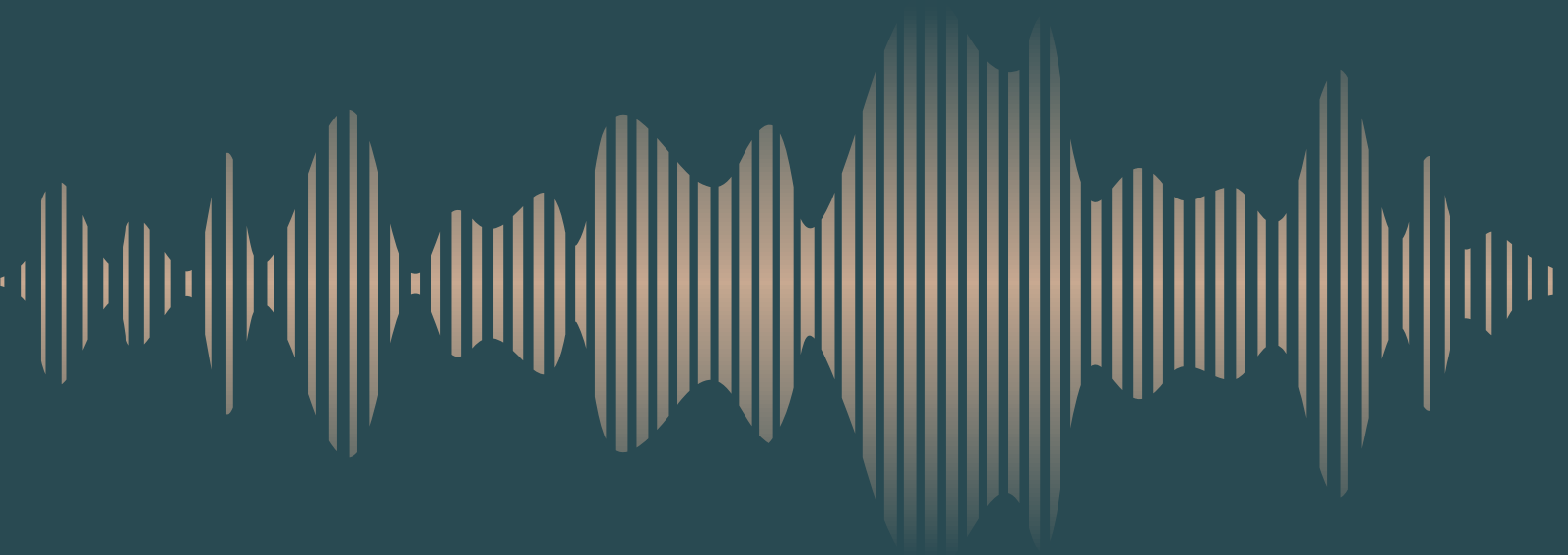


Stories of Village Life an Oral History Project

The Stuart Town Community

Barbrara and Richard Eade
Interview Transcript
29 February 2024



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This Oral History interview was conducted by John Bayliss with Barbara and Richard Eade on 29 February 2024.

Richard and Barbara Eade discuss growing up in Stuart Town and their work for the local community with the Rural Transaction Centre and the Ironbark Festival.

Transcript created by Simone Taylor



This recording created on 29 February 2024 is part of Dubbo Regional Council's oral history project 'Stories of Village Life'. Each recording contributes to the developing story of life in our region.

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(I): Interviewer: John Bayliss

(R): Richard Eade

(B): Barbara Eade

(I): Thanks very much for participating Barbara and Richard. For benefit of our recording could you please state your full name please:

(B): Barbara Joy Eade

(R): William Richard Eade

(I): So how have you long lived here in Stuart Town, Richard?

(B): 70 odd [years]

(R): (laugh) Yeah, Richard's lived here for - well I'm 78 - almost 78 [years] and we did move once we moved 10 mile. So we've always been in the district we actually brought this place in - 1978. She we've been here a fair while, we built the place. And yeah, we've been in the community all that time.

(I): And Barbara what about you?

(B): I've been here from 76 years. I was born and bred here. I did move down the river 6ks -6 miles...

(R): Yeah, yeah about that.

(B): About 6 miles. Went to school here, got married and went out there 10 miles came back and I 'm still here. (both laugh)

(I): So, both of you well and truly local.

(R): The apple didn't fall very far from the tree. (both laugh)

[0:01:51] (I): And was your family always here as well? Both families always here?

(R): Mine was, mine was here all - no dad come from...

(R): Down in Mookerawa

(B): Yeah, Mookerawa. He was born in Hill End. But Mum was born over there in the house [Glenellen property] over there, and she was here all her life.

(R): Yeah, my people go back to the gold rush days and the Eade clan in this location, I think started in 1878, about then. My Grandfather was born in 1888 and I think that's around about the time they come into the district or a little bit before it. And they'd sort of decided that they wanted to be farmers rather than gold diggers and that was the reason that they'd come there. With some pretty good family results too, my grandfather was a - a noted wheat breeder amongst other things, apart from stud wheat he grew, stud cattle and stud sheep, and stud dogs. He was a meticulous record keeper.

To the extent with his wheat in particular, he ended up getting the big prize in 1933 of winning the world wheat competition. And that came about because of his great ability to keep records and actually source the grains that he needed to cross breed over a long period of time. And it sort-of paid off, both with recognition and financially, because he got a trip to Regina in Canada out of that which he was away for about 3 or 4 months. Won first prize, which I believe was a 1000 guineas, also got second prize which was in my father's name 'cause he was the eldest of his children, and he ended getting second prize which was about 500 English pounds and missed out on third but got fourth and it was 200 pounds, you know - I think that sort of sums up his commitment to what he was doing with the breeding. Very involved with the RAS [Royal Agricultural Society] and his local show society was Molong - but he had a network of people from all over - particularly in New South Wales but into Victoria as well, that he used to converse with about breeding wheat. So yeah, got a lot of accolades for it - and a lot of money.

[0:05:15] (I): Very good - so where would you have both gone to school? Here in Stuart Town or Wellington?

(B): I went to school here. Kindergarten through to sixth class and then I got on the bus went on the dirt road to Wellington High School.

(I): And was that up to intermediate?

(B): Yeah Intermediate, yep.

(I): And what about you, Richard?

(R): I didn't go to school. Well I sort of did, I was home schooled basically. What they call Blackfriars in those days.¹ Through until I was about 3rd class, then the family got involved with what they called subsidised schools. The Government had this programme whereby if a collection of people wanted to make a school, they would sort of register it. They didn't fund it very well, but they provided a teacher, or more particularly a governess and I did from third class till sixth class and then I went away to college.

(I): OK whereabouts was the college.

(R): Wolaroi in Orange.

[0:06:32] (I): Oh, Ok yep. And not necessarily the Blackfriars and that type of schooling but was it normal for kids in Stuart Town to stay here for primary school then go to Wellington?

