah, no. It. It's on the north side of Lockley, but it's about half way between Lockley Pylon and the tip.

Yes.

Now when we got up to the top, then we found this existing track.

Ah yes,

And we walked along we found even made steps.

Yes.

And that goes down right over the end of the, of the little ridge.

Very close to it.

Yes very close to the end of the ridge and it just zig-zags. I think that was built by, by ah the Army cadets on their training days. I'm not sure but I think that what it was. Ah the steps, you think so?

Yes. There was a good deal of activity out there, in that area because it was wild country near Sydney and the before they had the, you know militia they had a cadet system which they used to And would you be referring to the 30s when you think they did that? Oh no no, that would be back, prior to 1900.

Oh really

I think so. Yes, yes.

And the, I suppose you would have gone in quite often down the Govetts Leap track and then ..

Yes we went down Govetts Leap track, at .. I've never made it, I've often been down the, ah, the Evan's Lookout track, and also the Bridle Track there, but not from there to Blue Gum, usually it was regarded like hard work to sort of walk away from home and then come back. Because the fact I lived near Govetts Leap, it was either Govetts Leap or Perry's to go down. So, in the earlier days to get from, if you went down Govetts Leap you'd go on down to what we now call Junction Rock.

That's right, yes.

And then to go on down to Blue Gum I think there wouldn't have been much of a track in the earlier days, would there?.

No. No the only track, there was a, there was a defined track and I think as much as anything it was a cattle track. Yes.

And it crossed the River a few times, I've heard.

Ah, yes, I think it did. I think it did, I'm a little bit vague about, about that, and I've read, read a few accounts of how people say they crossed the river three or four times and these days the track keeps on the left. On the left hand bank all the way, so I'm wondering if there was ever any proper effort to build that track, or whether it just grew.

I think it just grew.. I think it just grew. There's one place you go up quite a steep hill, I remember that Yes.

And I can't recall having to cross the river. Strangely enough I can't recall that. We could have, could have, but I doubt it. Can't recall. I know that at the Junction Rock they had a, the people who ran the cattle there, they had a rough fence, just a real sapling, sapling tangle. But that apparently was all that was needed to keep the cattle in. Yes. We'll come to that a bit, a bit later perhaps. But ah, so you went down there a variety of ways. And did you camp there sometimes, or was in normally day trips ?

No, I never camped, because at the time, most of the time I'm talking to were the days when I had a dairy, and that is the nearest thing to perpetual motion has ever been invented. (laughter) And. And what was the attitude of Blackheath locals to these people who'd come up from the city with their, with their bushwalking gear and set of down there to camp?

Ah. Some regarded it as being a bit cracked. Others regarded them as being, well, you know, nice friendly guys who sort of loved the bush ...

Yes. and that. Ah, ah, quite a few of the locals would go down there. Younger ones would go down there, hike, like it was ah, I suppose in the community there only a, only a small percentage that actually sort of love bush walking. It's not an easy, it's not easy exercise. And it takes a bit of, almost training, it's in a way like art. You don't... one person would look at a tree, and say, like he's interested in timber, he'll say pretty good stick that, you'd get about ah, oh twelve hundred

super out of that. Another man looks at it and writes a poem, like the trees of the forest are like the pipes of an organ. See.

Yes

So I suppose amongst the Blackheath residents well there were some who were interested aesthetically and others regarded it as interesting - they'd have an interest in the way of ah, well, they liked to know their district, and others even might have had an interest in, in it as its use for a cattle run.

Well, in 1931-32 there was all this coverage in the press about how the bushwalkers were buying this block from Mr Hungerford, and - in order to have it reserved - what do you think the locals thought about all that? Well, I think in many cases they would think it was, they'd leave that to the bushwalkers. Cause, one of the things you've gotta remember, in the 1930s - people talk about the depression just recently or the recession or that - but it has no comparison with the sort of havoc that 1930 wreaked. See that time there was, there was up to over thirty percent unemployment and that was unemployment, largely male unemployment, which was, you know, really surprising. And that's why I often have a, you know, so you've gotta have a bit of sympathy with even Hungerford with his, with his, manoeuvrings about the lease of the forest. Yes. Do think he ever had plans to chop down the trees and plant walnuts?

I doubt very much whether he ever intended to plant walnuts. I think he might have had, he might have had some notion that if he got possession of it and he did enough to sort of get freehold of it then it would have been a valuable timber resource in the future. There's also, it's crossed my mind that he might even have had wind of what the bushwalkers thought of the place and thought well, here's a chance to make a few bob (chuckling) without too much sweat.

