



## Gawler Oral History Project

# Your Memory Our History

**Transcript of a discussion with Shirley Lucas in January 2017**

**Interviewed by Maureen McKenzie**

During first 25 min George (her husband) is part of the discussion as well. Both Shirley and George engage jointly in the conversation with Maureen. A note has been made in the transcript when George had to leave for an apt.

There are numerous parts of the recording where there is laughter and joy. I have here and there mentioned this in the transcript .... but I should emphasize that there is much more laughter in the recording than is indicated in the transcript.

The recording starts with George talking:

“It was a standard car. Ford 10. That was early sedans. Most weren't. It had a boot that you put the lid out. Served its purpose alright.

*Did it have one of those funny seats in the back?*

No. normal seat. In the boot there was no seat. No it wasn't one of those.

*But you didn't have seat belts.*

No. They were sort of years after.

*So was it a bench seat?*

Yes, bench. front and back? Yes it was quite a modern vehicle.

*I bet it was leather too.*

No. No. I can't remember. It was a standard vehicle. A Ford 10.

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*What year was that.*

I've no idea. You know ??? we found one in Birdsville. it wasn't quite the same. It was a van but that was out in the scrub.

*Yeh we went to the transport musem in Glascow and there was a lot of things there.*

If you are going to throw it all away there is no reference of anything left. That's right.

*So how old were you then George?*

About 19. I don't think I was working then. I couldn't do any work. When he went to high school at that time there was a railway line up Murray street.

*What year was that?*

1930 what 6. When you went to high school. Yes that was there then. Around 1936. And there was a railway line down the middle of Murray street. Went from the south line to north Gawler station. No. Didn't it go right up? It went to the top end of the street. Oh is that all. Where Coles are. There was a flour mill there. A flour mill that burnt. Most of all the flour mills caught alight. Yes they all burnt. They use to catch alight.

*What, combustion?*

From the wheat dust , and they use to catch alight. You know where the Salvation Army is by the bridge there.

Yes.

That was a flour mill. What they called the old Mill. Golden crust. Bridge Mill. It was Jeff Bros Mill. I don't know what it was before then.

*You said you came to SA in what?*

1941. Well actually it was only from North. have you heard of Jamestown? Yes. We were living north of that and that was on a soldiers settlement.

*Yes, so your dad was in the War.*

Yes, WW1. He was there and married in 1921 and they went straight up there on the soldiers settlement and it was 1941 when we came down to Gawler . And they owned part of where the aerodrome is. Where the gliding club is now. About 1943 the govt took it over and that's where they trained the pilots before they left here. Their house was right against the river . The bypass now goes through it.

*So you said you were on a soldier settlement block.*

Yes, down here again.

*So, you were farmers. Yes.*

*And what did you have?*

It was like a dairy farm because we had to milk the cows. I use to do it by hand. Pail and bucket. I think it was in 44 dad lost a lot. There was a flood on the river.

*On the Para river was it?*

No, really the Gawler River. After that it was a drought and we had to sell the cows. And he had to go by train down to Penfield military and he was a gardener down there. So, he lost a lot and then the govt acquired it for the Base? Yes, at the top, a couple of paddocks, they

took that. ???? and they finished up down there. I think they called it munitions or something or other. Yes, that's right.

*Is that what they acquired it for?*

No, that's where he went to work. All to do with the war.

*And what year was that?*

About 1943/44. 44 I think because we still had the top part there until the govt took it over for the RAAF.

*And you said here that they were the only fighter squadron that flew the Kittyhawks.*

Yes, And they needed them in New Guinea.

*So, what was happening in New Guinea?*

Japanese were there. One chappy from here. He was local. He left here in a Kittyhawk and they never heard of him again.

*How old was he?*

In his 20's.

*But that was common then wasn't it? Oh Yes , too right. A common thing. And people wouldn't find them in the sea anyhow.*

*Were either of you in the services?*

No. George was rejected because of his heart. Yes, I was totally rejected. I tried three times. But the doctor said "you know George, get out of it". Next time again he said , "get out of it".

*You were a tryer George.*

A tryer alright. You know what they said to me. He said, "you potter around home. That's the one place you ought to be".

*So, what did you do?*

Farming. Mainly grain. Grain, sheep, pigs, cows and chooks. The lot. Well they are all the staples. I tell you what, it got to the stage they had to bring men back to get it done. And there was the petrol. People used kerosine. Plenty of kerosine. People put that in. People bought bottles of shellite.

*So, Shirley you started off as a Davidson.*

Yes.

*That was your maiden name?*

Yes. that's right.

*So, your Mum and dad were Will and Dorothy?*

Yes. They came down with the four children? Yes, that's right. Fay, Ron, Shirley and ? .

Yes. Ron went last year.