(B): Yep. Well, when I started up here there was three that were doing their Intermediate [Certificate], they didn't go to high school, they schooled up here, that was three girls. Yeah they stayed up here until Intermediate and then they, I presume they did it through correspondence - through the Blackfriars I don't know what it was 'cause I was kindergarten, first Class Mr Kemp was our teacher, but I don't - but they used to teach us. I mean they'd do their work then they'd come in and here us read from tales. (laughs)

(I): And how many young boys and girls are we talking about here, quite a few 30 or 40 or more?

(B): Yes. Gosh what would have been up there then? Well, there was 52 when I started working then in '78. I'd say when we were there it was probably up round 60.

(R): Well, there was two schools.

(B): Yeah - then we had the convent. The convent up on the hill there was probably 30 or 40 up there. They come in from everywhere to go to the catholic school. And then they closed the catholic school down, a lot of the kids came to the Stuart Town School - the public school and some hopped on the bus and went into the convent in Wellington.

(I): And just where was the convent? Was that right next door to the church, the Catholic Church?

B: Here in Wellington?

(I): No, in Stuart Town

¹ Blackfriars was a form of correspondence education started in 1916. Originally part of the Bridge Street headquarters of the NSW Department of Education. In 1922 a secondary school for correspondent children was established at the former teachers college at Blackfriars in Sydney. The school used a graded leaflet system to teach each child individually and sequentially and became known as 'Blackfriars.'

(B): No, yeah, the church is there now, and the school was down towards the railway line [beside the Roman Catholic Church].

(I): Lower side of the hill. Not next door - towards the railway line.

(B): Yeah. And then the Nuns lived in that house.

(I): And is that building still here?

(B): Yeah, they're both still here.

(R): The school's not, but the convent is.

(B): The school went down to Ridgecrest.²

(I): Ok, alright then, yeah

(B): Or Parkes, whatever that is, they took the school down there.

(R): The Baptist [church] brought it,

(B): The Baptist school, wasn't it.

(I): So, it would've been a pretty big day going from here to Wellington [for school] it would've taken...

(B): Well, we lived over there and we used to ride our bike and catch the bus about say half past 7 and then you'd get home about half past 4.

(I) Yeah ok.

(B): That was my day (laughs) and dust...

(I): And dust and then all the chores in the evening

(B): oh yeah, oh gosh yeah you had do all those, feed the dogs, get the calf in. All those little bits and pieces.

[0:09:10] (I): Yeah, so that early life obviously school - and helping on the farm and around. What else happened for you both during those early days of up to being a teenager and things.

(B): Well, my mum and dad played a lot of tennis a lot of golf so we played tennis, we coached tennis. I played a lot of golf and yeah then there was church we're involved - from 15 on probably, I was involved with the young Anglicans. We'd have every Friday night we'd play

² Ridgecrest Christian Education and Convention Centre, located at Mumbil.

tennis, or we'd have a dance – cause there was probably 20 or 30 of us - but that is what we did, kept occupied and built billy carts and..... all those sort of – we climbed trees.

(I): And Richard for yourself, was it more working?

(B): Yeah, I left school in 1960, and I came back onto the farm, and Dad said you've have enough school because I wasn't getting very good grades and there was some medical problems with me. Nobody knew anything about it until I was a little bit older and we figured it out got some help, but yeah Dad was Shire President for Wellington Council all through the 60s and he was very active and he didn't have much of a workforce, me and my cousin were probably it and I was only 15 so we were sort of 10 mile out of town weren't able to drive anywhere so for the first three or four years we didn't venture off the farm much apart from going to town and probably to Orange or Molong once or twice a month. But we - Graham and I used to do a lot of shooting cause the rabbits were still pretty thick in those days. We trapped them. We used to make good money out of trapping rabbits, and we shot thousands of them over time and yeah so we kept pretty busy - there was never any problem with it, it's just the way it was. You know we never got any of the luxuries of power until 1956. So, my formative years were spent pretty much with the old kerosene lanterns and those sorts of things. But they were good for the time but when we got the power that made a big difference. Cause it used to take us 40 minutes to drive that 10 mile into Stuart Town, seven gates and the roughest road in Australia. (laugh) So consequently you didn't do it every week.

[0:12:31] (I): Or every day

(R): Or every day, yeah. Yeah, so that was our formative years through the 60s. Barb and I teamed, you know I was in Young Anglicans as well and we sort-of of got to know one another, even though we'd sort-of grown up together as kids. 'Cause Mum and Dad and her Mum and Dad were great mates as well, so she was always there. So, it was sort of a natural progression I suppose we didn't have to go too far to find the love of my life.

(I): Oh, very nice. With that number young people in town - therefore there was adults and so it was quite a thriving community in those days?

(B): All sorts, a bakery, a butcher shop, hotel it was just busy.

(R): Yeah, there was plenty - there was the skin buyer, you know, the wool and skin buyer, and the rabbit buyer.

(B): Fox [buyer] you know, you'd shoot foxes and they'd skin'em and peg'em out then bring in here to Devenish's - yeah it was. Oh, then we had Arthur Cohen, he used to bring our mail down, cause we lived down the [Bell] river. When he couldn't he have to leave it on the top of the hill and dad would go up in the tractor and get it if it was wet, because you couldn't go down the hill. All those fun things - all those things.

(R): There was a lot of people about too.

(B): There was - my aunty and uncle lived over there [on Commissioner's Lane] with four children, you know and there was the ones down here - Langs they had four. You know - the Foxhalls - we all played together. Or you went to our place over there on the lawn, just sitting around talking. It was good fun.³

(R): Barbara's parents had a tennis court too which helped. That was a lot of fun.

(B): Yeah, well you know - you just enjoyed life that's all you had. We never went [without] - we'd go up to Mrs Offner's, we'd get a half-penny ice cream or the crumbs out of the biscuit barrel. Cause we never had that much money; you know you just - you didn't.

[0:15:00] (I): And the shops that were in town provided enough of the basics in life? Did you have to go Wellington or Molong to do other sorts of shopping?

(R): Occasionally you did. You know probably one a month or every six weeks you'd go and top on the things that weren't available. The basic were here, always there was plenty of that. But if you wanted your special tomato sauce or something like that, you'd have to go down *Moran and Cato*⁴ or *Browns* or something like that in Orange or *Western Stores* in Molong.

(B): Or you got what Mrs Offner had.

(R): Most of the time we did (both laugh)

(I): So, before electricity keeping your food fresh and what have you did you...

(B): No, I had electricity all the time.

(I): You had electricity all the time ahh (laughs) So was there ice coming from somewhere - coming down on the train or anything like that?

³ The area was known as the Westend of Stuart Town. (Information supplied by Barbara Eade)

⁴ Maron and Cato was one of Australia's largest grocery chains in the late 19th and early 20th century. It was started in by Thomas Moran and Frederick Cato in 1881. By 1935 Maron and Cato had approximately 160 stores across Victoria, Tasmania and New South Wales. The business was taken over in 1969 by Permewan Wright Limited.

(R): No, we had a kerosene fridge – we'd kill a sheep every week that was our meat. Twice a year mum would make a tray of ice cream - Christmas and Easter we'd knock a chock or two, or a turkey - good times.

(I): Yeah, so all and all very self-sufficient - had to be, I suppose.

(B): Yeah. We had a washhouse down there when I was growing up - but you had to go from here to the gate to the toilet - and on the way you'd have to pick the vegies to come back (laughs) and there was a wood heap, it was down there - so you'd have to go via the wood heap - but it just you know...

