



## Ken Carr

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*Born in Newtown, Sydney, in 1906, Ken left home at 14 to go bush, where he worked for most of his life. He worked at various rural jobs, such as farmhand, polo groom and dairyman but mostly he worked as a stockman, seeing the change in farming methods from horse power to mechanisation. He has five daughters and lives alone at Woy Woy since the death of his wife ten years ago.*

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*(Ken provided the following chronological list of his working life):*

1929-1921	Tumut (14-15 yrs old)
1922-1923	Goulburn (16-17 yrs old)
1924-1925	Coonamble (17-19 yrs old)
1925-1926	Glen Morrison (20 yrs old)
1927	Married
1927-1929	Sydney/Depression/any job going.
1929-1931	Emmaville - tin mining and droving.
1931-1932	Sydney
1932-1934	Merrylands - dairying
1934-1936	Sutherland - dairying
1931-1938	Wallacia - vineyard.
1938-1940	Mudgee - travelling for Marcus Clark
1941-1943	Mudgee - dairying
1943-1944	Bowraville - dairying
1944-1948	Bathurst - dairying
1949-1950	Black Springs Station, Evans Plains - running sheep.
1950-1951	Condobolin - milk run/ambulance driver
1952-1954	Dubbo - ambulance driving/wheat farming
1954-1956	Coonabarabran - running sheep and cattle

1956-1958     *Sydney - various jobs*  
1961-1966     *Sweetbriar Stud - stockman*  
1966-1973     *Penrith (1st home owned) - factory work*  
1974             *Retired to Wangi.*

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I was born in Newtown, but I always had a yen for the bush, so I left home when I was 14. There was nothing wrong with my home, my parents - I just didn't like the city. My parents should have given me a kick in the backside and told me I couldn't go, but they let me go.

I went out west, and the first bloke I got a job with was a really unpleasant bugger to work for. He had a place at Brungle Creek, not far from Tumut. While I was there I chopped my foot with the axe. (A bit of bone shifted only the other day, after all this time.) When I cut it, the bloke I was working with took a look at it, and put my foot in a basin of kerosene, which stung like hell. The only pressure point I know is behind the knee, so we put a stone behind the knee and strapped my leg so it was bent tight back, and stopped the bleeding that way. I couldn't wear a boot for about a week, so I made a moccasin out of a bit of corn sack. They wouldn't let me go to town and get it seen to. I could have lost my foot. I was going on for fifteen.

I didn't stop at Brungle Creek long, because I had an argument with the boss one day when we'd gone in to Tumut, when I took a horse into town for him to be shod. We were in town when the argument blew up, and I told him he could keep his job, and that he could take the horse back home himself, and I went off around town to see about another job. Later that day the local policeman came up to me and told me that my ex-boss had threatened to have me up for horse-stealing if I didn't take the horse back out to the farm. So I took it back and stayed there a few more days. Sunday came and he had me ploughing near the house. He was going to the church service at a little village nearby and he was going to bring the parson back for afternoon tea. As he was leaving for church he told me to make sure that I had knocked off ploughing before he and the parson got back, because he didn't want the parson to see that he had me ploughing on a Sunday. But because the parson had a car and the boss only had a horse and sulky, the parson got there first, and I made sure that I didn't knock off till after he'd arrived!

I was supposed to be employed as a jackeroo by this bloke, but he had no right to advertise for a jackeroo because his holding wasn't nearly big enough. Anyway, I left him and went to town to see the Stock and Station Agent about another job. He sent me off to a chap by the name of Bruce Boone, and he was a really good bloke. The quickest way to Bruce Boone's place was through Tumut, but after what had happened over the horse I was scared of running into that copper again, so I took off in the direction of Gundagai. I was about five miles out when along came a bloke on a horse. I thought: "Crikey! This bloke's a copper." (The copper in Tumut had really put the wind up me). He wasn't dressed in uniform or anything, (often they didn't), but the horse that he had made him look like he could have been a copper - in those days they weren't like these broken-down racehorses they've got now, they were specially bred horses. Anyway he pulled up, and said to me: "You're a young feller to be carryin' the drum, aren't you? Where are you goin'?" I said: "I'm goin' in to Gundagai to see if I can get a job." "Were you the bloke that asked Bruce Boone for a job in Tumut a week ago?" I said yes. "Well," he said, "he's waitin' for you. I'm the manager of his

place here in Gundagai. I live in town, but you can go down to the Gundagai property and see the bloke there, Rolly Banwell, and get him to give you a feed and bed you down, and get you off in the morning." And that's what happened.

So the next day I hiked seventeen mile over to Gocup, which is seven miles out of Tumut. I got there and the damned place was shut. I knocked on the door, and opened it, and there's an old Arnott's tin full of biscuits - home-made - and a note: "We've gone to town. Home about five o'clock. Put the billy on and have some tea and biscuits."

And so I started with Bruce Boone. It was only a seasonal job - planting corn and that. They used to run cattle as well on the hills. He used to knock the men off on Saturday afternoons and Sundays, and in those days that's unheard-of, I'll tell you. Usually you had to work all day Saturday and then go into town Saturday night. He was good. His wife used to write to my mother. I wanted to buy a horse but she said that she had a horse there that I could treat as my own while I was there.

The shops used to close on Wednesday afternoon then, and open Saturday afternoon and Saturday night, to catch the cockies coming into town. They used to have Saturday afternoon stock sales, too. When I'd go into town on a Saturday night I'd go and have a few beers. I was only going on for fifteen, but nobody ever took any notice. There was a saddler there by the same name as me - Tommy Carr, (no relation) - he was an interesting bloke, and I liked looking at the saddlery and that. We used to go down to the saddler's shop and spend a bit of time there.

One day Mrs Boone said that she couldn't get away for a break with her husband because she had to cook for the men. "I can cook." I said, and offered to do the cooking while she went away. After a bit she agreed. We used to kill a beast, chop it down the middle, and half went to a neighbour and you kept half yourself, and you'd have fresh beef for a while. Then you'd pickle it. When that was finished, the neighbour would do his kill, and give you half. You got more fresh meat that way. We ate mainly corned beef and vegetables - that's spuds and cauliflower - and damper. And we used to get bread out from town once a week.

