

TAPE TRANSCRIPT

D.A.

I have with me today Raymond McDonagh , who in his formulative years lived around the Cooks Hill , Junction area and spent much of his time around the inner city area of Newcastle.

Ray , thank you for agreeing to share your memories with me today of your early years.

We are taping this on the 6th August 1989.

May I start our questions by asking you what your earliest memories of Cooks Hill and the Junction are ?

R.Mc

Well , early days I went to South school, Junction we called it then. We lived opposite the Mary Ellen Hotel , we used to walk from there to Cooks Hill for woodwork and that was where the sports ground is now. There was a big hollow then , the trams used to run down this hollow and there was a horseshoe factory in between there and Cooks Hill school.

D.A.

What years would that have been Ray ?

R.Mc.

Oh , that would be ... I was seventeen , that would be thirties , yes about 1930 and then they tell me the trams used to, of a Friday night, when

they were loaded , they used to have to push them up , you know , they had to get the passengers out. The old steam trams , I can remember , I can just remember them. Then , we used to pass Arnotts biscuit factory , it was in operation then. They used to make two biscuits then , I think they were certain ones that they could not make in Sydney , but eventually they all , the whole lot shifted to Sydney.

D.A.

Do you remember what those biscuits were ?

R.Mc.

They were a sort of wafery , they were a dry biscuit , I just can't remember the name of them now. Like a kid would never eat them ,but adults . They were a well known Arnott biscuit , but what they were I just could not remember the name now. They were puffed up but very dry , could hardly eat them.

D.A.

In the vein of a sao ?

R.Mc.

Yes , well the same but only these were round , but they made them here a long time after they went to Homebush , but then they eventually. In fact we used to , the staff used to be sitting out there having their lunch when we used to go

through , come through sometimes , but Arnotts home was there then , but they did not live there.

D.A.

I believe this is the W.E.A. now ?

R.Mc.

I think it is. The fire station was opposite the hotel there , well it is still there but there was a sort of a music hall next to it. There was two next to the fire station , something like the Tivoli in Sydney. They used to have , you know , dad and I have been there , he had taken me there, you know , more of vaudeville and then there was the two Cook's timber mill and I think Viggers. They used to be next door to that and then you got down to the sports ground , it was as it is today and around further was the incinerator , they built that , the gas tanks used to be there. The gas company is still there but I do not think the tanks are there. The other part of the water board, that is all new that building there , but up in Hunter Street there used to be , where the Nesca house is now , that was where they did repairs to vehicles.

D.A.

Body repair shop ?

R.Mc.

Yes , body repair shop , O'Connors . O'Connors had it.

D.A.

That would early days ?

R.Mc.

Yes , they dealt with horse drawn vehicles too.
More or less a blacksmith , sort of.

D.A.

Coachwork ?

R.Mc.

Yes. Well I think Nesca house is there now.

D.A.

You got your licence fairly early and that brings us to something more interesting too , about your early life. Your driving of the people around Newcastle , notable ladies and what have you.

R.Mc

Yes I used to take , do Millgates gardens for them and that. I was only in my teens and I had my licence. I used to take them to bridge , you know , women , instead of bingo in those days , it was bridge. They used to go to it a lot and I used to pick up Mrs Millgate and we would go around , not all of them , but different times I would take different ones. There was the Miss Bearby's , I think they were a ... that was a family , the Morxison Bearby's , I think they were in Carrington , like , engineers or whatever and then the Levey's. Mrs Levey , they were the

tobacconists , I think they still are in Newcastle. The Houstons , she , Mrs Houston , they were the family had the Standard laundry. I think they started the Standard laundry.

D.A.

That is out where the old Tech was at Tighes Hill?

R.Mc.

Yes , then the Rundles , they were the early Rundles , like the families , the younger ones. Still the Rundles as it is today. But they all lived out around Hamilton South , around near , like Denison Street , where the ambulance is now. Then there was the Miss Bearby's. They all. That was where most of these people lived then. Like out at New Lambton Heights . That came later , all the business people mostly lived around there, but I used to take them to bridge. And there was Mrs Beausmar , she lived , she was Dutch. He was the first manager of the lampworks , his wife , she used to play . They used to go to various homes.

D.A.

They would only play in one and others homes ?

R.Mc

Yes. Yes , sometimes they would go to a church function or something . They used to go up to , I think it was the gentleman's club . Somewhere up near the top of town .

D.A.

And whose cars did you use. Did you use their cars?