(R): Yeah, we had an orchard.

(B): Yeah. we did too

(R): Apricots and plums and peaches and figs, yeah.

(B): Big veggie - garden

(R): Big veggie garden we always had those things going.

(B): Chooks, eggs.

(R): You'd go to town you'd buy a bag of spuds - you know you wouldn't buy...two kilos or anything like that, it was a bag of spuds, bag of sugar you know - all the basics.

(I): So, sport and things, tennis of course if you've got your own court you...

(B): Yeah, played here in Stuart Town a lot we had night tennis four nights a week a wasn't it? Sundays we'd have comps up here. We're in a comp we could travel - there was a - 50 mile [radius], wasn't it?

(R): Something like that yeah.

(B): Yeah, from here, but we could just get into Paramount [Tennis Club] in Dubbo for Tennis, we could just get into that. But we'd go to Cumnock playing tennis. We'd go - that was one at March, there was tennis court at March [NSW].

(R): Just out of Orange [NSW]

(B): We'd go there, we'd play tennis there. And then we got married and then [you'd go with the team] - you'd go and do it, and you'd take your babies with you, and we just did it. Then, you know, all the courts disappeared, and the people disappeared - But we played up here [at

Stuart Town] probably till what ten years ago? I used to travel into Wellington and play with the policeman's wife here, the schoolteacher from Mumbil and Hela Bryan - from Burrendong and myself, there was four of us. We used to go and play in Wellington.

(R): They'd a comp [a competition]

(B): We had a comp, yeah, us four used to go in there. You know, - I'd play golf in Wellington. But then we had a golf course here, her son-in-law put a golf course in around here (laughs) your gonna use a three iron, though. But there was one [golf course] at Mookerawa and one at Burrendong - just a social course.

(I): Oh, ok yeah.

(B): But that's what it was.

[0:18:56] (I): And there was a lot of other sporting activity in town at the time?

(R): A lot of them played Rugby or Rugby League. They had some pretty handy players from around here.

(B): Cricket was another one.

(R): Cricket was big.

(B): Dad and Bruce played a lot of cricket. Trisha my sister was a good cricketer.

(R): She played for the state.

(B): Yes, she did.

(I): Very good.

(B): Yeah, we got coached tennis by Mr Everett.

(R): You had Fred Everett, I had Fred Bennett

(B): - Fred Bennett from Orange. And we had Fred Everett in Wellington.

(I): And I guess all of that's on the back of Stuart Town being quite a big place in those days.

(B): Oh, it was, yeah. And you didn't just go to town. If you were going in for the comp - you'd pick up the kids from the other families. You know, one car would go in full. You never just went on your own with one [car] because you'd always take people with you. You know, you'd go and play - whatever it was, yeah. But another game was basketball. There used to be basketball in those days, netball...

(I): Netball, ok.

(B): Yeah, look we were never bored. You were kicked in the backside if we said we were bored, there was always a job to do. I can tell you; I had a very strict father. (laughs)

(I): Fair enough. So, I know you said you started work pretty early but is that always been on the land?

(R): Ah the first 20 years I was on the land. Until 1978-9, I helped out the farm.

(B): Oh yeah about '80

(R): Yeah, probably '80. My sister and her husband and family came back onto the farm, and I was able to get out. And I was smart enough and had enough knowledge to go into my own business as a steel fabricator and a steel supplier, and Stuart Town that was fairly central. I started working, I was building sheds, and yards, sheep yards, cattle yards. Doing skillions on the side of sheds, closing sheds in, repairing sheds and I never stopped. We were doing the things that the bigger fellas don't touch, because they just want to go in a build a shed, that's it, and walk away. But a lot of people want variations and skillions, and they want it associated with sheep yards and that sort of thing, and that's where I fitted into the slot.

[0:21:58] (I): So, you had your own premises here?

(R): I've got it attached to this house here as a big lumber workshop

(B): He's got a big shed

(I): Oh, ok.

(R): I used to make - fabricate you know the yards here mostly then take'em and install'em. All of the componentry came out of my shed, I got a pretty fair stock of steel, probably a \$100 000 worth or steel laying around at any one time, because I used to sell it off, supplied a lot of product. Anecdotally I made a lot of money once at this misfortune of Sydney having a hailstorm back in 1990 and because my supplier was in Dubbo and he was a national supplier. One of the troubles of the Sydney boys, was that the guys down there couldn't get product because the bigger organisations, you know the bigger companies that were doing the bigger jobs, sorta took all the product that the little fellas would normally get but they couldn't get it, because the big fellas were taking it all. But I got very popular with a couple - of builders because I could source stuff here - put in a cutting list and it would be delivered to the job in Sydney. I could give'em a lead time of you know, seven or eight days or something like that. Whereas they were 6 months behind. So, I had some pretty big accounts going. (laughs)

(I): Well done.

(R): I made good money, oh we all did. But you know but there was just so much work, particularly in Sydney, around Erskineville and Botany and down in that Eastern Sydney [area].

[0:24:05] (I): Did you employ locals?

(R): I did have a team, I had three or four guys from here. And that was one of the problems they had down there too - they had a fair bit of trouble sourcing labour. But you know we had up to 14 people working on. And big jobs, you know 1400m² that sort of thing, was four house blocks (laughs) that's a fair bit of tin, I can tell you. (laughs)

(B): And our daughter in Sydney and her husband they put them up for six weeks in their house, the four boys - feed'em and looked after them.

(I): So, Barb, when you finished school what did you end up doing?

(B): I went to Nelson's in Wellington in the office. Then I went to John Paul Ward [now Graham & Ward Solicitors], and then I went home and worked harder on the farm than I ever worked. (laugh)

(R): Only until 1975.

(B): 1975 I got the job up here at the [Stuart Town Public] school for ten years, and then I went into Wellington High School and a SAM - Senior Admin Manager for 25 years.

(I): And that's the sort of work you were doing here at Stuart Town?

(B): Yeah, at Stuart Town I was the SAM up here - I was the money person. But up here I only worked from 9 o'clock till 12 o'clock

(R): 9-12

(B): 9-12. And when I went into Wellington, I was full time from half past 8 till half past 3.

(I): Then [you] retired.

(B): Then retired, I retired at 58. I had to retire because two of my friends died of cancer and it was that awful and I had to get out. I thought, 'no I don't need to be here'. But I got to the stage I was driving home, and I was going through Dripstone, and I could not remember going through Dripstone, and I thought 'I've been doing this far too long' I thought it was time I stopped.

(I): So, tell me about the changes you've noticed in Stuart Town in the village?

(R): Well, it's gone from thousands to dozens as far as the residencies are concerned. There - we just started another shop which is fantastic for the people that have undertaken that - that's good for Stuart Town. But yes, it's been a slow slide. It's not peculiar to Stuart Town, it's

right across Australia and that's because we're so mobile and the communication system is so good now, compared to what it was 50 years ago - you know you can get things on the internet - a day later they're at the post office. You know, if you want a spare part for your lawn mower or something like that all you gotta do is press a few buttons...

(I): And it'll come.