So after I'd done that I was given a week's holiday, and Bruce Boone said: "I don't care where you go, but if you're going to stay anywhere overnight, ring me up." So he'd know I was alright, you know.

I had a week roaming around the place, and when I got back Bruce told me to muster up the draught horses and take them down to Gundagai for the wheat harvest. Sixteen of them. There were four to a team on the headers, and they had two drivers on the machine and one bloke bag-sewing. It was all bag wheat in those days. My job was to get up in the morning, get the horses in and feed them, then come in and cook breakfast. Then a bloke would take the horses up to the wheat paddock, and then I'd get more feed out for the other eight horses. Then I'd take those eight up and bring the first eight back. That's how they had time to feed.

When that was finished at Gundagai I went back, and Bruce said: "Well, the job's finished, and you'd better go home. You're only a bloody kid anyway, and what's more you've spent too much money." Anyhow, he gave me ten pound, which was a lot of money then, and two wild ducks and two tame ducks that his wife dressed for me to take home to Mum. Then he took me in to town and put me on the train.

I got back home, and Dad had a friend who had a son up at Coonamble, so I went to Coonamble then and worked for him. That was alright. I got a pound a week. Unlimited hours, of course - you worked Saturday and Sunday and weekdays. When it came shearing time they bunged me up to thirty shillings a week. I had to take the shorn sheep out to the paddock and help to muster them in, and in my spare time I used to do the wool pressing. I wouldn't finish till nine o'clock at night sometimes. The big woolpress we used to use (a *Koertz* Homestead and Leasees Model) had a big arm on it, and I only weighed just on nine stone at the time. I'd push the wool down, but by the last two strokes I could swing on the arm and it wouldn't come down, and I used to have to get someone to help me with the last two strokes. I earned my thirty bob.

I don't know why I left there - I just packed up and left. I was there for two years or better, but I must have had the roaming fit or something. I'd had enough of carrying swags, so I saved up and bought an unbroken horse for ten pounds. There were lots of fellers on the track in those days, carrying their swags, but I realised that humping a swag put you under suspicion a bit, so I saved up and got this horse. When you were on a horse people couldn't as easily jump to conclusions about you - you could be all sorts of things.

But for one reason or another you never stayed on the same job for long. Most of the jobs were seasonal, like shearing time, or crutching time. You'd work on a place doing crutching, say, but as soon as the crutching was over you'd have to be on your way and look for another job somewhere else. You'd usually be given about a week's notice.

I went into town and got a job on a company station, *Wingadee* - in those days it was the biggest station in NSW. It was started up by a bloke by the name of Andrew Tobin, and the brand was A over T. It was thirty mile out of Coonamble. When I got there it belonged to the Australian & New Zealand Loan and Finance Company, and old King George - (the 3rd or 4th or whatever - I can't remember exactly which one of the Georges it was, - the one with the beard) - was one of the biggest shareholders. When the Prince of Wales came out here in 1919, to get an idea what colonial life was like he came out to *Wingadee*. He got to Tyrone Pub, a little old wayside pub on the Walgett road and they asked him to leave a memento of his visit, so the Prince of Wales jumped up on the bar and punched his signet ring into the wooden ceiling! Tyrone was owned by *Wingadee*. It was on the boundary, then it was ten miles to the homestead from there - and the homestead wasn't on the back fence, either!

It was pretty tough there. If you didn't own your own horse they wouldn't lend you one to go to town. I saw in *The Land* newspaper that the property was sold two years ago. Rians owned it. They were big people on the land. They owned property in Queensland and property all over the place. They never went social or anything like that - they were ordinary people. They sold their Queensland property, then later on they seemed to be selling all their property, and they finished up selling *Wingadee*.

When I was there Maurice Fehon was the Manager and Bruce Gillies was the overseer. The way they used to run the stations then was like this: first you had the homestead - a decent-sized place, then you had the store, then you had the men's quarters, then you had the jackeroos' quarters. There was a roof over the next section that led to the next building which was their kitchen - a big kitchen with a baker's oven in it and everything. The cook was a married man. He used

to cook and take the dishes out to the men and his wife used to serve the jackeroos and make their beds and all that. Some of the men had their wives with them, and they stayed in little places dotted around. There were their kids too, but the families with kids were away from where the men were.

I finished up out on the boundary. There was a rough bush hut there. Dirt floor, a table, another bit of a room, and... nothing - no furniture or anything. Refrigerators were unheard of. It was near what they called No 2 bore - that's where I used to have to get my water from. There was no dunny, no shower or anything like that - to wash we used to go and jump in the bore box. When the water is pumped out of the ground it goes into the bore box. It's all flat country out there, so they built up a hill, and cut a square in the middle of it and corded it up with sleepers or something like that. The water comes in there, and at the top, just below the level, it was cut down so the water could flow out down a wooden chute into the bore drain. You'd hardly credit how far that short drop would push the water across that flat country. It'd push it to blazes! It wasn't dead flat, of course, and where there was a depression they'd build up a bit of a bank, and where there was a rise they'd cut a channel, and at the tail end they'd have a dam. They might have two or three run-offs like that from each bore. The water was hard as hell, and full of all sorts of stuff. And the water was hot - it comes out of the ground hot. You'd jump into the bore box to have a bath and it was that hot it'd take your breath away.

You'd get four or five kerosene tins of water, and stand them in a row. When you used up one, you'd fill it again and go on to the next one. That let all the sediment and that go to the bottom. That was your drinking water too. (*Laughs*). It tasted like shit! The rations were a bag of spuds, a 25 pound bag of flour, four tins of Aunt Mary's Baking Powder - ('cos it was plain flour, not self-raising flour) - and four tins of condensed milk, two bottles of tomato sauce, two bottles of Worcestershire Sauce, tea and sugar in a brown paper bag, and a brown paper bag with sultanas in it. No greens - though there was onions, I forgot that - 14 lbs of onions, I think it was.