*Then you met this handsome young fellow. (laughter)*

Yes. We were at the Methodist church then. Not the Uniting. Methodist church at Gawler West . yes. And he used to come in from Kangaroo Flat for Knights and Comrades.

*What's Knights and Comrades?*

That was the name of the group for men and women. The guys were called Knights and the girls were called Comrades. Yes, we used to say "the comrades are for the Knights". (Laughter). It wasn't a bad match either. (laughter)

*What things did you used to get up to?*

You couldn't go in unless you had a passport. Oh a password. You had to whisper that when you went in to the meeting.

*Was this like "the left hand shake"?*

Yes. And do you know that was actually taken from the Lodge. The Masonic Lodge. Yes. So I did the music. Somebody got the bright idea and said you'll have to be the door warden as well. So, I had two jobs. And the silly part was, we went down to start one in Islington. Yes islington. Down Kilburn way. yes. They had the chiefs and so forth and I got included because they wanted some music.

*And what year was that?*

Oh, that's a long time, I've got no idea.

*So that was down Churchill Rd?.*

Yes that's right. It was only a little bit of a building. A tiny hall.

*What hall was it?*

I don't even know if it would still be there.

*So, when you were in gawler what things did you do as a couple, you know as young people?*

Well, that was the meeting. Then we joined together to have speakers, and then sometimes we went for a walk, and we could walk around the place then without any fear. We stopped behind and talked and talked. She got in my way. (laughter). She got in my way. (laughter). Yeh.

*So, did you ever have hayrides and things like that?*

Oh no. We had dances. But that was taboo with Methodists. But we use to go to dances.

*That's right because the Methodists didn't believe in music and makeup.*

That's right. But when we were going together his mother use to make lillies. You know for the supper. At kangaroo Flat. The hall was opposite Roseworthy College. It 's still there? Oh yes. She use to help with the supper. Yes, your mother.

*How many brothers and sisters did you have George?*

I had one sister. Younger.

*So what year were you born? 23.*

*And what year were you born Shirley?*

1930. We were on the river there just across Winkels Bridge on the way to Two Wells. And we were just in that corner there. There is a Davidson Rd there now.

*And that's you is it?*

Yes our family. We were there for quite a while. And my grandma was there as well I thought I had some photo's of that. No. The earlier days there were other things. We used to go to Balls as well. The Freemasons Ball.

*You were a freemason as well? No.*

*But you used to have balls? Is that like a deb ball?*

No. Just a general ball.

*Were you a deb Shirley?*

No . Nobody got into that. These balls were had by different organisations. And they would ask quite a few young people. They wanted the young ones there to make the dancing busy cause the older one's didn't want to dance. To make the ball. And that's why we got there.

*So, what dances did you do?*

Kings waltz, then, queens waltz.

*Did you do any of the others like..... ?*

Yes, the military two step yes, I can't remember.

*Did you do the progressive one where you are in a circle?*

Oh yes.

*No rock and roll?*

Not then. Laughter. Not then. That's right , rock and roll didn't come in till the fifties. Then they had ..... Then they said you had to be half drunk to do that properly. Laughter.

*So they had alcohol there?*

Well it's not allowed. No.

*But they did?*

Laughter. No, well out there police were 300 metres from the place. They had very little trouble with it. And even in Gawler it was the same. Still the same thing today. They don't have Balls today anyhow. We use to use the Institute for the Balls. That was always there. At the Institute they stopped the dancing because they reckoned there was damage to the building.

*What the floor?*

No, they said the structure of the building and it was moving. And that's why they stopped having them? They stopped a lot of it.

*So was it a big band?.*

It was usually a band. Usually there were 60-70 people in there. With them moving around the building. Building was getting too old.

*So, this is the Gawler Institute?*

Yes. Yes.

*What year was that ?*

In the fifties.

*What can you tell me about shopping. Where did you go shopping?*

We had to come in to Gawler. Murray st.

*Any particular stores?*

Eudunda Farmers was there. Shirley use to work in there.

*So, what did you do? Serving.*

*Any particular dept.,*

In the groceries. You had a book. Everybody had a book. And they would get their book, and we would write out what they wanted. Then go and get it. Ours was 639. laughter. 639. Ours was 1654 for the two of us. Each person had a number on their book, and you had to write out all there grocery things. You had to write them out first. Then add them up. No machinery. All in your head. it was only about a list that long.( laughter). These books were a fact. You were sort of members, yeh members of the cooperative, and everybody had a book. Sometimes you could get a bonus. A discount or something. But you had to write them out and then you had to pay out and they had flying foxes.

*Oh like in the Simply Pine place. Yes. I remember them.*

There is one still in Neds. There is one still in the Pine place. Yes. I remember there is one in Neds. Neds? I know there is one in what used to be Crosby's. It was for the change. from the office they would get the change and bring it back .