(R): ...and put in a couple of numbers of your bankcard and the things there.

[0:27:16] (I): And that is also because the works gone from - whatever might been here, is now gone?

(B): What did we have - how many orchards - we had 17 orchards here, now we've got none. That was in the 70s-80s there was orchards - cause I was manager of that business - it's just gone.

(R): It was probably - well it was touted as being the premier peach orchard growing area of Australia. And there were some special varieties of peaches even that were peculiar to Stuart Town, but the marketing system was its downfall. They were very good at growing them, having high class fruit but there were too many people with their snout in the trough from the farm gate on. But whether you like it or not Flemington markets in Sydney are a bit of cesspool and always has been.

(B): We went to market and saw...

(R): You know the things that they were doing there, we saw'em doing - it was just terrible. With our fruit from this area.

(I): And then of course that means no more baker, butcher, any of those things anymore.

(B): Nothing. We've post office now from half past 8 till one. A pub for two and a half or three and a half days a week. And the [local] shop's just opened after eight years or six years of whatever.

(I): And for shopping - supermarket shopping you'd go Wellington, Orange?

(R): Yeah, both.

(B): Mainly Orange, but if I'm in Wellington -

(I): Yeah ok, and everybody would be doing that?

(R): Yeah

(B): Yeah, you can't shop [here] - I mean it's great up here and it is now because if cooking and you want, just say, self-raising flour or something you know, they've got the kilo bags there [at the new shop] - you know a kilo of flour or whatever that's great. They got eggs, they got everything you know but that's what it's good for [the essentials] - but you wouldn't do your shop there.

(R): Not at three times the price. But that's, you know, good'on'em for doing it - where pretty happy to have it.

(B): Well, I did cake decorating and I didn't mind charging.

(I): And that also means that there's no more school?

(B): Yeap, yeap they've probably got 10 or 11 there now.

[0:30:00] (I): Ok, yeah, that's only primary?

(B): Only primary, yeap. And probably seems to be more teachers or more people there than children. They've two teachers there, then they have the groundsman [a Senior Admin Manager} and an – SLO one that helps in the room, cause teachers can't be on their own. There's got to be someone with them all the time. So there's always someone there, yeah.

But a lot of people - the trouble is now, probably in last five years the buses have been coming from Orange, and the bus comes from Wellington. Well, a lot of our kids are going to Orange that should be going to our school here. And the kids that are here - should be going here [to Stuart Town Public school] there going to Wellington - hopping on the buses. So, you know, it's sad because this school could have probably 30 children - well I saw 11 get off the school bus at Farnham the other day, it's just sad - - - Ang and Trent's kids get on the bus at half past seven and they're home at 4:40pm. Only to the bus stop then they've got to drive 8 miles - 10km into the house. So it's just - everything's changed. It's just people - - - they live here now and they're working in Dubbo or they're working in Orange, you know. It just once upon a time you wouldn't have thought of it. I boarded, I lived here [in Stuart Town], but I boarded in Wellington - cause you just didn't do that.

[0:31:50] (I): And the major impacts on the town in a good way, I know you said you had electricity all the time - but was electricity and those sorts of services did that change how town was? How village life was?

(R): Stuart Town was peculiar in as much as it had power pretty early in the piece 1936-37. When Barbara got power on down the river, and that was a result of Stuart Town having it. It

was because the main line came along the railway line and it easy to strip it off from the substation that used to be here. And that's why, it was tied into the railway system of course. But yeah, Stuart Town always - for all those years from about the mid-1930s they've had power here. But the rural properties suffered because it was a financial thing - there was a government edict that, it wasn't to cost the farmers very much money to get power and the government always said, 'oh we haven't got enough money to put these lines through,' and hence 20 years later before a lot of the farms around here had power. But yeah, that made a heck of difference to what we as a farming community had. In our case we went intensive on the farm we had a lot of chocks on wire for egg production and that was a job in itself. Barbara spent a lot of time packing eggs I can tell you.

(B): 1000 a day

[0:34:01] (I): Wow

(R): And we set up milling system that was fairly high capacity, so we went into pigs as well, intensively. That made - it was good because it levelled out the high and lows of farming. Most farmers get one cheque a year basically and I would worry about it. (phone ringing in background) - Or in our case it was successful, we had markets. There was a hiccup in 1975 which devastated a lot of people. On the 24 Jan 1975 there was a fire started next property on from where we were, and traditionally fires run from the northwest to southeast, and we were on the southeast side where the fire started so I was ours the second property impacted. And out of the two and half thousand acres we had; I think left with couple of hundred acres that wasn't burnt. Which, in itself was a disaster. But we also lost all our breeding sheep and their progeny - there was about 1100-1200 ewes burnt and all the lambs - sorta pretty fair kick in the guts.

(B): That's when I got the job at the school.

(R): Things changed a lot after that. We waffled on for a bit because the pigs and chocks where still ok, so we still had an income stream plus you know the necessity for me to be a farm labourer, sort of diminished because we sort of let the country regenerate by itself, not much else you can do. I could have gone fencing, but that's expensive so we just left that alone. I got a job then, I went with the university of NSW on a farm - just outside of Stuart Town here. It was part of a common, the Stuart Town common. And the wool and pastoral science section of the University of NSW had hived off a thousand acres of the common to make an

experimental farm.⁵ And the common was pretty raw - at my time of life I wouldn't be happy with what we did now, but you know everybody was looking for work those days, we had a REDS scheme with 16 people out there.⁶ So, we developed that thousand acres, we built two sets of sheep yards, a big set of cattle yards, a wool shed and a lot of other infrastructure – like gateways and pump sheds and stuff like that and put in a water reticulation system. I started there just after the fire, maybe a month after the fire, in February and worked right through until I had to go home for cropping reasons [harvesting season]. Dad put a crop in, and I was the header driver. But yeah, it was sort of the end of November, so I spent nearly a year working for the University of New South Wales, it was a great experience. I was their welder, that was my job to do all the welding and setting out everything because I've doing it all my life anyway. Barbs dad was involved in it.

[0:38:35] (I): So, was there many other properties effected by the fire the same as you were?

(B): Yeah, there was 11 properties burnt - 22 000 acres burnt. I don't know how many sheep, thousands. No houses - there was some sheds burnt and some machinery.

(B): Our swimming pool saved ours.

(R): It actually got into our wool shed, but a couple of fella got there and they just happened to have to a pump and they got the dam thing out. And I wouldn't have thought it was possible.

(I): So just prior to that, you had diversified into some pigs and chooks. Had other farmers in the district done that sort of thing as well, or were they still relying on sheep, cattle and maybe their orchards?