Actually, what you lived on was half a sheep a week. With no electricity or refrigeration or anything, what you do is get a corn sack and hold it sideways by the bottom and the mouth and you pile coarse salt in that. You get the sheep, cut him up, take a leg and a few chops off him, then the rest you rub with dry salt and stick it in this bag. It used to be like leather when it comes out. So we did that with our meat. Fresh chops for breakfast for a couple of days, a leg of mutton, and after that it was all dry salted meat. You'd boil that, with potatoes and onions - and a damper.

I was there on my own. Up in Queensland they wouldn't allow it - there had to be two. You don't think of it when you're doing it, but when you come to think of it, it's a bloody risky job. You've only got to be galloping somewhere and go arse over head, and where are you?

After that I worked for a while at the Head Station mustering sheep. I had my own horse, and I was friendly with another bloke, Jack Christian, who finished up with a string of jumpers later on. He was doing a bit of a line for the daughter at *Junaweena* station - that's ten miles the other side of Coonamble - and I was doing a line for the schoolteacher there, Marie Green - she was the governess. Even up at the head station, when you finished work if you wanted a bath you had to have a bath in the common room in a tub. You'd heat a couple of kerosene tins of water on the fire, tip that in the tub and have a bath. So Jack and

I would finish work, have a bath, catch our own horses (of course you weren't allowed to ride the station horses), and away we'd go. Forty mile. We'd ride the forty miles over, then sometimes we'd get horses over there and take the girls for a ride. Sunday nights we'd play on the piano and sing, and we'd take off on the forty miles home after that - sometimes we didn't leave till eleven o'clock at night. (I was seventeen going on eighteen at this stage.)

If they had a dance, say, at the local hall, they'd always hold it on a night when there was plenty of moonlight, because you needed the light to ride home again afterwards. We'd get about thirty or forty to the dances. I'd learnt to play the organ when I was a kid, and later on when I was working at Glen Morrison on *Homeleigh* station I used to play the organ for the Catholic church there, - accompanying the choir.

I was getting on all right with the local schoolteacher - I gave her an engagement ring and all - but I was drinking at the time, and she said I'd have to knock it off. I said: "Nobody's gonna tell me what to do," so that was the end of that. I wouldn't take the ring back, so she sent it down to my mother.

Jack Christian and I were riding back one time there when we got one of those big subtropical storms. Down she come! You couldn't see your hand in front of you! We're ploughing through mud - you know, black soil. (There were twelve-horse teams in Coonamble until 1924 - they were the only way to get through the black soil mud when it rained.) Anyway, by the time we got to town we were just about buggered, so we pulled into the Oriental Hotel (it was owned by Joe Herlihy - an ex-hurdles jockey). We knocked him up and he put us up in the lounge. It was no good going on in the dark, so we stopped there till daylight and kicked off at piccaninny dawn. But we still had thirty miles to ride and we got back late. We were both sacked. Gave us twenty four hours to get off the bloody property because we were back late!

So I got my cheque for what was owing to me and went to town. I took a job droving then with Con Moore. He was a big tall lanky feller and we went down to Gulargambone and took sheep off the railway there. We started to walk them home, and they were starving stock. There were no restrictions on starving stock, but with ordinary sheep you've got to cover at least eight mile a day so they won't eat up all the grass. But we went quite slowly, sometimes maybe a mile or so a day, and we didn't have a bath or anything since we'd left. There were three of us, and when we got to Coonamble, near Con Moore's house, he sent two of us off to his place to have a feed and a bath, then we went back and he went home. One of us had to stay with the stock, see? Then we never had another bath then till we got rid of the sheep at Billaroy, the other side of Coonamble, about a week later.

There was a Forest Ranger on Pilliga Scrub by the name of Cormie. He had a son Stan. (It was Stan that I'd bought an unbroken horse off when I was working on the edge of the Pilliga Scrub). He used to yoke up a couple of horses to a buggy, and drive from there into Coonamble to do the shopping. He'd leave about four o'clock in the morning - fifty miles to drive - and give the horses a hose down and a feed at the back of the pub - they all had stables then - dozens of them. Then he'd go and do the shopping, have dinner, have a few beers, then back home again - same day. He'd get home about nine o'clock at night. He'd do that once a week.

I also worked for Jimmy Fagan, he was another good bloke. He used to go to

Mass about every second Sunday, and he'd always take me into town with him. He used to have a bloomin' old gaberdine suit - a sports suit. His wife was a socialite. We were batching out there on the station most of the time because she had a house in town. But it finished up the social life in Coonamble wasn't sufficient for her so he got her a house in Dee Why, in Sydney. Anyway, before that, when Jimmy'd go to Sydney he'd take the wife and the kids and stop at the Hotel Australia, and he's there sitting in the lounge one day in this gaberdine suit when the commissionaire came up to him and told him he'd have to move because the lounge was only for the guests. Jimmy said he was a guest, but the feller didn't believe him and called the manager, who confirmed that he was a guest. But to show the sort of bloke Jimmy was, though, he said to the manager: "Now if you penalise this man in any way for his mistake I'll never come back, because he was doing what he thought was right." You get people like that.

At particular times it looked like things were going right, and they went wrong. Jimmy Fagan put me in for a block in Queensland. I was seventeen or eighteen. His wife wouldn't move up there, so he put money in my name into the draw - it was a lottery sort of thing where they drew your name out of a hat. If you won the ballot you could sell the lease after you'd worked it for five years. He was going to give me three pound a week to go up there and work it till he could sell it - presumably at a profit. But nothing came of that because we didn't get pulled out of the hat. They were among the happiest times of my working life, working for Jimmy Fagan.

I had a temporary job up in Coonamble too, on *Pier Pier* station. That was owned by Billy Irving - he was an ex-King's School boy. Wealthy people. He had a bloke there that they used to call a 'privileged man' - sometimes they'd have a friend or something who used to live in the house. They had a nickname for him - Bindy. He'd gone to Sydney when they had the second outbreak of Spanish 'flu, and he couldn't get out - he was quarantined there. I was supposed to go out there for a month, but because of this I was there for three. Of course when he came back I was laid off.