R.Mc.

Their cars . They had a De Soto and a Vauxhall .

D.A.

This was the Millgates , was it ?

R.Mc.

Yes . Mrs Lott thier daughter , she may be still alive for all I know , she had the Vauxhall . I do not know where she is today . She could be still alive .

D.A.

Mrs Millgate , what did she do ?

R.Mc.

They were retired for years . He owned a lot of property in Newcastle , up the hill . He owned flats and houses . He used to go around and he would spend the day driving around in the car and he would collect all his own rents and whatever. But he had the first hotel in Kurri , when they took the line through . Thats where he made his money . Then he came into the , he told me he went to England and Resch's was coming out in the boat and he told him to buy shares in Tooths and that is where he . He retired very early in life .

D.A.

So he would be an initial founder in the Resch's brewery ?

R.Mc.

Well Newcastle , as far as Resch's , he was the founder . He used to go to brewery . Woods , he used to get his beer there for Christmas , being a shareholder and that . That was the Tooth warehouse then .

D.A.

Thats the regional museum now ?

R.Mc.

Yes , well behind there , the museum , there used to be a brick building . There is a college there now , isn't there ?

D.A.

Yes .

R.Mc.

That Lyons , two brothers , they were the ones that used to use that to experiment for oil from coal . Next door to them , Don Kelly , he was a produce merchant. He used to sell the mash from the brewery. I suppose the leftover , whatever comes out of it , he used to sell that for poultry feed. And then Perc Bird took over after the Lyons left , he , it was leased . It was always a government building , but those Lyons , the Lyons brothers , they went a long way with oil

from coal . I do not know whatever came from it .
They experimentd , they had a lot of equipment in
there , but anyhow Perc Bird got the lease from
the Government and he . He used to deal in hide
and skins . I think he is still in Newcastle.

D.A.

That , the hides , yes I know that , they used to
be near Parry Street there somewhere .

R.Mc.

He used to take them up to Wanseys in those days .
Wanseys were up in Wharf Road , up near Zara
Street power station . It has gone now .S.Wansey ,
I think it was , they were a well known Newcastle
family . I think Perc is still in the game
somewhere. I see he would have to be in his
ninety's

D.A.

And the Wansey's were the ones that eventually
were the Herald and what have you , weren't they?

R.Mc.

They probably were too . See I was away then . See
I went away up the North Coast for . A lot of
those families , I did not know where they got to
after I came back , but then of course they . I
think Perc Bird , he used to go to all the , in
those days the Gresford Maitland and buy poultry.
See there was no poultry in the shops, you went to

them and bought them , or they sold them to you out of coupes , you killed them yourself , dressed them , you know .

D.A.

So you could not buy a frozen bird like we know ?

R.Mc.

No , no , but you go to them or there would be poultry dealers that bought them off them and they would dress them and bring them around fresh . And Stan Steggles , he was the one that really started Steggles , not the way they are today , but of course Stan might have been a bit of a black sheep of the family . I do not know what happened to Stan . It became a big business eventually , but he used to go , they were down where they are now in Tudor Street , you could go in there and there would be pens of poultry , go and pick your bird out and buy it . That was all you got in poultry .

D.A.

Did they do the killing and dressing there if you wanted ?

R.Mc

Yes , if you wanted it they could dress them for you . Whether they did it themselves , I am not sure . I do not think think that they did . Then there was P.D.S. they dealt in them live . Actually the retailer , he bought them off them and dressed them .

D.A.

P.D.S. own Allowrie butter .

R.Mc.

Are they still there , are they ? I have never been up there for a long time .

D.A.

They are near the markets at Sandgate .

R.Mc.

Well they were there , that was just a . P.D.S. was behind the fire station , that was all sand hills , there was nothing what there is now. Quite a lot of things there today . Then the other part of the town , the Mall you can only see what was there before that . They reproduced a lot of it. Other than that I do not know .

D.A.

So you have early recollections of the mall area , Hunter Street and the shops that existed there then . They were no longer there of course .

R.Mc.

No .

D.A.

What do you remember of some of those places ?

R.Mc.

There used to be a Scotts and then there was Winns and then there was Lowes , old Billy Lowe had a shop there and there used to be a dentist , Cole ,

George Cole , he was one of the top Newcastle dentists , he used to have a lift where Caldwells are now , I suppose . You used to walk in the shop and the lift was almost on the footpath , it used to take you up to George Cole the dentist . Then there was a Merewether identity , Perrotts . They had the Victor ice cream , they used to be up in King Street up near Newcastle Permanent who are there now . There was George and two sons , Ozzie and Lou , they made ice cream ,milk ,retailed it , mostly wholesale.