(R): Yeah, most of them were. I guess our property was sort of 'Mr in-between'. It was not quite big enough for two families. And there was mum and dad - educating my brother at university as well so there'd had a commitment there. Barb and I had two little girls. So, we sort of stretched our resources and that's why we came up with the pigs and chocks. Most of the other farming enterprises were able to drop off their labour a fair bit and - the demise of the rabbit had done a lot to improve the countries carrying capacity. It was the mid-50s when

⁵ The University of NSW department of Wool and Pastoral Science set up experimental farms in several locations around the central West region including as Stuart Town, Wellington, Fowlers Gap and Broken Hill. The experimental farms were researching parasites and diseases that effect livestock. (information supplied by Barbara Eade)

⁶ REDS or Regional Employment Development scheme was a Federal Government project designed to improve employment opportunities in rural and regional areas around Australia, it commenced in 1974.

myxomatosis ran rampant and decimated the rabbit population. And we never had fire problems in my formative years, ever. Sometimes you'd get a lightning strike, and a tree would burn but because we always had rabbit droughts, there was never any fires until - you know once you got into the '60s - well into the 60s, and the ground had started to regenerate and there was a lot more ground cover and a lot more feed on the ground. And people sort of stocked up higher, higher levels of stock. So, you know they did it by basically not spending as much money and cut down the labour a bit because they didn't have people digging out rabbit burrows and putting up fences and that sort of thing. But yeah, so most of'em got into that routine of just looking after their stock, and the stock did a lot better because the rabbit had gone.

[0:41:46] (I): And Barb was it common for people - young wives or young women I guess to travel away Wellington or Molong or Orange for work?

(B): We didn't in those days, it wasn't done was it?

(R): No once you got married, you stayed on the farm.

(B): Once you were married on the farm that's were - that was it. That was - while I wouldn't - it was only I got the job here at the school, because then I worked in with Harris's and when Donna [Barbara and Richard's daughter] started, I'd bring Donna in. I'd pick her daughters up and bring'em in and then she'd pick'em up of an afternoon and I'd meet her at Store creek and take'em home. But everybody just sort of stayed home, there was no - unless you were schoolteacher or something, but there wasn't many of those around here either.

(R): No, no.

(B): Edwards' they didn't - I can't think of anyone - the women were just home, you know. They never went, Mum never went to work- like they never went to work.

(R): Yeah, but it's different today.

(B): I mean everything wasn't done - I mean when Richard had the job out at Farmham⁷ - building the wool sheds and that, we might have to get the girls up or get one up and we'd have to drive him to meet out here at Farnham at half past seven in the car, then I'd go back,

⁷ Farnham is a locality, located off the Burrendong Way between Stuart Town and Euchareena.

feed the pigs if he hadn't got time, then I'd get dressed and come to work. You know, you just did it for 10 months, that was your life, cause we only had one vehicle, but you just did it.

[0:43:27] (I): So essentially Stuart Town was sustained by agriculture and farming practise. And that's changed now in the 2000s.

(B): Yes, now it's the dole. They stop off the train here so they can't go to work, they got no way to go to work so we have people that just don't go to work.

(I): So, the farming isn't same as it was then?

(B): No

(R): No, no. The aggregations have got bigger, people have left the land and the properties have expanded.

(B): And what's hard - they've made them smaller [the properties] - they put a house on over here.

(R): Yeah, the blocks around town.

(B): Yeah, the [smaller] blocks, they've built houses on them. And out here there's a property but he lives in Mullion Creek and he's got a property here. There's a lot like that, that don't live here. We have a lot of places here, but nobody lives here, they just come weekends or..

(I): And there not running stock or anything?

(B): No, nothing.

[0:44:40] (I): And then back to the orchards, what'd you say 16-17? So that quite a big industry, I guess.

(B): Hmm it was.

(I): So, you touched on the pricing I guess, or the relationship between supplier and the buyer. So, what happened to all those orchards?

(B): Gone. dozed out.

(R): Dozed out, they're all gone.

(B): Well, they've gone. So, Mum and Dad died. Zillah and Lionel Edwards, they've died, Barry Edwards [their son who had an orchard] is gone. They're all old.

(R): That era is gone, and we're at the tail end of it. (Laughs)

(I): But it's still good peach growing country?

(B): Oh, my word

(R): That hasn't changed.

(B): We've got a nice neighbour down here, his mum and dad had peaches. Well, he went away at Christmas, he's got some nice peach trees down there we could have the peaches - they're beautiful. And they had taste, you know.

(I): Yeah so - that's loss of identity in a way for Stuart Town if they take that reputation [away].

(B): Yes, it is. And people even now, cause I work up at the RTC two days a week volunteering and you often get an older person, and coming in and asking, 'is this were those beautiful peaches came from,' you know you used to get them every now and again because they remember them. They'd go to Les Frappell or Laurie Pope, cause they were both on the road.

(I): Was the influence of the railway in town? Was it a big thing?

(R): Well, there was a workforce here. But it all sort of closed down.

(B): Now if you want something, like you saw a pump on it - you've got a pump coming up. We sit at the railway crossing up here, and here's his pump, he had to go to Dubbo to get it. Because they don't stop.

(R): (Laugh) I saw the pump go passed.

(B): You saw it go passed, and there it is.

[0:46:45] (I): So that would have employed a number of men.

(B): Oh, we had two Station Masters.

(R): Yeah, and a porter and then there was the fettlers here, there were six or so fettlers. And that slowly drifted away, and it was run from Wellington then. And they cut out the mail trains back in the late 70s - early 80s.

(B): 9'o'clock it would come through, Mum and Dad would be playing tennis and have to race off.

(R): Yeah, out at 'Eadevale'. Dad used to say when he was a young fella, 'cause he worked on the farm, the original property. And they'd have a break down - whether it was sowing time or stripping time and the major suppliers in those days were H.V McKay or Ralf McKay or

Sunshine [Farm Implements] and they were all Pymont Sydney, all those big companies that supplied agricultural goods from Pymont. But they had a big rail system at Pymont. And if you got a telegram to 'em before 4'o'clock on any weekday. The part that you ordered would at Stuart Town or Euchareena at 8'o'clock next morning. I'm dammed if it'll happen today. (all laugh)

(B): Four days latter and then it goes...

(R): And that would have been in the 20s, probably mid to late 20s. That they had that ability.

(I): And the way mail trains used to run that obviously doesn't work like that anymore, does it?

(B): Only the XPT [passenger train]

(R): All motorised now.

(I): And when the trains were running regularly would a lot of people travel from here to Sydney?

(B): Yeah

(R): There was always people getting on and off the trains.

(B): And used to get on here and go to school in Orange.

(R): My mum did her secondary education in Orange, and she used to catch the mail train going back towards Sydney at about half past 8 in the morning. And by the time she got to school it was about 10'o'clock. Every time she got a report, she got a bad one because of attendance. Because she never got to school before 10'o'clock. But that's what she did you know, to get her secondary education.

(B): Well, Uncle Arty did that to go to Orange too. Cause he was going to be a chemist -I dunno what happened in those days.

[0:49:54] (I): So, again it was the loss of that important thing [train services].

(R): Those services from rail are basically non-existent now.

B: So, it wasn't when I started work, because I had to board in town. Because I couldn't catch the school bus because you'd be late and then coming up you had to work till half-past 5. So, you know there was no trains.

(I): So, with a lot of families and things in town, a strong community - but out of that I understand you've then been very involved in the community. I know Richard, your Dad was [Wellington] Shire President so there's a bit history there for being involved in the community but that's been a good

thing, a positive thing you've been involved in number of shows, a number committees, a number of events and things?

(R): Yeah, we've always been.

(B): Dad and Mum were always in something.

(R): Yeah, it sort-of all part of life's fabric. The people that you meet is just phenomenal, some of them are amazing people. I know we got involved - well Dad got involved with the Festoon lighting in Mudgee. He was invited by the mayor over there a fella called George Moufarrige⁸ who was a really old-style Lebanese - just a master of people. He was an amazing man. Him and Dad were pretty good mates, you know. He was the Mayor of Mudgee and Dad was the Mayor of Wellington so you know they crossed paths quite often and they couldn't get any polities to come and switch on these festoon lighting, so Dad ended up doing it. But we were the VIPS - as a family.

(B): We got a lot of things - got inside their houses, had meals and everything.

(R): Beautiful people. And the communities themselves were a lot more active. 1967 was Wellington Sesqui-Centenary. Cause it's the second oldest inland town in Australia. Apart from Bathurst, which was 1813, Wellington was 1817. So, Dad was Shire President when that happened. The things they got up to as a result of - it was just a terrific time, wasn't it?

(B): Well, they went on the train all dressed up on the train here...

(R): Queen competitions and all sorts - Burrendong Dam had a big influence on a fair bit social fabric. Because there was so many people about. And some of them got involved in the community heavily.

(B): We were.

(R): I remember Reg Bennett who was the second in charge down in Burrendong when they were building, and he fought pretty hard to rebuild the Anglican Church here in Stuart Town. And they raised a lot of money to do it. It was all community money - churches have never got any money, or they say they don't.

(B): Well, they're gonna sell the house now. The Church of England's church is going. - I'm not a Catholic, but I go to Catholic one day and - because Church of England only comes once a

⁸ Emilie George Moufarrige was Mayor of Mudgee and Shire President for 14 years.

month - The Catholic fella [priest] Carl comes up every Saturday morning, so you go every Saturday morning. I do a reading there.

[0:53:55] (I): So, with community involvement it's not as strong as it used - not your involvement - but at the community as a whole because there's not the population anymore? Or a different population?

(R): Different demographic altogether now.

(B): They don't work, they don't want to do anything.

(R): They're time poor most people now. Mostly the wives work - there's a lot more pressure to move around - they're very mobile. They've always got things on, if they've got a spare minute they probably jump in their caravan and go somewhere - the mentality is a lot more prevalent now.

(B): The other thing is, that I find working with the town, is that you want - someone young to give you a hand, 'oh how much you gonna pay?' There's no volunteering anymore. They want to be paid for doing it. We're doing it for nothing. When you were cementing the thing up there, there was six of you there working, Richard's truck, his tractor, his cement mixer - everything. These fellas wanted to help, and I said, 'Do you want to help' And they said 'Nup, what are you paying us?' I told them to go home, we'll do it ourselves.

(I): So, it's different?

(B): Its totally different - And even with my children where they are they don't get involved in anything.

(R): There great love now is playing with their phones. And I guess I am as guilty as anyone, because I can. (laughs)

[0:55:43] (I): So, what do both think is unique or special about Stuart Town, about living here?

(B): I love it. I love sitting on that verandah having a cup of tea, and there's nobody next door to me, there's no one peering in, it's beautiful. Quiet, hidden. You can hear the birds - the birds are running around. Yeap that's what it is for me.

(R): And the history of the town - is incredible and we've lost most it.

(B): I do, I read the book a lot, the Stuart Town book, it's just unbelievable.⁹

(R): It was just a teeming mass of people back in the 1850s. There would have been thousands of people here. Because of the gold...

(B): Four hotels just down there.

(R): There was just a massive [amount of gold prospectors] - because it was so easy to get to, I'll put it that way, see a lot of the gold followed the rivers, and Bathurst of course was the focal point, all the services sort of emanated from Bathurst. But because there was so much activity here it became a very big hub of distribution for quite a lot of the gold fields. Apart from Mookerawa and Burrendong, there was Bodangora, Gulgong, - Mudgee area and back up all the Macquarie hills it backed over. All those areas were serviced from here - Hill End. It was just because it was easy to get the service and the goods from Bathurst to here and then they were disseminated from there. There wasn't much gold west of here - it was all sort of those hills behind us. Because the fall into the Bell River, nothing. A lot of people dug a lot of dry holes going that way. But never found anything. But from here back to the river and beyond was just amazing supply of gold. Not to the extent of the golden triangle which is Ballarat, Maryborough, and Bendigo, that's an enigma, there was a lot of gold here. In fact - when it got mechanised back in the 1880s-90s there were 19 company mines operating here, and some of them were as big as BHP. So, there was a lot of activity. It's same as what [Cadia [Newcrest Mining Ltd]¹⁰ now and what Bodangora is going to be, it's going to a massive development. Ancient system there - if they find one more ore body, they've got two out of three - they said if it goes to three, they'll be for a hundred years. So, you know it's got that much potential. And we're right in between it.

[0:59:17] (I): So that history of that early period still strong in the 40s, 50s, 60s?

(R): The activities it was mostly pensioner type people - we used to do a bit of pot holing...

(I): No, no sorry I mean in terms of the history of township, not a history of the gold? It developed its own history in those years, outside of the gold?

⁹ Barbara is referring to two books about the history of produced locally: *Whispers from Ironbarks* (1988), produced by the Stuart Town Bicentennial Committee; and *Branches for Ironbarks a journey through time 1898-1989* (1998) produced by the Stuart Town Book Committee.

¹⁰ Cadia is owned by Newcrest Mining Limited. Cadia has operations in Orange, Blayney, Cabonne local government areas.

R: I used to put it that Barb's dad probably new 50% of the history of Stuart Town and Mookerawa, and I reckon I know 10%. I reckon the next generation will be down to 1%. Because unless it's comes back – but it'll never come back like it was.

(B): No

(R): If a gold company comes here - there'll be a thousand people working here and they'll set up a township. Cadia lucky because they've got Orange. I think even with these wind farms [Aquila Wind] they're talking about [sound disruption] which are apparently going ahead, they're talking about putting a donga village here, for 300 of 400 hundred people. Well, that'd certainly smarten things up a bit. But that's happening in the next 12 months.¹¹

[1:01:05] (I): Going back to the community involvement. The community hall? You had a bit to do there?

(B): Yep, yep.

(I): Too much?

(B): That's where the wind farm will hold their meeting next Tuesday, all day. It was built in 1932?

(R): 1932-33, I think it was opened in 34.

(B): Yeah, Mum's father – they're all on the trust. They had trustees for it. They had that. And then, well they still had the trust until just recently, didn't they?

(R): Yeah, it was designated a School of Arts.¹²

(B): And it was trustees.

(R): And they had trustees, yeah.

(B): And the council wanted to take it over some time ago, but the mums here they fought and said no they keep it, 'cause they didn't want to get rid of it.

¹¹ Aquila Wind is a proposed development for a wind farm located near Mount Aquila, southeast of Stuart Town in Dubbo Regional Council. As of 2023-2024 the project was under assessment by NSW Department of Planning, Housing in Infrastructure.

¹² School of Arts were part of the Mechanics Institute Movement that began in the 19th century. Mechanics Institutes were designed to provide educational opportunities to working class people. School of Arts were established by volunteers as independent community organisations, sometimes with government subsidies, and acted at local community centres.