The Prince of Wales came to Coonamble just before I got there. They put on a buckjump show for the Prince. There was a bloke there who was a horsebreaker who gave an exhibition of riding. He put an old wreck of a saddle on with no girth on it, just a surcingle. And the surcingle, instead of being strapped down low was strapped up at the top. He said to the Prince: "I'll ride the first buck in the saddle, the second buck behind the saddle, and I'll finish him off bareback." And he did. After the second buck he pulled the string on the surcingle and the saddle flew off and he came down on the bare back.

Out there in northwestern NSW we used to get our weather from between the northeast and the northwest - like a segment. If you got clouds coming from outside of that segment you wouldn't say we were going to get rain. They say that trees have got nothing to do with rain, but that's bullshit because when we had a drought there the rain would be coming in right towards us and we'd think we were about to get some, but it would veer off and follow the trees towards Coonabarabran. It'd follow the forest, which proves that trees do have an effect on it.

I left Coonamble after two years and come back home. I was nineteen. You never got any annual holidays or anything - you'd have to chuck your job in to go home. The only union around then was the AWU, but all they were interested in at that particular period was the shearers.

The Arbitration Court used to set the wages for everything, and they set the wages for stockmen at 2/12/6 a week because the judge said it was unskilled labour. I'd like to see *him* trying to deliver a lamb that's coming out a breach birth or something like that! You've got to do all that sort of thing. If you were a member of the union you could demand the 2/12/6, but if you went for a job and you were in the union they wouldn't look at you. And if you weren't in the union they'd say: "Things are tough so we can't give you 2/12/6, but if you'd like we can give you a job at thirty shillings." And that's mainly what you got, though they used to pay the married blokes 2/12/6. In those days - around 1924 - shearers were paid thirty bob a hundred, a shed hand got three quid a week, and top quality wool was 28 pence a pound. Bales of wool weighed 4cwt, but this was reduced to 3cwt later after union pressure.

A rep from the AWU came to *Wingadee* while I was there, trying to get members. We told him how you wouldn't get a job if you were in the union, and if you weren't you had to take thirty bob. He explained that if we were in the union then the union could cite the station and force them to pay the full award to everybody. But nothing came of it. They never fought *Wingadee*, - (*Laughs*) - not with King George as a major shareholder!

When I left Coonamble and came back to Sydney I was there for a while. Dad used to give me a job sometimes so I could stop longer, driving a horse and lorry. Down at Macquarie Place in Sydney the Farmers and Graziers Co-Operative Shearing Company had their office there, and the president of that company was F.B. Fleming. I went to see him about a job. He had a property at Muswellbrook, a property at Scone, and another property at Glen Morrison. Half the time Glen Morrison had no stock on it. It was what they call a relief property. When feed got a bit scarce they'd unload some sheep or cattle and send them down to Glen Morrison and feed them there. His brother-in-law, Johnson, was a returned man from the Boer War, and he used to always wear leggings. You never saw him without them. I think he went to bed in them. Anyway, Johnson got sick and I went there to look after the place. Then his wife got sick, and things went on and on - he was very unlucky - and I ended up being there for about five months. After that Johnson came back and I stayed with him for a while till he got settled in. So when that was over I saddled up my horse, and away I rode to Sydney. Glen Morrison's near Walcha. It was a fair ride.

Previous to that I was in Sydney for the Easter Show. I had a bit of a job horseriding there. I'd have to go across into Centennial Park and I met a girl there, Flo Gally. Her father had a property in Queensland. I was only going on twenty but I got engaged to her. She had a little Fiat and she used to pick me up and take me for a drive. It turned out she was married and had kids! Years later when I was tin-mining I saw a photo of her in the *Truth* newspaper where she'd taken in another bloke and he took her to court. There was a photo of her with her daughter, who was about sixteen by then, and it was hard to tell which was the mother and which was the daughter, she carried her age that well.

Anyhow after that I met my wife, and we got married. I stopped in Sydney so as to support my wife. I got married when I was just on twenty one. I was working for Matthews Thomson, they were wholesale grocers and importers. I got that job through my father. This is 1927, round about, and to show how tough things were then, six weeks after I got married my wife got scarlet fever. The other girl had done me out of my two horses that I'd left in Sydney while I was up at Glen Morrison and we were struggling for money after we got married. Of course in those days it was thought that the husband must have been a bit of a second-

rater to have his wife going to work - that was the general attitude then. But my wife kept on working, and the idea was that we had to live on my wages and bank hers. Next thing she's got the scarlet fever, and was out at the Coast hospital, and I was quarantined, so the two of us were out of work.

After that I had three or four different jobs - I'd just take anything that was going. I was striking for a blacksmith for a while. He used to live down from my father and mother where we were stopping because we were broke. I used to get a few bob off them. He'd have regular customers like the baker and the milkman.

Incidentally, talking about horses and motors, they all went for motors early in the piece. But when the Depression came they found the horse was cheap, and they all went back to horses. We used to shoe all of them. There were trotters coming from Leichhardt and out that way. And McDonald and Eklund's, they used to run trucks for the long distances and use horses for the short distances. When things got slack in the wintertime and the horses weren't used they'd turn them out into the paddock, then when things got busy again they'd go back to using the horses again - so we had all them to shoe too. The blacksmith used to knock up all the shoes in advance. We'd have Jack, Bill, Tiger and so on, all the horses names with the shoes made ready. When the horses came he'd heat 'em up and tailor-make 'em for each horse. But by gee it's a hard job striking - one after the other.