Sure. Well I guess we'll never really know ...

I don't think so ... but you can't deny that the purchase of the forest has resulted in a delightful focus for bushwalkers.

Oh that's right. And also you had a spin-off effect because it drew attention to, many people's attention to the, to the national, whole national parks idea. Because up till, up till then, ah, almost the whole of the country was up for, available for lease, you might say. If you look at the parish map you'll find there's areas subdivided all over the place, and subdivisions - these things often

collapse because people didn't fulfil the requirements of the conditional purchase lease and it'd revert to the crown. I've got one very good story about how - I wonder if we could digress this little bit, it's such a lovely little story ...

Yes, yes

Its, it involves a block of ground out near ah the Hunton Estate - block 18 or 19. The council - it was cut into blocks and council gradually resumed it all again. Sorry, what was the name of the estate?

Hunton estate. See it was facing Govetts Leap and would have been an absolute eyesore.

Yes.

Anyway, between that and the actual cliff edge there was another area which a man had taken up as a lease. I'm a little bit vague as to the actual position of it but it was a cliff edge and it was in that general area. And this chap took it up as a conditional purchase lease. He was unable, he hadn't completed the conditions and he was due to lose the lease. So rather than lose the lease he thought he would sell it. So he offered it for sale to an acquaintance for a sum of money and this chap was willing to buy it, but then he made some enquires and he found that there was a chance that the chap was going to lose the lease in any case, so therefore he could start off from scratch without having to buy it. So he decided that he would wait until the lease was surrendered and get it for nothing, or next to nothing. Well then the chap who held the lease, he got wind of the chap's intentions and he went to someone in the Lands Department and said look, that block I'm surrendering, he said that should be reserved for posterity, it's so valuable that it should be reserved for posterity, and it was. (laughter) So that's how you might say bad intentions produced a good effect.

Yes, yes

That's by the way. That was told to me by William Smythe King. Right. Um, just to get back to your Blue Gum visits, I think you told me the other day that when you became married it put the lid on your walking a bit with your young kids and so on, but you went back in later years.

Ah years, just for a while it did because while you've got babies you just can't - I wasn't the one to sorta walk off and leave them to it, and also I had a seven day a

week job, so that kept things pretty busy, but once the children started to get older, well first of all they taught me something, and that is that a four year old child, if you say you're going to go for a bushwalk, that doesn't mean 20 miles to Mount Hay. That means going 200 yards down to the creek at the back of our place, taking a piece of string and a chop bone, and catching yabbies, putting them in a tin, and when the day's over returning from the creek. And that's, that was a wonderful treat for a four year old and a 5 year old and a 6 year old. Well, as they get older so their ambitions grow a bit further and they start to appreciate a longer walk. But eventually by the time the eldest was - they're all close together - so the eldest was 10 and the youngest was four, we tackled Blue Gum as a family, and Andrew - that's the tall chap you saw the other day - he was the 4 year old at that time and he went down and came back under his own steam. Great.

Up and down, up and down Perry's.

I'll just interrupt you there to change the side of the tape.

[Start of LH1, Side 2]

Yes, so your children all got to know Blue Gum quite well. That's right, yes. And it became quite a favourite spot. We, on one occasion we went down over, we took another party, we'd often take a party of neighbours' children down. My wife, one of her favourite jokes is to say - there were some kids down the street, they were never taken anywhere, and if we were going on a picnic she'd say 'we're going down to Blue Gum Forest or going down somewhere today: you can come if you like, as long as you're here in half an hour, and bring your lunch'. And the kids would take home and usually bring their own lunch - they'd pack their own - and they'd be there, and that was how they got to know a bit about the bush. But ours loved these bushwalks, but we tried never to make them a burden. Like, that's the thing with children: if you - they should enjoy it, and it not be a burden.

Certainly

I've known people who compel their children to go and it turns them against it. Yes. And you went down to Blue Gum of course on the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary, by helicopter.

Yes.

What would have been the last time you walked down?

About 10 years before.

Right. And ...

10, 12 years before.

And how would you compare the forest these days to what you saw in the 1930s? Well, the only marked difference that I can say is that the scrub has grown up, like there's a certain amount of acacia, wattles and general ti tree, so it's not nearly as clear as it used to be. In the 1930s, and 40s and 50s it was - the whole area - you could see from one side from the other until the trees sort of just blocked out any further view.

Yes

And that was one of the attractions of it at that time and I think that in a way it's a pity to allow it to get overgrown. I know there's a quite an argument there about how much damage the feral cattle do and they certainly are dreadful animals on a slope, because they always follow tracks and the form these tracks which meander round the hill and they're usually either slightly going up or slightly going down, so they rapidly become watercourses. Yes.