(R): It was vested in the trust and the property was too, we have changed that - The reason that there's been a change is because of lack of numbers [for Trustees], that's one reason. And the other reason is, and what we've done, we've put it back into Crown Land, converted it back to Crown Land.

(B): It was on Crown land, the Crown Land's at the back, wasn't it.

(R): Yeah, so the trusteeship expired so now it's Crown Land. And what it's done, it's opened up our ability to access funding. Currently we've got a floating, I'll put it that way, request for funding to put in a commercial kitchen up here. You know, the powers that be said 'Oh that's a good idea,' So Crown Land has already given us \$23,500 to do the plans. So, there's a pretty fair chance they'll give us the money to do it (laughs). Because they don't want to lose that history, it's a safe area for community disasters, fires or floods - not so much floods but certainly fires its designated a safe area for people to [evacuate to].

(B): Well, we had poetry - Lennard Teal come here and he reckons – what was it?

(R): The acoustics.

(B): The acoustics of that hall was fantastic, he thought for them. We've had two or three poets there that have said the same thing.

[1:04:04] (I): So originally, it's the School of Arts but also doubled as the dance venue for Balls and things?

(B): Yeah, Balls and weddings - caters for everything.

(I): And that's still the case?

(B): Yes

(I): Or could be still the case?

(B): No weddings anymore. Wakes - more wakes than anything. (Laughs) Parties ...Birthday parties and that we have'em there. But we are having mostly conferences and like [Aquila Wind] this is their 2nd one they've had here this year.

(R): Yeah, we have three and four [Aquila Wind] meetings here a year.

(I): This is for the Windfarm

(B): The [Aquila] Windfarm yeah.

(R): Biodiversity people come a couple of times a year.

(B): Oh yeah, they come, they come for their meetings.



(R): They have their meetings here.

(B): The RFS - The Rural Fire Service have their meeting there.

(I): So structurally you've made editions to it, changed much?

(R): Yeah well 2003 we had the RTC annexed to it [the School of Arts Hall]. That was pet project of John Anderson.

(I): Yeah Ok, John yes. Tell so me So the RTC - Rural Transaction Centre that's still running?

(B): Yep, we go there two days a week.

(I): Yeah, and even though there is mobile coverage better than what it was when they were first initiated?¹³

(B): To be honest we probably should close it, but you might make \$6. I did last week, made \$6. But now the shops open so they can go there and get there toasted sandwich or their drink, - so I don't know what's gonna happen with that. But the Hall's still there, I mean - we vacuumed it quickly, get the cobwebs of it, for the meeting on Tuesday.

[1:05:54] (I): Yeah, so initially in the state, the RTC would provide a great resource for the community.

(B): Oh yeah, yeah.

(R): It did yeah. There was internet banking, we had a doctor come once a week? Or a fortnight?

(B): Once a fortnight

(R): Once a fortnight.

(B): Baby health clinic once a month. A hairdresser once a month

(I): I think that's where the library stopped - the mobile library stopped when it was still running.

(B): The mobile library when it was here it stopped. Yeah.

(R): Because people are so much more mobile and the communication system so much better, all that's sort of obsolete now.

¹³ The Rural Transaction Centre Programme was initiated in 1999. It was designed to provide a range of services to small communities including banking, postal, phone and internet services, along with Medicare and other government service. 500 RTC were established across Australia in areas with rural populations of up to 3000 people.

B: And the people who used to go to the library too - they've passed away, you know, it was Uncle Arty and Alf Barwick, you know they used to always be here- so that sort of stopped.

(R): Currently there's - I don't know - maybe a couple of dozen people that live here that work either in Orange or Wellington or Dubbo. My nephew and his son they both work for MAAS [construction]. The guy down the road here he works for Aviagen the chook farm.¹⁴ The fella across here, him and his wife work for Cadia. The fella on from him, he works at Bunnings [Hardware Store] and his wife is a RN at the Gaol [Wellington Correctional Centre], you know.

(I): So, people might live here but, obviously there's no work for them here.

(B): No, no.

(R): And that's just this end of town.

(I): So how many people would be still living in the village, including those who work out of town?

(R): Oh, I don't know there might be a couple of hundred altogether - There's some retired people, Dicky McGregor's retired and - his wife still does a bit, I think.

(B): She works with the UPA - [United Protestant Association Home care]

(R): There's quite a few people that have retired.

(B): Misty works in Orange too.

(R): Yeah, Misty works in Orange with 'Wellbeing' - being well or whatever it is, you know NDIS.

(I): So even though there's people around it doesn't mean that there's the same sort of community as there was 20-30 years ago

(B): Gosh, no.

(R): Nearly all of them, apart from only a couple of them, are older people and even the younger ones like the Gurney's over here, both their girls go to Orange Anglican Grammar School. Catch the bus here at half past seven in the morning. Get home at half past four.

[1:08:53] (I): Yeah. Alright so last question, I think. Unless you had something [speaks sound recorder Simone Taylor]

¹⁴ Aviagen is international poultry breeding company with Australian operations based at Goulburn, Wellington, Wagga Wagga and Bowral, in New South Wales.

(B): She's been madly writing (laughs)

(I): Oh, yes sorry the Ironbark Festival. So that's been running what?

(B): 20 years

(I): 20?

(B): Well for years – we had it going back in the 70s, we used to have it [our Easter Festival] up at the old railway hotel, and we always had it up there. A fella - he used to bring bales of hay and put around?

(R): Eric Golf?

(B): No, out here?

(R): Oh Phil Thatcher?

(B): No, no...

(R): Oh, isn't terrible to get old and forget these things. Anyway, I think he's name was Vic Parkinson.

(B): Yeah, that's it.

(R): He was ex-mayor of Mosman.

(B): Mossman yeah. But we always had the markets there, then probably - 15 years ago we moved down to the hall?

(R): Yeah, it sort of grew, mainly because of the Railway Hotel, because there was a big push back in the late 60s early 70s to do the Railway Hotel up. Which is 1880s building, and it's in real good nick now, real good order. So, they used to have a function every Easter – sell apples, bit and pieces - they got a street thing going...It sort of permeated and got bigger. In amongst that - they used to have a Mardi-Gras. It ran for three or four years I suppose - it was organised by one bloke [Eric Gough] and he was a bit an enigma - a racehorse man. But it got out of control - the Mardi Gras actually got out of control.

(B): The police had to get involved.

(R): And the police shut it down [laughs].¹⁵ Because I don't when it was - 1986 or something like that - we made the national news because they'd had New Years Eve - they used to run to New Years Eve and the New Years Eve festivities in Sydney the police were quite happy, they'd only made five or six arrests and there was 23 in Stuart Town. [Barbara laughs] So Western Area Command said to us 'You're not having it anymore., and if you are its gonna cost you a lot of money' [laughs] So, you know that fell over, bit of a spinoff of that was Easter.

(B): And then for probably about 10 years, or 15 years we had it at the Hall, the Hall committee - We'd have stalls in the Hall and sell apples and then used to do BBQ sausages out the front and then - what would it have been about 2010 or something

(R): When the RTC...