In between jobs I often used to stop at the Harp Hotel in Goulburn. There was a bloke there called Jock Dale - he was a jockey. He was pretty tall for a jockey, and his father was a trainer down at Kogarah when they had the Moorfield Pony Course out there. He came up bush because of his weight. There was a big bloke called Darkie McDonald - he was an American, had black blood in him - he was a big hefty bloke and he used to skite that he'd been the heavyweight champion of his ship when he was in the United States Navy, so everybody steered clear of him a bit. Anyhow, we were in the Harp Hotel there drinking one night and Jock's there, and Darkie's standing next to him. Darkie accidentally bumps Jock's hand and spills some of his beer. "Hey, steady on, Darkie," says Jock. "Why, do you want to make something of it?" says Darkie. "Yes!" says Jock, so outside they go. Turned out that this Darkie McDonald couldn't fight his way out of a paper bag. Old Jock pasted him. It got round the town that McDonald wasn't what he'd said he was and they gave him a terrible time. By the time he was leaving to go to his next job I felt sorry for him - fair dinkum, everybody belted him.

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My father came out from England when he was sixteen. He was born in Portsmouth Gaol - his father was an officer there, and he used to live on the premises. He had a big job in those days. But in England, if you've got a job like that, unless you had a private income it takes all your income to keep in the right circles, like. When grandfather died there were three sons - there was Tom, who went into the prison service later on, then there was Dad, and there was Walter, who went into the army. At the time Walter was only a lad and Dad was sixteen.

Now my grandfather's brother, Mark Carr, had a tin mine up the Gulf outside Emmaville. He died of course - only young too, (he was only ninety six when he died) - he used to drink whisky. His daughter Lizzie lived in Emmaville, so we went up there on royalties, gouging the tin out.

One day I was winding the tin up. We didn't have anything flash, you know - you

got a tree trunk that was pretty round, that'd be the barrel, and a couple of sticks each end, and a 44 gallon drum. The drum I was winding up got a bit of a swing up and got caught on an outcrop of rock and reefed the bloomin' handle out of my hand and the handle came around and hit me right on the bridge of the nose. The other boys there said it knocked me ten feet in the air - a 44 gallon drum's a lot of weight. I fractured my cheekbone and I was getting chips of bone out of that for a long time after.

The part of the mine we were working had a set-up where there was a vertical shaft that went down to a drive which went in to the seam of tin. You never took more country out than you had to. You get a seam of tin, you've got to shoot all the country out so as to get the tin out - that's what they call vein tin. There's two sorts of tin - black tin and ruby tin. Then there's what they call lode tin where the tin is in all little pieces mixed up with the granite - with that you've got to take the whole lot out and then separate it and all that sort of thing.

Mark used to call it the *Red Cross Tin Mine*. He had an open cut in the shape of a cross, and where the two met there was a solid lump of tin there. It was all tin. When Prince Albert had the London Exhibition at the time, old Mark - (he'd been in the army as an officer) - he sent this square lump of tin over for the Exhibition. Old Queen Victoria had a picture of herself autographed with it with all the army insignia around the frame.

I left there and started to do a bit of droving. I still had the family in Sydney. I had two little kids at the time, and after about eighteen months I had no money so I saddled up and rode from Glen Innes to Sydney, about 412 miles. We used to ride long distances in those days and think nothing of it. I rode from Glen Morrison to Sydney and used to do sixty to seventy mile a day.

Earlier in the piece I went to Sydney after a job, and there were two jobs going. I had a horse, but one job needed someone to start straight away which meant I'd have to sell my horse. The other job was with people who were more stock-minded and they gave me time to ride to get there, so I took the second one. I took a girl to the pictures the night before I had to leave to go to the job and while I was there they came and knocked on the door and told Dad that they'd made other arrangements. When I got home from the pictures Dad told me that my job had gone, and asked me what I was going to do. I said that I had everything ready anyway, my swag rolled and everything, so I was off. I hopped on the horse and I rode to Goulburn. There I got a job on *Arthursley* station.

*Arthursley* station was a grant to Captain McArthur's cousin, which is how it got the name. It's near Marulan. What was the shearing shed when I was there (they were all stone buildings, by the way) had been the convicts' quarters in the olden days. Stone house, stone everything. H.E.Creswick owned it when I was there. He's a big man. He had his nephew in charge, and we were digging out rabbits. One day he came round to us and said: "If you boys would like to come down on Sunday I'll take you around the place and talk to you about it." There was a big hill of sandstone there, and the convicts used to quarry the stone, put it on a sledge, and they had a chain (and no bullocks) and instead of a bullock bow they had a handle, and the convicts had to pull the stone down. When they were ploughing the convicts pulled the ploughs. There was a little stone church on one of the boundaries and we were digging the rabbits out there when the parson (I'm a Catholic but I'm not bigoted or anything - anyone that's a Christian's OK) - the parson sent word out to Creswick that he'd hold a service for us men in the stone church if we wanted to come along. He came out Sunday afternoon about three

and gave us the service, and we all turned up. Well... we couldn't do less when he'd come all the way from Goulburn in a horse and buggy.

When I was digging out the rabbits we had a bloke there who had been working in a mine down Tumut way called Mount Ord. There was an explosion there and it deafened him - sent him stone deaf. I could talk on my hands - I learnt how to do that as a kid just for something to do - and one night we're all there round the fire. This bloke was very suspicious, and kept asking me if they were talking about him. I kept saying they weren't, and after a bit he went into town to Marulan and got a few under his belt. When he came back he wanted to fight everybody there barring me! I was in the clear because I could talk on my hands. The boss used to put me with him, so that I could pass on to him anything that the boss wanted to tell him.

The rabbits were very thick there then. If you shot them in the head you'd take them down to the freezer and you'd get two bob a pair. But if you shot 'em low down where they'd get bruised, then you'd skin them and bow them and sell the skins. At *Arthurslee* station I was getting three pound a week, which was good money, but it was only a temporary job, see? The boss used to take the skins (you'd bow them out - but you had to do that in your own time) and he'd grade them and sell them to a local skin buyer, who get a better price for them in Sydney if they were graded. The boss took half of the proceeds and the rest was divided up equally among the men working for him. Like the cook and the dogman and the bloke doing the fumigating, say - they wouldn't get any rabbits, but they were still working on the job, so they got a share too. We used to make an extra couple of quid a week out of it.