*So you didn't handle money? It was all done with the Flying Fox? Yes. S0 you put your money in. Then let it go. They would assess it and send it back with change.*

*And where would they pick up their goods?*

We had to pack them. They did do some delivery too.Yes. When I went to high school I would leave a list there at midday, then after school go and pick it up. Oh ok. Yes, it's a bit different today.

*Did they do deliveries back then? yes. yes.*

Yes, you better go Dear (**George leaves to attend appt**).

Two of the people, assistants after the war, they use to go on their bikes to the people and get their order from them. they would come back to the store, pack it up , then go out with horse and cart and deliver them. Laughter. That was 44, 45, and early fifties.

*So, how long were you at Eudunda farmers?*

I was there 5 years. I left school 1940. No wait a minute. 1944.

*And you were how old?*

14. Left school. Then had to wait until march the following year to go into Eudunda Farmers and we had .... I had a bike then. Had to use my bike.

*Was that your main way of getting around?*

Push bike yes. When we first started at school I was in grade 6 and Leith was only in grade 1 so we had to walk from the farm to Gawler primary school.

*How far would that have been?*

5 miles. yes.

*How long did it take.*

I can't remember to tell you the truth. Laughter.

*Well you must have left with enough time to get to school on time.*

Yes . Usually 9 o'clock when it started. (laughter). Yes I had to ask him the other day "just how long was it?" He said 5 miles. (Laughter). Well you had to go the two Wells road, well we were just over the Bridge, go from there up the hill, and then go down 14th Street where we went over the swing bridge.

*Was it really a swing bridge?*

Oh yes. And then we had to walk around to go to the primary school.

*And that was gawler primary/ The one by the Community Centre now?*

Yes , or the oval.

*So, did you finish, what grade did you finish school?*

I was there for Grade 6 and 7, and then I went up Lyndoch rd for the High School . I was there for Year 1 and 2, and I didn't get anywhere with my Intermediate,. (laughter). So we left and the following March I started in Eudunda Farmers. And then.

*Where did you go then?*

I went to Timers Fashions.

*My mum worked there.*

Oh did she.

*Did you go to their 100th Anniversary.*

No, I didnt, though I was only there two years but ..

*What years were you there?*

51 , 52, something like that.

*So, you did a bit of seamstress work?*

Yes. I was told several times that I had to alter somebody elses work and put the sleeves in correctly (laughter) .

*So, you were good at putting sleeves in?*

Well I had to be (laughter). Yes. But I was a little bit slow at doing things and had to get out of it. And then I went to Sister Powells Nursing Home.

*Where was that?*

In Finnis Street almost alongside the Catholic Church.

*So, it was an order of Nuns?*

No, No. she was a nursing sister.

*That;s right they use to call them sisters back then, the nurses. Yes. They wore these funny hats.*

Oh, some did, others had like a shawl over the top of them. I was their for 2 yrs. I think that is where I put my back out.

*Was that nursing?*

Oh yes, nursing. You had to lift yourself. And I'd start again with George. We were going for quite awhile together. Sister Powells. Then she went and bought Martindale. I wasn't there then. I was at other end of Finnis St.

*So what was her name?*

Sister Powell. And that is how I got to learn massaging and other things. I don't regret it.

*Did you get to martindale?*

No no. That was a bit later on. Then she bought James Martin Village.

*Where was that?*

Out at Willaston. They had the nursing Home and residential. They still had the cottages. They have always been there but they closed up the other part.

*She was a very forward thinking woman.*

Then she went to Sister Powells. Then her son took over. So, it was very interesting to be with them. Bellchambers. I don't know if you have heard of them.

*Who's Bellchambers?*

It was the mother's son Trevor Bellchambers. I got to know him when he was only so high. His mother was the cook.

*In Martindale?*

No. In Finnis St. So I got to know them quite well. Laughter.

*So this was Bellchambers?*

Yes. Mrs Bellchambers is in Probus now. She's been coming since I've been there. Laughter.

*So, how long was it till you and George got married?*

Not until about 1962. 62? Laughter. We had to wait and wait because George didn't have any money. And he couldn't build a house or anything . No houses ....

*So, you had no home loans and that then?*

Oh golly no. Laughter. No, it was just, you know it was anything but good then. I just kept going with him. I just felt it was him. Yes. I don't think we have had a row. Laughter.

*Wow! I'm impressed. That's wonderful.*

I did a few months in another shop. But it didn't work out. So I left there. And then I went into Crosby's.

*HB Crosby?*

Yes. I was looking after the materials.

*So, where was that in Gawler?*

That's the one that has been empty so much.

*Oh is that the Pine place?*

Yes. Essex House. They called it.

*And you were in the ...*

I was there for 8 years. In the materials. There was ...

*And what years?*

That was in late 1950's. 8 years. till 62.

*But once you got married you had to give up work?*

Laughter. And go work out there. Laughter.