D.A.

How did you get on for keeping ice cream then , in those days with the ice chests and what have you ?

R.Mc.

Well , they used to pack them in like a wood , something like a cask , just pack the ice around it . On the farms they used to churn the ice cream in a barrel . They were the early wholesalers in Newcastle . There is the family , the Perrots , they were the first I ever knew , you know . Well they started the milk bars , they were the first and then milk became popular , milk shakes or whatever , they started the first one where Caldwells are today ,that used to be the milkbar, Next to that I think there was a tailor , you used to go upstairs to them , there was a shop.

D.A.

Not Peate ?

R.Mc.

No , no . Peate was up near where the new Wales bank is today , somewhere up that area , that is up near the post office . Then the old Lyric theatre , that is still there , I think . Isn't it?

D.A.

Yes the Lyric is still there .

R.Mc.

There used to be .

D.A.

Opposite that was the Victoria , wasn't it ? That was in the same street , wasn't it ?

R.Mc.

No , that was in .The old Vic , they used to show. They used to have Sunday night concerts there , they used to show vaudeville . They were in , opposite D.J's.

D.A.

The side entrance , that's right , yes.

R.Mc.

I cannot think of the name of the street . there was an old firm , Goldsmiths . They were in Beaumont Street , they were in Newcastle , opposite them was Johns.

D.A.

Goldsmiths were the ones that burnt down. There was a couple of lives lost in that ,wasn't there ?

R.Mc.

Yes Scully's , they came from Lambton , he was a traveller , he was a freelancer , he handled anyones goods , you know and she went up to . She must have been in shopping in the afternoon , waiting on him , untill he came back from his rounds or whatever , her and er...

D.A.

The daughter I think it was .

R.Mc.

I am not sure now , but I remember that day , It was a hot Westerly . I was at work over at Carrington , we saw the fire from Carrington . In fact we knew the family , they came from Lambton , but that was his game , he was a traveller. I suppose he is still in Newcastle . But then a little further up there was Elliotts , although they are Elliotts in name only , but there used to be the two brothers , they were always up town , one of them .They used to wear little pork pie hats . Then there was the Niagara Restaurant and there was a hotel there . The Central and there was another one opposite where whats his name would be today, where Best and Less are , that area, Prouds ,there is a jewellers there now , I

cannot think of the name of that hotel . Then there was the Strand theatre , the entrance to the Strand is just where you go into the entrance to the lottery office . The Niagara , they were sort of a restaurant , light refreshment , mixture , the lot of them . There is one in Beaumont Street too . Then Sargents took over from them . Sargents from Sydney , they had Sargents pies . Rundles were there , they were still there , where they are today .

There was the Rawson hotel , it is where the Commonwealth bank is . Then there was two hotels down further , near Scott Street , one opposite one another. I just cannot bring their names to mind . Then there was " Goody " Pyke , they had a hotel straight opposite the post office . I think the Wales is there now .

D.A.

Yes , the big new Wales .

R.Mc.

Yes .

D.A.

There certainly were a lot of hotels around in that period .

R.Mc.

There was Brains , Stan Brain , he had the Centinal , I think they called it .

I knew them to look at . I would say that there would be four or five been moved . The Oxford , Laskey had the Oxford , he used to have the baths . There used to be a baths there in the street , near the Commonwealth Bank . They used to be indoor baths , where that little arcade is now .

D.A.

Right . The city arcade ?

R.Mc.

Yes . There used to be baths there . Jim Laskey was the caretaker , well then he went into the Central Hotel , he was a well known identity . He had , Jim had a wooden leg , he was well known in Newcastle , he did a lot for the limbless and that . I think he had a son went into the hotel opposite, the... down from Crown Street , you know where the village theatre there , well opposite there . They used to be the Oxford and then there a garage , Ledson or someone . I just cannot remember the name of the garage and then on the next corner of Union and King , there was a garage there . In fact a mate of mine served his time there as an apprentice . Opposite was Nestles , that would be the corner of King and Darby Street , Nestles were there . Up where the library is today there was Pick Me Up sauce . They had their outlet there , wholesale . The top part now further up , the Sun , the old newspaper building , it was there . They

have preserved the buildings there , the same buildings but different operators .