This was before myxomatosis, and what gets me is this: The thing that kept the rabbits down in the past was trapping, and that brought good money for trappers at a couple of bob a pair - carcasses, you didn't have to skin them or anything. But you got the RSPCA and do-gooders saying that it was cruel. Well, it *is* cruel, but a lot of things are cruel - you can't help it. After all, you've got to cut a sheep's throat when you want a feed. Rabbits only stay in the trap for a few hours at the most, because most trappers would do three rounds of their traps every 24 hours. And if you can handle sixty traps like that you're not loafing! But you don't hear these people saying a word about myxomatosis, which is the cruellest thing! You should see rabbits that have got it - eyes all bulged out and seepy, their balls are about three times as big as they should be, and it's a very slow death - and it's the cruellest thing ever I struck. And they talk about trapping!

Well, digging out the rabbits finished at *Arthursley*, and then I went on to *Woolagarang* station - that's another ex-convict joint, out near Breadalbane. Incidentally, I was riding my horse out to that job and I wanted to make sure I was on the right road, so as I passed the Harp Hotel I said to a bloke: "Is this the way to Bred'l'bain?" He scratched his head and said he'd never heard of it, so I spelt it to him. That's when I found out that the locals call it "Bred-orlbin". Eventually we thrashed out that I was on the right track, and I went there and they still had the old school bell sort of thing that they used to have on a post. They used to have that for the convicts, too, and they used to ring one of those bells at lunchtime and all that when I was there - one of the convict bells - they'd ring it to bring the chauffeur and the grooms and all that in for a feed.

Why, I don't know, but there was a two-story building with a bath upstairs and a big tank stand way up in the air with a tank on it, and the owner wouldn't put an engine on it. When you finished work and you'd had your tea, for entertainment

you'd get on a double-action pump and have to pump this bloody thing full. And he wouldn't have a telephone on the place. Not that I ever met the owner - I only ever met the manager. I went out there for the shearing. You'd do a bit of fence repair and things like that then the shearing and the mustering would come on.

Nobody talked politics much - especially in the early days. Australia was Australia, and you took things as they came. Now what have we got? A lot of weak-kneed people who are in for compensation for this and compensation for that. Speaking of compensation, when I was up at Coonabarabran I cut my finger. It doesn't sound much, but it chopped into the bone. The bone was exposed and it started to go gangrene. I went to the doctor about it and he fixed it up, but he told me I couldn't work with it, and he gave me a chit for compo. When I got back and told the boss this he said, "Cripes, we've got to sow that crop for the lambing ewes," and he talked me into helping him. He paid me the full wage as usual, but the bugger collected the compo and put it in his own pocket! Kept it himself! And there I was cracking hardy to suit him, mind you.

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When the work cut out at *Arthursley* I went back to the Harp Hotel, which was sort of like my headquarters. (The hotel tariff in those days was two bob a meal and two bob a bed - or two pound ten a week.) Anyway, Dickie Daniels, the overseer from where I'd just been working came up to me and said: "Sorry about puttin' you off. How about taking a job as polo groom?" So he organised for me to get a job as a polo groom with the Witts brothers, travelling around with the polo ponies. Best job in the world, too. They had a property out at Gunning. I never went to their property - I picked the horses up in Goulburn.

The two Witt brothers used to play. Eight horses. Each player has a groom, so you've got to look after four horses. Ashtons were the leading team at that time, and the Ross brothers. The Ross brothers came from Harden. Ashtons had three brothers playing in their team plus a bloke they paid to play while they were waiting for their youngest brother to be old enough to take on. There was a pub near Randwick Hospital, and they used to take us up there from the stables for a drink now and then when we were in Sydney. The Witts' never joined the party - we used to be invited by the Ashtons and the Rosses.

I was in Inglis' Newmarket stables with my horses. There were yards and yards of bloody stables there. They had to have them for the yearling sales. We had our horses stabled in there, and some of the others were over at Chisholm's stables just near the entrance to Centennial Park. They've got asphalt paths and all that sort of crap. But from a practical point of view we were better off in the yearling section because it was all under cover.

We came to Sydney on the train from Goulburn after the tournament there had finished, and Inglis' and Chisholm's had a couple of fellers on horseback meeting us. There was a railway unloading turn-out at the bottom of Bathurst Street then - they used to have a lot of stock come in there. They had wagons for us to put our gear in, then you'd ride one horse and lead three - one on your near side and two on your off side, so you're riding four horses. And you're all dressed up in riding breeches and top boots - the bosses used to give you something a bit worn. We're coming up Eddy Avenue and I heard people saying: "It must be the Light Horse!" (*Laughs*).

It wasn't too bad with the polo ponies. This was when I was about nineteen. I've

got things a bit out of sequence here, because the polo ponies were before I went up to Glen Morrison. But the polo ponies were a good life while it lasted. We'd do Cootamundra, then up to Goulburn and so on up to Sydney. But as soon as the season was finished - after the Dudley Cup, the big bash in Sydney - that was the end of your job. I suppose of all the jobs I've had being a polo groom was probably the best. You got your hotel expenses and your travelling expenses, and four quid a week as well, at a time when you'd be getting around thirty bob a week on a job on a farm somewhere.

When we were in Sydney for the Dudley Cup, at the Newmarket stables, you had to hay up at ten o'clock at night. We'd take turns to stay back and do the hay so the others could go in to town. We'd go into town and hang around - go to the pictures and that sort of thing. To give you an idea of the sort of fellers you'd be with: you'd pass those women on the street, and they'd ask if you wanted to go with them, but the fellers would tell them to go to buggery. They weren't that type. But to give you an idea of the type of women they were that spoke to us, one chap from the Harden team, when he was approached, said that he wasn't interested because he was a married man. The answer he got was, "It's a dirty duck that puddles in the one hole all the time."