*But that was true wasn't it. You weren't aloud to work once you got married?*

No. No.

*So you had to give up your job to a younger one.*

Laughter. Yes.

*And then be a stay at home.*

But that doesn't matter.

*I mean it's just interesting now as to then.*

Oh yes. too right. Things have changed.

*So, when you got married and stayed at home what did you use to do?*

I was milking cows out on the farm.

*So you weren't really giving up work.*

Not really. Laughter. Looking after chooks, cleaning eggs.

*What kind of chooks did you have?*

Mainly white one's.

*What they called the Australian all sort or something?*

Yes. I think that's it. Sometimes we had a few black one's but not many.

*So you had chickens, sheep, ..What kind of sheep were they? Just for meat?*

No. meat and wool.

*I notice here that you were a singer.*

Yes. That is what I was trying to look for. A photo. Now can't remember where I put it. That's OK. We were still on the farm. We were picked up by the conductor. It was my mother and father and my brother Leith. So the four of us we got picked up. And there is a photo of the choir in the Institute. And Dora and George were all in there because we were in there as well. I reckon there would have been 80 people in the choir. That was the Gawler Oratorio Choir. And then we joined with the Barossa. And that's ...

*you were Gawler Choral Society.*

Yes.

*And then the Gawler Barossa Oratorio Choir?*

Yes.

*With your mum, dad, and Leith?*

Yes.

*And George was a member too.*

Yes, George was there. Because we went different places, And George use to take us there.

*So you did a Christian singers mixed choir.*

Yes. Every year we did the Messiah. Oh that was just beautiful. Yes. We stopped going when we got married. Up until then we were there all the time. Dora married in 1956 but she was only married 16 years and she died. Collette, who is in charge of us at the moment, she wasn't quite 12, Bron was nearly 9, and Merilee had just turned 6, when Dora died. So she came up to the farm and nana looked after them. Nana only lasted another 4 years so the rest of the time we had been helping out. Russell died in 1982.

*Your son?*

Yes.

*Was he their father?*

Earl was the father. Earl Lawrence. Russell our son, he was 18.

*When he passed away.*

Yes. We had a car accident.

*Very young.*

Yeh. 18.

*Sorry to hear that.*

*SO, anyway what can you remember about any of the things you used to do when working at Eudunda Farmers, because that would be different to what we have now as far as getting the things ready. I mean you wouldn't have had the packaging would you?*

Oh no. What it was, they gave us the list. We had to write it down. Then work out how much it was.

*So you measured everything out?*

Oh yes.

*So there wasn't self packaging and prepackaged?*

Oh no. We had a bag of sugar and we had to measure out so much each order in lbs and oz's. Yes. Butter.

*What with the butter? A big slab and you cut it up?*

Oh no. The butter factory did that. You know where the butter factory was? No. They call it Para Mews now. That was the butter factory.

*Oh ok who was it?*

Haydens butter factory. Because George's family sold the cream and not the other they had to take the cream in the back of their car. In big round things.

*Oh yeh, I know what you mean. I can't remember what they were called. I remember seeing them when we used to go driving in the country. They used to put them out for the milk cart.*

Yes that;s right. The big metal cans. They would put them out the front. Yes. With the cream we had to take it into the butter factory.

*So, you would just take the cream and not the milk?*

Not the milk. No. We would separate it.

*How did you do that?*

They had machines you see. Milk would come out through it and spin round and the cream would go one way and the milk the other.

*Oh ok. So you had separators.*

Separators, yes. That was the way to do it. And every week they would bring the jars, they would bring it in every day, every week, then they buy the butter from the factory. A few pounds a week or something like that and they would churn it up for the butter.

*So, how did you keep it cool?*

We had a cellar

*Not a fridge or a coolroom?*

No, just the cellar.

*And just the natural coolness of the cellar kept the butter from melting.*

Or the cream. Yes. The cream.

*So is that where you kept all your stores, in the cellar?*

Just about.

*You would have to go up and down the stairs. You didn't have a lift?*

Oh no. Laughter. What was that?

*Did you have a dumb waiter?*

No Laughter. And they had quite a few people there.

*So, say if I came in with an order you would do completely all my order on your own?*

Yes.

*All on your own?*

Yes. It took a while.

*So, how many items would you have? Quite a few. It wouldn't take you only 5 -10 minutes would it?*

Oh no. I reckon it be as big as this. You write it all down.

*So at least 20 - 30 items.*

Yes just about. And then work out how much it would be.

*So, people could, as George said, he would drop the order off and then come back and pick it up.*

Yes exactly.

*So, a lot of people could do that instead of standing around and waiting for it.*

Well some did.

*So, you had a little coffee shop next door? A McDonalds?.*

laughter. What was that. Talking about that would you like a cup of coffee. Actually that would be lovely.