So I can understand the National Parks antipathy to cattle and horses. But at the same time if there's - there seem to be very little, ah, in the way of wallabies or kangaroos down there.

That's true.

Very few. And I think in the absence of those animals well it needs something to just keep the place a little bit cleared.

It's interesting to speculate what it would have been like in the pre-cattle days.

Yes, yes. One chap, Brownie, what was his name, Kevin Brown, he said to me did I ever remember tree ferns down there, and I said well, he said I've been told that there used to be tree ferns all through the forest. Well, I said all I've, I can't remember, I have seen a few tree ferns along the creek banks, but I've never seen many, well now tree ferns they'll be eaten by cattle - when they're getting a bit hungry they'll eat tree ferns, and they'll keep on eating them and kill them. That's when they can reach the crown - if they can't reach the crown they can't

kill them. So, how much in the way of tree ferns there were I don't know, but the recollections that I have is that the forest has changed very very little because it seems to be growing so slowly.

Yes.

I think that when I took my father down in 1954 we found one big tree and I think it's still there and it was just about six feet thick, you know. Excuse me talking in non-metric terms because - in the trade I talk metric but when I thinking of these things well I gotta think in what I remember.

Sure.

Ah yes, that was the biggest one we could find. I had a six foot staff and I can remember putting it across the tree and that was the size of it. That was, oh, about a hundred yards up from the junction, a hundred yards or so, upstream on the Grose River side - on the Mount Banks side. Ah, there's always been, the trees on the, underneath Perry's Lookdown always seemed to be smaller than the other. I think that's because the river has changed course a number of times there, and probably wiped out part of the forest and then it's regrown.

Yes

I think that's probably the reason. The forest has no ... there seems to be no sign of the forest regenerating. I don't think that's possible underneath a canopy like that. It would - if you cut the whole forest down it would regenerate, regenerate to what it is now in about two or three hundred years.

Yeah. You might be interested to know I was down there on Sunday, and of course we had the bushfires last summer, and as a result of that a lot of the acacia scrub was burnt out and the forest is the clearest I've seen it for years at the moment, but only very temporarily I should imagine.

Yes.

Yes. Just going on a bit in connection with the cattle, what's your understanding of the origin of the cattle in the valley.

Well I think it happened that, like once they found the various tracks into the valley that could take, support - that they could get cattle down ...

The first one would have been that one at Evans.

Yes. Evans Lookout. That was what we used to call the Bridle Track there. That one, and probably around Pierces Pass or somewhere over that side. I know the Bilpin people used to go up and down there. And I've heard of a chap in Leura: he assured me he had taken cattle down from Leura out along the Mount Hay Ridge. The only place I can possibly think would be somewhere between Lockley Pylon and Mount Hay. I don't know, he refused to tell me how he got down. Ah, that would be in the earlier stages and I think ... A hundred years ago or something?

Yes, yes. Like, you've got to think settlement on the mountains here was mostly started round 1880, some time after the railway went through. That's when the settlement started to build up. When you get settlement then you get people supplying the - looking after the homes of the wealthy and you have to provide services, you have to have meat and milk and then people, they explore around and they discover that the Grose Valley is sort of an untapped resource. You can run cattle down there without paying anyone anything - no-one owns it - and if you can ride a horse fast enough and good enough, with cattle dogs you can, you know, make use of it. That's going back to the 1880s. But the time I think there was a fair bit of use done that way. But when the more regular use occurred, as far as Blackheath was concerned, was in the 1930s when the local town dairies, in particular Les Sheard, had a place, what do you call it, Frog Hollow, Blackheath. Les Sheard, Mal Rigney and his brother Beade, they had a dairy in Blackheath and later Medlow, and a chap named Murray. He was - just after World War 1 he had a dairy - and I think he might have been one of the first to use it, but Mal Rigney, he took up a drought relief lease of a square mile underneath Evans Lookout and regarded that as being a title to running cattle in the valley.

It was his excuse to take cattle down there - down the pass. That's right. Yes. And he and Les Sheard - I think that Les might have been the better horseman and he might have, might have sort of come in on the deal that way. But Les Sheard to my mind made the most use of it of all, and he would start out from Blackheath and, like, do his milk run, and he'd start out by seven o'clock in the morning and drive the cattle out to Evans Lookout on the road, get them down there, turn them loose, go round and locate them down there and bring the springers back. 'Springers' - that's a cow getting near calving. And he'd be home that evening. Just occasionally he found that dingos were a problem and one



occasion he did some strychnine baiting - sorted a few dingos that way - he told me that. So the cattle would tend to congregate down where the pastures were down around Blue Gum, I suppose.