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Old Alec Rose, he owned the Harp Hotel in Goulburn. He was rough as guts - an ex-bullock driver. He bought a horse from some bloodstock place that was a discard sort of thing - he bought it for riding alongside the bullock team. Anyhow, they had people up from Sydney and they went to Cootamundra for the picnic races and Alec decided to enter his horse in a race there. There was a Sydney trainer there, and when he saw the horse he offered to train it for Alex. Alex said: "What the bloody hell do you think I'm going to do? A bullock driver paying to have a trainer?" So after a bit of arguing the bloke said that he'd take the horse to Sydney and train it for nothing, but he was to get to keep any prize money. Well, it ended up the horse won the Sydney Cup! Alec had borrowed money on his bullock team and everything because the trainer had told him it was a sure thing, and it was a pretty long price, and old Alec cleaned up big on it, so he got out of the bullock business and went into the pubs. The horse's name was *Wattle Vale*, and Alex had a plaque made up as a memorial, with the horse's racing plates gilded and mounted on it.

You ask what "racing plates" are. Well, you can't race a horse in shoes - it's too risky, and when you get to the racecourse you take their shoes off and put their racing plates on, which are aluminium - a lighter shoe. When the horse is finished racing the blacksmith pulls the plates off and puts the shoes back on. They make sure, when they're making the plates, that the holes match up with the holes in the shoes for the nails so that the nails drop into the same holes, otherwise you'd have a pattern of holes in the horse's hooves. To make sure they hold they clinch the nails with a little tool they have that takes a little bit out of the hoof, and where the nail comes up they turn it into that.

I had a book here which I kept about Jimmy Wilton. He was the greatest horseman ever. Only a little bloke. He used to train horses and follow the shows and circuses. He'd train a horse to keep level with the horse he was riding, and he'd have two horses holding a rail between their teeth. He'd canter towards them with the horse that kept level with him and the one with no rider would jump the rail. Another stunt he used to have was to put a dummy on a horse, and have the horse jump a hurdle. Before he jumps the hurdle the dummy falls off and the

horse picks the dummy up by the seat of the pants and carts it off. He had ten horses, and each one had a number on its head. They'd race into the arena going around all mixed up, and at the command they'd sort themselves out into the right order - 1,2,3,4,5 etc. He'd mix them up again and then he'd sing out and each one would come to stand in the middle of the ring when he called their number. He had another horse that would walk on its knees, (he padded its knees), and another one used to sit down. He also had a string of white Alsatian dogs - had them trained, too. I had a book with all these pictures of these horses doing their stunts, but I lent it to a bloke out near Tennant Creek some time ago and I never got it back.

When I was younger I leased a farm up at Wallacia, but there was a clause that said the lease couldn't be renewed, so I did a bit of travelling for Marcus Clark's up at Mudgee. The War came on and they couldn't keep the car going (they supplied the car), so I did it on my horse. I used to ride 250 miles a week, going through places like Gulgong, Dunedoo, Leadville. I didn't like that so I went back to doing some dairying with a bloke by the name of Darcy Smith.

I gave up work in the bush when I was sixty. The last place I was on was *Sweetbriar Stud*, outside Oberon. He was a good boss, Alan Stoneman. He used to go away a lot, and when he went away I couldn't leave the place or anything. He had a weekender up at Avoca, and when he came back he'd say to me that I'd better go and have a few days off at Avoca, to make up for being tied up while he was away.

Alan Stoneman was going out of business, so I went to work for the bloke next door. I did a lot for him, because with sheep and cattle he was a good man but he didn't know anything about dairying, which he wanted to try. I found out you could get a licence at Bathurst, so I took him in and introduced him to some of the people I knew who were doing a bit of dairying out there. He was going to give me twenty six pound a week to run the dairy. Now you didn't draw your pay every week - you might go and get a cheque when you needed to, and you'd run up a bit of an account. But when I did come to get some of my pay he said: "I've been investigating this and the award's only eighteen pound a week," and that's all he was going to give me instead of the twenty six he'd promised. So I left. The wife and I were quite happy in that job, but it was the principle of it.

I was sixty by this, and my wife thought it was time for us to have our own home, so we bought a place in Penrith. I took a job with Marcus Clark as a traveller. Soon after I started they put in computers at Head Office, and they brought all the trouble in the world! I was making good money there - you'd make as much in commission as you would in your wages. But I couldn't really take to it so after a while I got a job in a factory as a cleaner. I did that till I was 67, then the family said to me that I was going to keep working till I was too bloody old to enjoy it. They kept at me and at me so I knocked off working and I bought a place up at Wangi.

At Wangi I had a boat and a car and all that. How I could do that on the pension was I had a bit of a job down at the power station, and I used to mark out and look after a tennis court. Those two jobs brought in a bit of extra dough. And I had my boat. I was kept nicely busy. My wife and I were happy there. She was a marvellous person - a city girl, but she took to life in the country like nobody's business. She used to come out shooting with me, and she used to like the boat, too. I was 72 when she died - she was only 70.

I came down here to Woy Woy ten years ago after my wife died. I sold the place at Wangi for about half price, because of the power station there closing down. Wangi is on a big peninsula and there were over eighty places for sale there at the time I was trying to sell, so I had to sell it for peanuts. Everywhere else the price was going up except there.

I had ideas of giving my family a better start than I had in the horse world - 'cos it takes two generations to get in, you know. I've got five daughters and they were horse mad as they grew up, but when they got a bit older they changed and not one of them stayed with it. They've become real city-ites.

Of the jobs I've done, I liked messing around with stock, with sheep and cattle most - I wasn't too keen on the farming side of it. When I look back over my working life I reckon that as people went in for machinery, that's when they started to go broke. The old horse used to do the job. But people seemed to think that machinery was always better. When I was working up at Coonabarabran, they had a windmill there pumping out of a creek up to the house. But the boss gets the brainy idea of getting an engine in to pump it. But when the creek flooded, the engine got flooded and we had to pull it to pieces and get the water out of it and everything, so it finished up we put it on two sleepers. When flood time came we'd get a horse and pull it up onto high ground, then take it back down again afterwards. But with the old windmill, all you had to do after a flood was clean the foot valve, which cost you nothing. And it ran for nothing, too, where the engine took petrol and oil. Now where's the sense in that?