(B): 2010 was probably about the first [time] we closed the street off. Cause we never had money - and to close the main street off it just cost us so much money to close it off. So now we have it in the Rec ground - It'd be about - well I took over in 2009 as Treasurer and Secretary, so it'd be about 2010 I'd say - we named it the 'Man from Ironbark Festival' cause that when we got the sign on the toilet block there. [in Moxon Park]

(R): Yeah

(B): So, about 2010.

[1:12:50] (I): So, is it Ironbark or Ironbark's? The original name?

(B): Ironbark no 's'

(I): No 'S' even though you do see it with an 's' sometimes.

(R): It's the town of 'Ironbark' the location is Ironbark's.'

(I): Ok

(B): It's a real thing with people.

(R): Some people turn that around – But it's good to have a bit of consternation about a name.

(B): But anyway, we've got 50 odd stalls.

(R): I wanted to call it stripy town [laughs]

(B): We coulda done that back in the early 80s.

¹⁵ The Stuart Town Mardi Gras, was a New Years Eve party organised by the local community. It did not have any relationship with the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras.

(I): So the stalls and things there locals or from the district?

(B): Everywhere. Yep.

(I): Yeap, ok. And if you've got that many stalls coming does that reflected on the numbers that come over the years to it?

(B): Oh yeah, we can get two and a half thousand people here on Saturday - Easter Saturday. And we've got the dog trials this year, so that will probably bring a few more - we just have it in the rec ground.

(R): We're pretty well set up for it now.

(B): We have Geurie Lions Club come and do the gates for us. Cause there's only about five of that here that work, or six of us [on the committee].

(R): Well, we'll see what happens this year, I was a bit inclined to have bi-annually just to give us a bit of a break, but they said, 'oh no, you've got to have it yearly'.

(B): Yeah, but it's all right for them there only 40s and 50s were 70s nearly 80s - you get a bit tired on the feet.

(I): I think if it stays as a community event it stays as an annual one and can be - not necessarily profitable in that way, but profitable for the community to be involved I think that's important to build that sense of community up.

(B): We've got - people that come from Orange - they do it every year up in the Railway Hotel, they do the art displays - selling the photos, the pictures. [At the Easter Iran Bark Festival]

(R): Yeah, they're very good.

(B): Yeah, they are. And he loves it. Richard rang him and he was so excited he was coming back down.

(R): So that's good.

(B): Yep.

[0:1:15:06] (I): So, what do we think for the future?

(B): I hate to think.

(R): Watch this space. I think in the short term there's going to be a lot of activity for next seven or eight years. Particularly with the wind farms going ahead. That'll be - I dunno whether it's a plus or not - but it'll certainly create a fair bit of activity. It'll probably mean our road

system will be improved no end. Because there's a demand for that now - as we all know there working on bits and pieces of it and that'll continue, so you know, that's a plus. Whether at the end of the build of the wind [farm] it just drops off and I don't know. Maybe this gold thing might rear its head again more activity on that front. Because all this area is taken up on leases - exploration licenses. It's never not been under those conditions. So - they've been over the years doing a lot of drilling - there's quite an amount of data that they've got on the history of the gold and what's available - and so whether it's gonna be the beneficiary for something that happens - I'm just thinking that Cadia is gonna run for another 50-60-70years and if Bodangora goes for as long as they're saying, it'll be a while before Stuart Town gets much bigger than it is. Currently it's a great place to live.

(I): And Barb what do you think? Potential for growth?

(B): I'd like to think so, but sad part about it, we're selling a lot of houses here, but people buying them, but they live in Sydney. We have houses here that are empty, and they come up once a month on the weekends - so I really don't know. It's not like it used to be because we have a lot of break and entries - things that we never had once upon a time. I don't know - I've always lived here so I've lived nowhere else. I spent two weeks over at Nelson Bay and I certainly don't want to go over there (both Laugh). I don't [want to live there] you can see them hanging their undies on the clothesline - no way I'm used to country I've never been in the city [laughs]. And down at Donna's [Barbara and Richard's daughter] it's the same - I just don't know what'll happen here, I love it, I love it here. And it's not because Mum and Dad lived here or anything. It's just quiet, nice - I only have to go into town once every month, or fortnight or usually doctors' appointments or something [laughs] prescriptions or something.

(R): It's not without its notoriety. If you cast your mind back maybe three years, there was a guy from Yeoval, he was shot, killed. He turned out to be one of the principals of - the Bandidos motor bike organisation, such as it is. And they chased around all over the countryside over 12 or 18 months - with no result. But early one morning there was a whole heap of vehicles went down the road behind me, and about an hour and half later another five or six vehicles went down, including a van tech with a rubber duck on top. And it turns out there was two blokes living in the house at the end of the road and they nailed'em at half past six in the morning before they got out of bed and charged'em with murder. This fella - his name was

Shane De Britt - the bloke they killed over at Yeoval - these fellas were sort of hanging around here.¹⁶

(B): Driving up and down - we saw them. They were parked out here - out the front gate this four-wheel drive. So, Richard thought, 'what are they doing?' So down he goes [and asks] 'Are you fellas ok?' 'We're working for the boss.' (both laugh) [Referring to the Boss of the police].

(R): You can sort of smell'em

(B): It's only a couple of days later up there in the cemetery there's a little shed, and there was a black car parked behind it. Oh, yeah what's going on here? They're watching'em aren't they? [Police surveillance watching the Bandidos]

(R): They're watching'em.

(B): They disappeared for a while, then they're back up there again - yes they're working for the boss. So then they caught'em - I thought it was a mitre10 truck. What was on the side?

(R): Nitro, he was a builder this fella.

(B): He had things on [his truck] likes just pipes, you'd just swear he was builder. And then one little one tonner with going along with work things on the back of it.

(R): Tradesman vehicle

(B): Tradies vehicle - Dam killer could have shot us.

(R): Yeah, so we made the national news. There's an ongoing saga with it, I think they've charged five people now with that murder, including a couple out of Sydney. They've got another bloke in Wellington.¹⁷

(B): You worry about these strange cars going past [both laughs] I ring up Alison cause she's down there, cause the morning they picked'em the police had megaphones and it's down a gully, and what did they yell out?

¹⁶ On 28 August 2020, two men were arrested on a rural property in Stuart Town in connection with the murder of Shane De Britt. Mr De Britt had been the president of the Central West Chapter of the Bandidos Bikie gang and was killed on his property located near Wellington NSW on 14 January 2020. The Stuart Town property was extensively searched following the men's arrest.

¹⁷ Five men were eventually convicted of the murder of Shane De Britt in December 2023.



(R): I suppose there 600-700metres above where this house is and at half past six they hear 'come out with your hands up - you're surrounded this is the police.' They were having a coffee on the front verandah, and it was booming straight at'em.

(B): Allison said, 'what have you been doing Malcolm? what have you been up to?' Anyway, you don't take any notice - but now we do.

[0:1:22:05] Well thank you very much for your time and your contributions our oral history project. Your story forms part of the council's Oral history Project and we thank you again very much Barbara and Richard for being involved, and the final bit. This interview was conducted by John Bayliss on Thursday 29 February 2024.



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