Yes, I think that once they got them past, once they got them past ah the Junction, probably they would - at that time I think Acacia Flat was a bit clearer than it is now - when I first went out to Pulpit Rock - that overlooks the valley - I can remember making out the outlines of what we called Nixon's Paddock and I presume that is what's now Acacia Flat. And at that time probably did a bit of grazing there, but the cattle mostly went down to Blue Gum and up and down the creek there because that's where the water and grass would be. And there were no fences.

No fences, no.

The cattle weren't concerned part of it was reserved of course.

Oh no. They didn't worry about that.

And neither were the owners of the cattle.

No. Les Sheard - he said he found a - somebody had a - he just said somebody had a stockyard down there and he made use of it himself for branding his cattle and so on. So this chap came along one day that owned it, or said he owned it, and demanded he pay for the privilege of using it. Les told him where he could get off. He said you've got no more title here than I have. (laughter) Which was simple enough.

You don't know where that stockyard might have been, Lew? Well, I was under the impression it was up the Pierces Pass end of the forest but somebody else told me they saw the ruins of one on the downstream side of Blue Gum so I just don't know. Perhaps there were several stockyards over the years.

Could have been. Could have been. Somewhere downstream and up on the hill there's a fairly developed mine of some sort, I don't know. It's not one that we've, it's not the one near Pierces Pass, this was further down. I've never seen it.

Yes. And you're not aware that anyone ever took cattle up and down the Grose?

To Richmond?

Yes. Along the old Engineers Track.

I've never heard of it. Never heard of it. I doubt - I think it'd be pretty rough from what I've heard.

Yeah. There wouldn't be much point to it, would there?

No. Plus there's the fact that there's no point - there was no flat land down there to speak of except for Acacia Flat and Blue Gum Forest. Otherwise the place would have been settled. Lew, um, a few of the bushwalkers who came up from Sydney in the thirties talk about coming up in the train on Friday night and walking out to a property known as Happy Daze on the Friday night, and there the person out there would let them camp out there or sleep on the verandah or whatever and then they'd set off down Dockers Ladders in the morning.

Can you tell me anything of the history of this Happy Daze property.

Happy Daze. Well, so far as I know the first person to own Happy Daze - certainly the first person to live there - was E.H. Brewer and his wife and relatives. E.H. Brewer, he was editor of the - he was editor of other things too but I know of him as editor of the Daily Guardian - that was a paper - run by who? I can't think of the owner, but the Daily Guardian was a, a competitor to the Telegraph and the Herald in the late 20s and early 30s, and it eventually became a casualty of the depression. Ah, it was, you know, a bit down-market. But anyway E.H. Brewer was the editor of that and while he was on it I'm told his salary was 5000 pounds a year and while he was on that he could afford to run these things. He spent quite a lot of money on the place. He - Harold Ives used to do a lot of work for him out there and they put down a well up near the top of the hill - not quite the top of the hill ...

This is the hill with the pine trees on it near Hat Hill, is it?

That's right, yes. It's still called Happy Daze. Richard Neville owns it now. Um. Anyway, E.H. Brewer. Well, later on he died and his widow kept the place going for a while and she became elderly and retired to Sydney and after that it was sold and a chap named Haydt bought it - I think it's H.A.Y.D.T. - he was ah a middle European, we'll call him that. I think he claimed he was Swiss, probably, I think he was German speaking Swiss, so he probably came from Zurich if he came from Switzerland. Ah, and he had several clothing factories, industrial clothing - the brand name was Hadex. Hadex made overalls and all sorts of

industrial clothing. He had a factory in Katoomba. [Lewis later advised that Haydt's full name was Alvin Eugene Warner Haydt.]

This was in the 40s or 50s?

Ah this was in the 50s, this is after the war. He was one who came out here shortly after the war. Either before or just after - he might have come out before the war - he might have been one of those who got away from Hitler. Ah, it's hard to know - and he bought the place and he started to develop it as a real, oh, you might say, a sort of a Swiss estate, perhaps. You'll find there's a lot of embankments done out there, stone-built embankments graded around and, and on one occasion he ah, the land that Hordern owned originally around Perry's Lookdown - from Perry's Lookdown down towards the edge of Blue Gum Forest - came on the market and ah Cecil Phillips tried - Sandy Phillips tried to get the council to buy it and they couldn't afford it and he tried to get the Boy Scouts to buy it and they couldn't afford it, and Haydt bought it.

This was land at the top there?

Yes. 120 acres, it's the top, and down the slope, down the talus. Well Haydt bought that, he hadn't any real use for it but he just bought it and then Sandy persuaded him to give it to the council and there was a quid pro-quo that council would then support Haydt's wish to secure a few more acres including the little stream that runs into - that eventually flows into Acacia Flat. And that was so you would have an assured water supply for his property up top. Well, he had to go to the Land and Environment Court and the council supported his application. In the process of the, preparing the case, his lawyer came up to me and obtained an affidavit from me.

Ah. My affidavit was answering questions as to whether any plants growing and that were absolutely unique to the area, and I couldn't think of any. I suppose whatever was growing on one ridge would grow on the next one there. There was nothing unique. Anyway the, he lost the case in the Land and Environment Court and the judge said that he didn't doubt - he had no doubts as to Mr Haydt's good intention but he said he had to bear in mind what would be the future use of it and probably it would be not as, not as benign as Mr Haydt's. The unfortunate part was that Haydt had no family. His wife wasn't interested in the place much and he was just just running on borrowed time. And he eventually collapsed at

the wheel of his car driving across the Sydney Harbour Bridge. Collapsed and died, and that was it. And Richard Neville, he bought it soon after that.

I see. Now, just near that property is this spot you referred to earlier, known as Surveyors Gully. I think you said you went down there once. That's right, yes.

Now this as I understand is a pass that the bushwalkers known as Orang Utan Pass.

I gather you hadn't heard of that name.

Well now I've heard of Orang Utan Pass, but I was thinking in terms of that being applied to another way down out near Mount Haystack or Bald Hill or whatever you call it beyond Hat Hill.

Yes, yes.

Ah, so I don't know, but I've always known of this crack, Surveyors Gully, even before I found it.

And I went out there with my father and I thought we'd found the way down because we came to this big open semi-circular gully. We went down but we were short of time and I didn't persist. Well I told Don Campbell about it. He went out there, found it, and found that wasn't the one, it was the smaller gully, less noticeable, ah, sort of the next gully to it.

Back this way?

Yes. Yes, back towards Blackheath. And so then probably the following week or so we went down there and at that time there was a small bridge across the little, what'd you call it, washout.

Yeah, so, perhaps you could just describe the way you went. You went down the gully ...

You go down the gully and you come to the shale band which is all the way round the hills down there - that red shale band. And the washout, the track ... you go down the gully then you turn left (like that's turning north) and go across this washout and then you can, there, the talus comes up to meet the track and you're down, you can walk down without any trouble. Well the ...

The very narrow spot on the ledge ...

That's right, a very narrow awkward spot. Well old Tim Wallace, who had this flying fox and the proposed coal mine, he'd been using that to go up and down to get to the bottom of his coal mine, and he put a temporary bridge across there. But they were a couple of coachwood logs that he used, they didn't have a long life. But we went across on them when we went down. Right.

And when would that have been, Lew?

Oh, that'd be pre-war. Must have been probably about 1937.

And Tim Wallace had been operating there for a while, had he?

Yes. He, he'd been there for several years then. He was out there for a while and he - they [Tim Wallace and his brother] - earned their living largely by carting firewood. They just used to scour all around the hills, from Hat Hill out to Perry's Lookdown, the tracks there, and you'll still find stumps where they chopped down the Snappy Gum. Like Snappy Gum is quite good firewood, what we call Snappy Gum - Scribbly Gum.

And he is supposed to have built this flying fox there at Surveyors Gully - I've seen it written this that was to bring timber out of the valley.

Well, his intention, what he said to me was it was to get, to start a coal mine, and he actually proved the mine, he went in, like the, see the coal seam outcrop all around the hills here - this is the Katoomba Seam - and it usually is about ah at Katoomba it's just about a metre high. Well around here I think it's a little bit thicker. And he proved that and he actually brought a bit of coal up on one or two occasions just as a try-out. Whether he had intentions on timber I don't know. He and his brother they were coal miners. Their whole, their whole attitude, they had run a bit of a sawmill I think, at times, but they were also coal miners. Thing I always remember about old Tim, he had at least one miner's mark on him, I don't know if you know what that means?

Miner's mark? Oh, yes?

A miner's mark - if you get hit by a flying piece of coal it acts like a tattoo, like you, a bit of the coal dust gets off and it'll often stay under the skin. I can remember old Tim having this black spot on his lip. So that indicates that a fellow has been amongst the mines quite a bit. So the real reason for this flying fox was this coal prospect.

Ostensibly coal.

Yes

Yes.

And where was the prospect, was it directly under the gully there? Yes, directly under. It would be on the, be on the, when you go down that track, ah, you're going down a gully, and I think that somewhere in that gully would probably be the entrance to their thing. See the coal is usually exposed because it's usually a bit below the level of the talus, I think it's about, like for instance at Govetts Leap waterfall the coal outcrops just above the foot of the falls.

Yes.

Well the talus the Talus reaches up two or three hundred feet higher than that mostly. Well the only place you're going to find the coal uncovered is when you're in a little gully, and I would think that his coalmine is down that little gully or one alongside it. From what you say he wouldn't have developed ...

No he never, he never did that, he never brought timber up. He might have brought an odd log up I don't know, but I don't remember ...

So his flying fox fell into disrepair quite soon I take it.

Oh, it lasted there for some time and then, then the bushfire burnt it down and that was the end of it.

Yes. Was it in a going condition when you went down the pass? Oh yes, yes yes. He had it, he had his big traction engine there and he tensioned the rope, the rope was that tight you could walk along it, it wouldn't give a bit. Yes.

He had it tensioned around stumps, things like that, so that he ...

So that pass was known about fairly well locally was it?

Apparently, yes.

Yes. With the name Surveyors Gully there's a good chance it's got a long history. I think so, I think you'll find it'd go back a long way back. It's probably been discovered by people at the bottom of the valley looking up and seeing the obvious, you know, slot in the hill.

Yes

Another friend of mine Bill Allan, he went down to Blue Gum Forest and he said he could never find the track down Perry's Lookdown until one day he went down and looked up, and he could see it from the bottom, so he climbed up it.

Yes. I can see it would be difficult, before there was a proper track it would be difficult to find the spot.

Well that's how we found the one out near Mount Haystack. We went down Govetts Leap Creek - you can get down where the creek goes over the waterfall

...

Govetts Leap Creek or Hat Hill Creek?

Ah ha, Hat Hill Creek I'm sorry.

Hat Hill Creek.

Sorry, yes. Hat Hill Creek. The talus comes up to the - on the north side it comes up to the level of where the waterfall drops over.

So you actually got down there without a rope, did you?

Got down there without a rope.

Ah. You drop into the creek very close to the escarpment? Well, we followed the creek down, and where the creek drops over there's a waterfall. To the side of it, there was actually, like grass and footholds and that, you can just sort of walk across to the talus. So we went down there, this was with Don Campbell on another occasion, went down there, around 1946 I think, ah, went down there and, probably for, until the Hat Hill Creek drops into a very very steep gully, oh it's like a slot, and we had to get down I suppose half a mile or so, when you could get across, and we were intending to walk around to Perry's Lookdown. But we walked on our way and we say this break in the cliffs and we thought well that'll cut the trip short and we'll go up there.

That would've been round to the southern side of where Hat Hill Creek comes out...

Oh yes, yes, well it's not - it would be ...

The Blue Gum side.

Yes. Hat Hill Creek, it goes down, and it turns north around what we call Mount Haystack. We'll call it that, it's that Bald Hill about the shape of a haystack. Well, the creek turns north, that's left as you're going down, and then on the other side of Mount Haystack is this track up. A dry gully.

A dry gully. Yes.

Yes.

It's a scramble, but you get ledges about five feet high. But you can get up. Ah. And are there any other gullies and ridges you've explored up in that part of the ...

No. But I know that the next one, after Hat Hill Creek, the next creek is called Crayfish Creek and locals have told me that you can get down into the valley there too, because the cliffs are getting a bit lower as you get up towards Mount Victoria.

Yes. Tell me, you told me a little interesting story the other day about some Aboriginal relics on Rock Hill. Perhaps you'd you like to repeat that story for me? Yes, Yes, I think that's a good one. Well, that goes back, again in the 1930s when people had no money so if you wanted entertainment you entertained yourself. And our entertainment was usually a bush picnic. Rather prosaic just to walk a couple of miles along a dusty road out to, towards Hat Hill and have a picnic but anyway.

This is a little hill just before Hat Hill?

That's right, yes. Rock Hill is the one on the opposite side to Richard Neville's hill, and a bit nearer the town. Well, my mother made the acquaintance of Mrs Brewer at the time and she used to go out there to see her, and she'd also, while she, like either going out or coming back, on one occasion she'd gone up to this Rock Hill and thought what a lovely, what a lovely view it is. Just like Happy Daze. And as we didn't have a house at the time, or a home, the thought occurred, well perhaps we could buy it, and my father went to the council, had a look at their maps and it appeared to - he got an address from that which seemed to be the person that owned it. And he wrote to them - he was a saw miller down at Wyong way, and the chap wrote back to say yes, he could, he's sell it for a hundred and fifty pounds. Anyway we found out later that he didn't own that, he owned the block alongside, and actually this Rock Hill was reserved from sale or



lease generally. Anyway while this was going on my mother, she romanticised a little bit and decided to sort of work out the design for her future home. So instead of drawing it on

paper she drew it on the ground with the, all the, by picking up the clutter of little stones - there's actually thousands of them on top of the hill. And she set out, you know, this little house like a, bit like a light house, with a bay window here and kitchen here and so on. And then made a few tracks, made a few tracks around the top of the hill, and come to a - so she'd edge the track with stones, and then ah if there was a nice bottle brush or something like that she'd put a little ring of stones round that. So that's the origin of the stones. But anyway, nothing happened for about ten years after that, and she went out there with my father one day for a walk one misty day, and they went up to have a look at old Rock Hill and the old picnic ground, and there's a young man up there, and he had string and pegs and all sorts of things. And they said what are you doing. He said, 'oh, I'm doing some anthropological research. I think I've found an Aboriginal ceremonial ground. And the lecturer I work under in Sydney told me to measure it up and draw a plan of it and if it looks good enough he'll come and have a look at it.' So of course my mother told him the story, and he took some convincing, but eventually it was pretty hard to deny she had actually done it. They always ask you 'wasn't there anything there before?' She said 'no, nothing', which is quite definite. Well that was that, and then, oh another 20 years, probably 20 years later my, there was a

[End of Tape LH1; start of LH2]

So ah ...

We got as far as to say about the ah ...

There was the first anthropologist

Yes

And then you were going to say 20 years later

20 years later, that's right. Ah, a young chap, locally, who used to consider himself an authority on these things, he gave a talk to Quota Club on the Aboriginal - Aborigines and their activities in the mountains. He said actually that a ceremonial ground was out near Hat Hill. Ah, no. No, he said I won't tell

you where it is, otherwise it'll, you know someone, if it becomes known, it'll get destroyed. So, I only heard this indirectly but old, the old chap who owned Ken Nicholl's place before him, I'll think of his name eventually, he ah he told me this story, so I told him the true story. He said 'but are you sure there was nothing there before?' a said 'sure', and I had difficulty convincing him because there's nothing that people hate having destroyed as a fondly believed fable.

Right.

So the next stop was my daughter was attending the university, Sydney University, and it must have been around 1980, something like that, anyway it was around the time of the bushfire, but she heard that some people were interested in a ceremonial ground up on the hat Hill Road. So at that time I ah - Bill Hurditch, he was the local forester I think, he asked would I go out, would I go out along Hat Hill Road and take some photographs of, of the behaviour of the fire which had been allowed to burn untouched out beyond Hat Hill. So on the way out, ah Suzanne told me about this, and she said, so I said, 'why not stop and we'll go up and have a look'. So we went up and sure enough they, this time they'd really gone to town on things, they had, they had a wooden frame, like a grid frame, about 3 metres square, and there was little sight lines been cleared, with little pegs with flags on, they'd discovered these little circles, they'd discovered the pathways, and they'd discovered the main - the grid was over the main, the main where the house was going to be. Though the whole lot was deserted there, their tools were there, they'd gone and left when the bushfires came, burnt it out, I don't know what happened, I don't know what happened, whether they heard the true story or what but it was a deserted site. They left their tools and everything.

Mm. Lew, the local... I'm intrigued to know when you set out on your little jaunts into the valley did you ever carry any maps?

No. I'd, I'd seen, I've seen them, like maps of the district, but I never bothered to taking a map. I knew the place. (chuckles)

Sure

Like once you know, once you know your boundaries well you can't get lost within those boundaries.

Yes, that's right. Yes.

It's very much like if you're up in the Snowy Mountains. Once you, once you learn the boundaries of, say from Guthega to Townsend to Mueller, and Kosciusko, and that, and the Snowy River, well, within that area you can't get lost.

Yes. Perhaps just to diverge from Blue Gum, do you, you've been down the Snowy a bit have you?

Yes, couple of times, couple of - summer holidays.

Yes

Beautiful place in summer.

Do any walking down there?

Yes, we went - firstly we stayed at Sawpit Creek, and on that occasion you could drive up to Rawson Pass, so one occasion we went on a guided tour with the ranger and we went from Rawson Pass to Mueller and then, not Townsend - we went to Townsend on our own steam separately - ah, what's the one after Mueller - Twynam, Twynam ...

Yes

Then we went down to - the top of Twynam - then we went down to the Blue Lake, then from the Blue Lake up over the ridge and down to the Snowy again and up to Charlotte Pass. Yes.

And I'd say that's the hardest walk I've done in my life.

Mm

And that was ...

Harder than when you went down Surveyors Creek and up Lockleys Pylon. Well no, that would be about it, because that time we went up to Lockley Pylon and back down and up again. That was ?terrible.

Crikey

That was terrible

Yeah I'll say

But, ah, on that occasion then they would, you'd get to Charlotte Pass, then the ranger drives the drivers back to pick up their cars at Rawson Pass and you come back. I shall always remember sitting in the back of the Landrover, hoping he knew the way. (laughs) On another occasion down there we went from Guthega, we went from Guthega up over Spencers Creek to Snowy River and up to Hedley Tarn, and back. I can always remember my daughter - it was the last day we were there, we were running short of time and my daughter was ahead and she was heading for the top of Twynam and we were shouting at the top of my voice 'Come back, come back! We haven't got time!'

Yeah

And that was ... I really enjoyed that, the Snowy.

Yes. It's quite different to around here, isn't it.

Oh yes, it's open and it's treeless, almost treeless.

Just to return to this part of the world, um the, we mentioned Lockleys. The road out to Mount Hay, what's, do you know the history of that road at all?

No I don't. I would imagine, I would imagine that it'd been done as a track and I think it would be, it would be to do with the ... I don't really know the story but there seems to be a lot of military activity out there. Not - like, as a training ground.

Mm

And, I think that was the basis of the first use of, like they used to have expeditions up the Grose Valley, like it was a convenient training ground to Sydney.

Yes

And, one of the first things they did on Mount Hay, this is before my time, was to clear the whole of the top of it. See, they cleared the whole of the top, and then Mount Hay re-grew, and when I went out there, I forget when I went out there first, ah, it'd, it'd re-grown, like it was a round, become a round top again. And then the next time I went out - well I don't know whether it was the next time - one occasion I went out there and the whole of the top had been cleared so as to expose the little obelisk thing they got out there as a surveying marker. And, they

gave it like a haircut, and it looked ridiculous from Govetts Leap. There was Mount Hay, which used to be nice and round, and it was with a flat top. (laughter) A flat top with a pimple in the middle.

But I, I think that might have been the origin of the track out there.

Yes

Course, also might have been a guest house proprietor's - they had a hand in a lot of these things. They would - you know, walking trails, riding trails for their guests, I don't know, but I have an idea that the quasi military used it as a training exercise.

Yes, I get the picture that, you know, before our recorded history of the bushwalking and so on in the valley that there was probably a lot going on what with ah Oh yes

What with the cattle and coal miners and perhaps the army and

Oh yes, like coal miners, they were, there was open slather, I remember, this was getting back in the 1930s, ah, I went round, with my father and mother - my mother was a good walker - and we went round the Rodriguez Pass, and we were climbing up toward Evans Lookout and we saw an old chap, an old chap, just packing up his swag as it were, to come back to civilisation. And he was, we said 'what are you doing down here?' And he said 'oh, I've been proving a coal mine. And sure enough, he had a little drive into the Katoomba Seam just below Beauchamp Falls.

These days everyone would cry blue bloody murder.

Yes. That was the 50s or something was it. Oh no, it was back in the 30s. Yes. There he was, he'd, he was just burrowing away there. You burrow in, and once he'd get in like a, a little way then you can prove whether it's a, like you got a good roof, a good bottom and what the quality of the coal is once you get a little bit away from the outside. He was hoping to sort of sell it then to someone.

Yes. Open up a mining lease.

Yes. Once around that area there was a - the council's rangers, they found a steam jets, steam jets, sort of just steaming up out of the, out of the ground. And someone thought, hullo, this was Rotorua over again. (Laughter) But someone

with a bit more nous said it's almost certainly was a bushfire set fire to the coal seam, and it was just generating a bit of steam. Yes.

Yeah. That's that.

Well Lew, I think we've covered quite a bit of ground, and I'm sure there'll be lots of things you'll think of later on and there'll probably be other questions I want to ask you later on, but I think we'll wrap it up for now, and I'd like to thank you very much for participating in this ... OK, that's a pleasure.

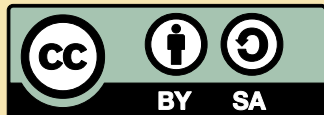
Thanks very much Lew.

END

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