Here's another example of how people get the new technology when they'd be better off sticking with the old. At Coonabarabran we used to mow the hay with a tractor, and then we'd windrow it with horses and a hayrake. Two of us would walk down the rows with the horses, putting the hay in, and we could tell the horse what to do by calling out to it. The only time you had to touch it was at the end of each row when you turned around. So it took two of us to do the job using horses. But the bloke next door used a Fordson tractor to get his meadow hay in. He still needed two blokes to look after the Horwood-Bagshaw bailer, but he needed the extra one to drive the tractor - so it took them three men to our two, to do the same job.

It's like these blokes herding sheep on motor bikes today. I don't care if a Suzuki can do sixty mile an hour, because the point is this: when you're behind a mob of sheep you're only doing about two mile an hour if you're lucky. Now where's the sense in using a motor bike for that? All you're doing is chewing up juice and knocking them about and that. And horses can understand you - they come when you call. If you've had to get down and get some sheep on the go that's gone doggo and won't move, and you follow it on foot for a bit, with a horse you can call it up to you, but you've got to walk all the way back to wherever you left the truck, or bike.

I left *Sweetbriar Stud* when I was 60, in 1966. There was plenty of machinery about in 1966, but the machines I see on TV and advertised in *The Land* these days I've never seen the like of! They've got bigger and bigger, and do more things - all since 1966! And that's not exactly going back into the dim, dark ages, is it? And the size of the holdings are getting bigger and bigger. But sometimes the little feller can produce better than the big feller. I was reading recently that big sugar farmers, for instance, produce much more sugar than small farmers, but their profit margin is less than the little bloke's. The little bloke can actually produce cheaper, with a bigger profit margin.

Alan Stoneman bought a massive machine for harvesting the meadow hay and it was an absolute failure. It was supposed to do everything, but it wouldn't even do the bailing properly. It cost thousands, but it finished up just sitting in the shed. He went back to doing it the old-fashioned way.

Since everyone has "progressed" on to all this machinery, they've started whingeing to the government for money for this and that. And if you go to one of these field days - that's where they talk them into all this stuff. "You buy this and you'll be able to sack one of your men" sort of thing. You can sack a man alright, but the interest bill is more than what his wages would be! I've seen a paddock full of machines that they were trying to auction - machinery from blokes that have gone broke.

When I was working up in Mudgee we used to mow with horses. We'd leave it lie in the paddock, then windrow it the next day - for one or two days according to the weather - then we used to throw it on the wagon, then cart it in and shove it in the shed - loose. It'd be stacked up to the roof, and it'd cure itself. As it dries out it gradually settles, and by the time it's cured you could walk on the top of it. They had a press there for hay something like a wool press. You'd put it in there and make what they used to call batten bales - that's the big bales with three battens top and bottom. Now that was the best hay you could get - you could break the stalks without it snapping - it was soft. Some people used to drive that sort of press with a machine, which was ridiculous because you had to keep stopping it and starting it all the time, and generally fiddlearse about. But you get a draught horse that's trained to the job, when you put the monkey on the top of the press, you'd see the old horse there nibbling at the edge of the stack - you walk round and put his arse in position and hook him on and away he goes, pulling the cable to press it down. He'd stay there and hold that till you say Right!, then he'd go back to feeding. I've seen them working like that without even winkers on - they're as good as a man, you know - they've got intelligence. I don't know why they stopped using them. Australia was the land of the horse once, but today they're all anti-horse, and the only people who ride horses now are these pony club people. As the horses were going out and people went for everything mechanical, they seemed to lose their touch with animals to a certain extent. I don't know, their way of thinking seems to be different. It seems to have changed the people's attitudes too.

In later years, all out through Belmore and Campsie there were lots of horse places, and a lot of people had stuck to the old horse and sulky. People with cars used to go to Anthony Hordern's or Farmer's for Friday night shopping. Grace Brothers was up on Broadway, and although it was busy and industrial during the day, at night-time there was nothing there, and the people from the suburbs with horses and sulkies used to shop there to avoid the traffic in the city. You'd see the sulkies there lined up on each side of the road. The wife used to go and do the shopping while the husband minded the horses, and you'd be surprised how many friendships were made there.

My uncle was a great man for horses and he had a place at Belmore - he was a wild man, too. It was nothing in those days to be trotting along the road and have someone come alongside and challenge you to a trotting race - "Trot you for ten bob" from here to there. One day he was coming in from Belmore and had got to somewhere around Canterbury there when a bloke with a high-stepping horse challenged him to a trot. They both took off lickety-split, and nearly had an accident with a car. The bloke in the car yelled out to my uncle, "You ought to be

driving pigs!" and my uncle replied, "OK. Hop in front!"

When the government was trying to develop banana growing up round Lismore there was a lot of work going up there and my uncle got a contract up there. He had two horses, a cart, and a sulky. His son drove the horse and cart with all their gear in it, and he drove the sulky for going in and out to town when they got up there. They drove from Belmore up to Lismore. People wouldn't think of doing that today. As I said, we used to ride huge distances then and think nothing of it. Round about the same time that I was out of work, two chaps rode from Melbourne to Sydney looking for work. They got lots of publicity in the papers as they went and their trip was highlighted. As a result, they were getting put up in pubs for nothing and feeding their horses out of mangers and all that, and there was I doing the same thing and camping out! If I'd have got the same treatment as they did I would have done the trip up in about six days - especially if you had hand feed for the horse. When you're on the road you have to take the time for the horse to feed - it takes a fair while for a horse to get a belly full of feed.

(This is a picture of the best dog I ever had. I had to shoot him when I was up at Wangi - he got cancer of the waterworks. Even when he was crook I still kept him. I wasn't going to put him down just because he was crook because he still had a bit of time left, but eventually I had to put a bullet into him. They talk today about 'putting them to sleep', but that's the kindest way of the lot - a bullet's just as good as all this business of paying a vet to do it for you.)

In my day the wages were terrifically low, and people stopped on the land because they were lovers of stock and of the life. That's what kept them going. You'd chuck it in if it was only for the pounds, shillings and pence. I was never a bit interested in money, myself. I was only interested in mucking around with stock. Animals were my life.

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*(Recorded May 29 and June 5, 1995.)*