The mall itself is the only part that has altered, it has not altered a great lot . The escalators and whatever they have put in , the contours of the buildings are more or less the same and that type of thing . Down further there was Ash's , they used to be the big hardware outlet .

D.A.

I believe you know a bit about the Wheeler place area too Ray . Down around that area , what used to exist there ?

R.Mc.

There was nothing there really . John Brown's house was there. Then they built the Civic Theatre

D.A.

John Brown was in coal . Was that the John Brown ?

R.Mc.

Yes . That was their home that was on that site I never ever seen it , but my family , my elder sister did . They came down when they opened the Civic Theatre , when it was being built , probably his land . That is where his house was .

D.A.

So that is the Wheeler place area , near the administration building and what have you ?

R.Mc.

Yes , they tell me one of them , Stephen , used to get around the streets and he would shout the workers a beer. The council workers and that . Stephen Brown , he was the younger brother , John was the head one . Down a bit further there was Gingeys , before then there was John.F.Miner , been going for a long time . It started there , his store , but he was apprenticed to... I just cannot bring his name to mind now .

D.A.

He was another optometrist who Miner worked for ?

R.Mc.

Yes , he took over and he has quite a few shops now . Then there was , where the hotel is there , it is still there , there was a fabric shop . They have not gone that long . Simpsons , that was there for years and years .

D.A.

That was on the corner of Auckland Street ?

R.Mc.

Yes , around the corner was , where Nesca house was , I just cannot bring to mind what was opposite there . The Salvation Army was where the Conservatorium is now . Next was a well known place called Gingeys . They were a sort of a bargain basement clothing . Union Street , there were shops I think that American firm started ,

they came out there . Sears Robards . I forget what they called themselves now , but it grew into Waltons . It went from there . I forget what it is now .

D.A.

Yes . It is something else now , again .

R.Mc.

And then um....

D.A.

That was Marcus Clarks originally wasn't it ?

R.Mc.

Yes , where they are now , down the west end , that was Marcus Clarks there . Steel Street , of course the markets were there , the produce . They have not been gone that many years , but the Steggles were early families there , then the Water Board . It is still in the same place .

D.A.

The bargain Arcade . Was that around that area , Paddy's Markets ?

R.Mc.

They were up the top of town too . There was another place , the Coo-ee clothing company , that would be sixty odd years ago . They used to be somewhere up where they made your clothes , made to order place .

D.A.

Fletcher Jones ?

R.Mc.

They were somewhere there .

D.A.

That was Coo-ee's was it ? Coo-ee clothing ?

R.Mc.

Yes . The Bargain Arcade were the forerunner of Coles and Woolies and what have you . They were an American mob that came out and took over in the early days and there was another down the west end , where the Gas Company is today . There was a Bargain Arcade there opposite where Young and Green were . They have gone from that area . Near the drain , there used to be a mini golf course there , when it became popular .

D.A.

Down near the Belview Hotel area ?

R.Mc.

Yes , opposite the Royal Theatre . The Royal was there , it's still there . Next to the Royal there used to be a restaurant , the Palais Royal. It used to have dancing and whatever . Behind there we used to walk from the Junction , over there to catch a train to Central School . Honeysuckle Station was there .

D.A.

That is where the goods yard and all that are .
They had a station there ?

R.Mc.

Honeysuckle Station . There used to be a lawn
mower , Taylors , I have an idea they were there .
But as kids going to school there was , I forget
how it went . What's a name , used to do repairs
to wringer rollers and things like that .

D.A.

Yes , the old washing machines .

R.Mc.

I heard a kid recite it . They had an ad at the
back , when you went past in the train you would
see it . It used to have , if I can remember it ,
it used to have , how it used to go . Wringer
rollers , wringer rollers re rubbered , meat bars,
that was the bars around the butcher shop and
roller hooks . They used to roll around the.
Then it had , meat bars and roller hooks , sulky
tyres re fitted , pickle tanks and benches .

D.A.

Dear oh dear , that is fantastic .

R.Mc.

That was the ad .

D.A.

On the back of the building . That is amazing .

R.Mc.

I suppose it covered the operation .

D.A.

Yes , the whole story was there in one sign . That is great . Ray I believe we could go on for hours with this , but unfortunately we have come to the end of our time and I would just like to thank you for all of your help and co-operation in this , because it has been really good and I really appreciate it .

R.Mc.

I enjoyed it .

D.A.

Thank you .

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R. No Donagh

SIGNED:

6th August 1989

DATE:

INTERVIEWER: