

This is a conversation with Mr Les Sternbeck, the oldest resident of Murray's Run, taken on September 2, 1989 about his life in Murray's Run.

Margie: Les, how long have you lived in Murray's Run?

Les: 75 years.

M: How many children were there in your family?

L: 11 in my family like brothers and sisters. 11 altogether.

M: Six sisters and five boys.

M: And where were you in there? Were you the youngest?

L: The fourth youngest and the youngest boy.

M: How did your family come to own this property?

L: My grandfather used to own it but then handed it down to my father and then down from my father to me.

M: And what was your grandfather's name?

L: Mathew Thomson Sternbeck.

M: And did he buy the land from the original Murray who owned all this?

L: I just don't know that. It used to be owned by a lot of landholders before my grandfather. My great grandfather owned some of the land, that was George Sternbeck. And a lot of selections was taken up in different people's names. But there was a lot of people living here before grandfather because the old map shows there was a lot of portions of different names - Mitchells and Bellamys and a lot of people. I just don't know how our grandfather, who he bought it off in the first place.

M: And how many acres did your grandfather own or your father here?

L: 2,500 acres, 74 acres in the Bucketty Arm area.

M: Did your grandfather own more than that before your father or was it all the same property just passed on?

L: No, it was all the same property.

M: And where did you go to school Les?

L: A private school up on the property.

M: On your property?

L: Up the road, what would it be, about 400-500 yards up the road from the home here, where those camphor laurel trees are.

M: And did your family build the schoolhouse?

L: Yes, Dad and the neighbours, the McKays built it between them. Yes, it was a private subsidised school.

- M: And who went to the school? All the children in the valley here?
- L: Not all. All the McKays went to school there, our family the Sternbeck family and the Nichols family and at one stage some of the Thomsons from down at Wollombi went to school there for a time there was her Dad's sister's children and she died the children came up here to stop and went to school here for a time.
- M: And how many children would have gone to the school when you attended?
- L: Well , it ran up at the most 16 at one stage there.
- M: And do you know when the school was established, what year?
- L: No, I just don't know when it was established but the second teacher I was went to school at the second teacher at the school, Maggie Kennedy and I was four years old when I started going to school. So it would be roughly 1910 or something round about 1909 because I think we would be because my oldest brother was 86 and he went to school there.
- M: And what do you remember about Maggie Kennedy, the teacher, was she married?
- L: Not at that time she wasn't. I don't remember a lot. She used to live over at Wyong Creek, she used to ride out to McKays on a horse, a big chestnut, stop there over the week like through the week and then ride back over at the weekends.
- M: So she lived with the McKay family.
- L: Yes, she lived with the McKay family. But there was another teacher before that I didn't hear of until my brother, my oldest brother, told me I just forget what name it was now.
- M: Do you remember the teacher after Maggie Kennedy?
- L: Yes, yes, she was the only teacher.
- M: Oh, she was the only one. So she was your teacher from the time you were about four until you left school?
- L: Yes, well she came here about 1920 and the school closed what, about 1937 I think it was.
- M: And why was the school closed?
- L: All the children had grown up and there was no other children coming on.
- M: And what happened to the school house?
- L: One of the McKay's sons pulled it down and shifted it out to Ellalong for building it for a garage or something.

- L: It was privately owned, McKays and my father owned it.
It was only a one-room school.
- M: Was it a slab?
- L: No, weatherboard.
- M: And boys and girls went there?
- L: Yes.
- M: And they both did the same lessons?
- L: Yes. The teacher was first class to sixth class. There was no high school.
- M: And so what age did you leave school?
- L: Fourteen.
- M: And then what did you do when you left school?
- L: I worked on the farm.
- M: And what sort of farms did you have, do you have?
- L: Dairy farm, we used to grow a lot of feed ffor the cows in the winter. Corn, sorghum and oats and that for the winter. feed, to make silage for the winter.
- M: And from what age did you start hand-milking the cow?
How old were you when you milked them?
- L: I'd be about 9 or 10. We put the machines in 1925, I would be 11 then. I milked a lot of cows by hand before I went to school, but I'd be about nine or ten when I milked them.
- M: And how many cows did you milk before you went to school?
- L: Oh, I milked up to 25 in the morning.
- M: You're a good milker.
- L: We were milking about 110 at the time.
- M: So this was a large dairy farm, because I read at Wyong, one of the dairy farms there had 90 cows and that was considered a large farm. So you were even larger at the time.
- L: Yes, we milked 110 when we put the machines in.
- M: Anyone else have dairy cattle here at the time?
- L: McKays, they had dairy cattle, yes they dairied.
- M: And how many cows did they have?
- L: Oh, they used to milk about 70 - 80 in the summertime, but didn't dairy much in the winter. They didn't in the early days. They only dairied in the summer.
- M: Why was that?
- L: I don't know but they didn't grow the feed until the later years and then they started.
- M: And you always grew.

- L: Yes, we always grew and dairied right through the winter. We didn't milk as many cows through the winter as what we did through the summer.
- M: So you milked the cows for milk and cream?
- L: Yes, for the cream, yes.
- M: Just for cream.
- L: Just cream yes.
- M: And what sort of cows did you have?
- L: We had the Illawarra shorthorns.
- M: And where did you take the cream?
- L: To the, it was taken to the Wyong Butter Factory and then later we transferred to Cessnock and then to Raymond Terrace.
- M: How did you transport the cream?
- L: Well, we used to take it over the mountain in a buggy in the early days, two horses in a buggy. And we'd catch the lorry over there at Braithwaites and the lorry used to come over there to pick it up three times a week, twice in the winter.
- M: How did you keep the cream from going off in summer?
- L: We used to have sometimes a cooler, a dripping safe to put it in.
- M: And what was that like?
- L: Well, it was made out of hessian, and the water to it, the water drips down over it to keep it wet.
- M: You used to leave the cream at the Braithwaites property. Were there those cream boxes by the side of the road?
- L: Yes, there was a cream stand there by the side of the road.
- M: And you would leave it there and they would come up from Wyong Creek. And when did you transport it by a vehicle other than the buggy?
- L: Dad, well when I milked for a time, then after to Wyong factory, Dad bought a truck, a 30 cwt truck and he used to cart it right through to the factory for a time. The milk twice a day to the factory, morning and afternoon, but we were on that for some time, I just don't know how long but a few years.
- M: And how long did it take you by buggy in the early days, from here to Braithwaites over Brush Creek.
- L: Oh, it used to take about, I think it used to take about an hour to go over, eight mile, four mile this side and four mile the other side. A sixteen mile trip.
- M: And did you and the MacKays go together or take it in turn?

- L: Yes, the MacKays did it one week and my brother did it the next week.
- M: And when you took it up to Cessnock in the early days, was that by buggy too?
- L: No, by truck.
- M: You didn't do that until your father got a truck.
- L: Yes, that's right. It wasn't changed over until we got a truck. We used to take it to Laguna House then. My father owned the property at Laguna House. My two older brothers were there. That was the milk lorry that used to come up there and pick it up
- M: And round about what year is this Les?
- L: He bought Laguna House in 1928, it would be round about that time that we changed over to Cessnock. Well, we used to go to Cessnock then at that particular time. Round about 1928.
- M: When you grew the crops here for winter, did you sell the crops from here or did you grow them for your own use?
- L: No, we just grew them for our own use.
- M: Did you have a problem with any pests or wildlife in the early days with the crops?
- L: In later years we did, by growing corn and that with the wombats. They used to go in and chew it down, they would spoil it if you was leaving corn to ripen they would fall a lot of the corn, chew it off at the bottom and spoil a lot of it. They'd eat the corn off the stalk.
- M: And were there any other pests?
- L: The wallabies were in the gully area, not around about close they weren't. In the gully area they used to eat a bit but not like the wombats.
- M: What about cockatoos?
- L: Yes, we used to have a few cockatoos. Not that bad.
- M: And what did you do about the pests?
- L: Well at one stage we had to poison the wombats, that's the only thing. We used to scare the cockatoos off with the, you know, fire a shot or two at them to frighten them off. But other than that ...
- M: And what sort of poisons did you use?
- L: For the wombats it was strichnine. You had to be careful where you put it otherwise you'd poison the cattle.

M: And what about insects on the crops? Did you use any pesticides or anything in the early days?

L: No, we never used any sprays in those days. The only one pest we did have in the very early days, on the corn was the black beetle. It would eat the corn before it, as soon as it would come up out of the ground. There used to be a lot of black beetle, we did have to treat the corn. Some powder they used to buy to put on it before we put it in so that it would kill the beetles. That's the only thing we had that used to be a pest.

M: And what about the cows? What sort of illnesses did they used to get?

L: Well, there was only one - of calves - mainly it was the black leg in those days. We used to inoculate them with garlic soaked in the virus and put the garlic in the split in the tails. That's the only cure we had in those days.

M: And what about ticks, were they a problem along here?

L: No, there was no problem. There used to be ticks, but they were no problem.

M: Did you later on?

L: We did have, the only time about four years ago. We had to spray our calves. We had two calves paralysed with ticks. We got the vet out and needled them and they saved them but they were paralysed from Saturday down to the Wednesday before they got up on their feet again.

M: Any vets come out in the early days?

L: Yes, pretty early days we had a vet used to come out. I forget now. It would be in the early twenties - it could have been earlier than that. It would be in the early twenties.

M: Did you have inspectors on the dairy farms, did they come and inspect your bales at all?

L: Yes, well that was, mainly in the early days that was the local policeman's job. He used to come round and inspect then he would come round and collect the registry fee every year and that was the local policeman's job in those days.

M: So you used to pay health fees to the policeman?

L: It was registered as a dairy, I just forget now, but we used to in those days fill our form in every year. But that was the local policeman's job.

M: And up until what time would that have been, when did that cease?

- L: It probably would have been the late twenties.
- M: And then health inspectors, Government inspectors took over?
- L: Yes, the health inspector then from Cessnock.
- M: And when you said the milking machines came in, in the late twenties was it you changed over?
- L: We put them in in 1925, we were about the first ones in the district.
- M: And did you have to maintain them, or the company you bought them from?
- L: The company maintained them that we bought them from.
- M: Do you remember the name of the company?
- L: I remember, it was Simplex - Simplex Milking Machines. The company's manager's name was Charlie Goodman. A good man from Maitland. They used to come out and service the motor every twelve months. We used to buy all our spare parts through him.
- M: And did you have any other services come out here?
- L: No, not mainly, not in those days the early days.
- M: Where did you get your mail from?
- L: Our mail used to come from Laguna post office. We used to go, we used to pick it when we would take our cream down for the night. Laguna House - the milkman used to - the truck driver - they used to give it to him and he'd bring it up to Laguna House.
- M: Is that from Sydney - he used to bring the mail from Sydney?
- L: No Cessnock - it used to come from Cessnock, Wollombi, to Laguna.
- M: Did you have any hawkers come along here selling things?
- L: Yes. Oh yes there used to be a few over the years. The first old - Charlie Ramekin, an old Indian. He used to come through.
- M: What did he sell?
- L: Oh, different stuff, clothing and everything he used to have. And then, oh what's his name, Jaygred - I can't think of his christian name. He used to come round about every - he was in a car and he used to have mainly clothing and all sorts of clothing - about every month. He'd done it for years. His Brother, well the family, has still got a shop in Cessnock. I don't know, you might know much about Cessnock?
- M: No, I'll look it up.
- L: They've got the shop at Dixon Street. A mixed shop, records and all sorts of things like that.

M: So they used to come out about once a month.

L: Yes, the one brother used to come out once a month and go all around the district. He used to mainly stop at McKays and when he came up this area, overnight and then go off next morning again.

M: And any other hawkers you can recall?

L: Not permanent ones - there may have been, oh but they were the permanent ones that used to come regular. We also had our groceries delivered every month from Wollombi up - Ern Willis used to deliver them. He had the grocery shop in Wollombi.

M: About what year are we talking about now?

L: He used to in the early days. He used to deliver, oh very early, in the twenties. Ern Willis.

M: so, in your father's time there were still people delivering?

L: My father lived here then when he was still delivering. In fact he delivered here after he left here. And then when Ern Willis finished there was another grocer that delivered from Wollombi. The grocer in Wollombi that delivered for a while was Jack Hawkins - he delivered up here for a time.

M: And when did you get the telephone on in Murray's Run?

L: 1933 the line was put through here, in Murray's Run, through to the McKays.

M: So you and the McKays would have been the first people to have the telephone connected?

L: Yes. Yes.

M: And did that come from Cessnock or Wyong?

L: Wollombi, through this way, it came through this way, there was none over the mountain, it ended up in McKays place.

M: Was there a community meeting place in Murray's Run?

L: No, we didn't have any community meeting, they generally used to go to Wollombi Public Hall, the Community Hall as it is the present time.

M: And what did you do for entertainment?

L: Well, I didn't have any entertainment. They did have a tennis court in Murray's Run up on the property here in the early days, but I didn't play it myself but the others used to play. People used to come up here any play on it, you know, different Wollombi area. But I never learned to play myself.

- M: So people would come from Wollombi, this was the only tennis court?
- L: Yes, there was one at Wollombi, afterwards at Laguna, one at Wollombi but they used to come up here and play of a Sunday.
- M: And that was on your property?
- L: Yes, yes it was on our property.
- M: Were there any organised dances or shows that you used to go to during the year?
- L: Yes, we used to go round, mainly never had any here of a - people's places for a dance or a party, you know Wattagan, Dairy Arm and areas and that.
- M: Did you travel into Wollombi for any functions at all?
- L: Yes, I used to go to Wollombi for dances. I'd ride to Wollombi and later some of them used to go in horse and sulky to the dances.
- M: And how long would that take you to ride from here to Wollombi?
- L: Oh, it used to take me an hour and a half, at the time. It takes half an hour in a car today. We used to have pretty good horses though.
- M: And when did your father get his first car or truck?
- L: In, he bought a car second hand, a six-cylinder Buick, er round about 1800 I think it was. 1918 rather.
- M: 1918. So the road would have had to be maintained then, along Murray's Run?
- L: Yes, yes. Yes, well Cessnock Council used tape ends.

Side 2

- M: So Cessnock Council used to maintain the road up as far as Walker's Ridge Road? And how often would they maintain it?
- L: Oh well, they used to maintain it about every three months. Round about every three months. They'd go round all the private roads, well not altogether private roads, the valleys, each one give them a turn. It was run by Cessnock Council, but there was a local gang from Wollombi that used to do it with a horse and cart in those days. And they always camped on the job through the week. They didn't, when they were out here they'd camp all week and they'd go home of a Friday afternoon.

- M: So they'd stay on your property or McKay's property?
- L: Yes, they would stay on our property mainly. You see, McKay's was off the main road. They were off the main road into their property.
- M: Did you employ any other people to work the dairy farm, or did you have any other people stay on your property.
- L: Oh yes, Dad used to employ people to work in the early days. Different ones for the dairy or other bush work, scrubbing or bush work during the winter. He used to employ men.
- M: During the depression or second world war, did you have any tramps coming along here?
- L: Yes, yes. There were plenty of tramps going through here.
- M: Was there?
- L: There was one, Dad gave him a job and he was camped here for nearly twelve months working on the property and going though.
- M: So you would see them regularly going through from Wyong to Cessnock or the other way? This was a main thoroughfare?
- L: That's right. There was no road round Bucketty in those days, the Kulnura road, there was no road to Kulnura. It was only put through there when the last world war, while the war was on that road was done through there.
- M: Oh, so this was quite a busy road then, in fact?
- L: Yes, this was the only road through from Wollombi to Wyong, down through the brush.
- M: Brush Creek Road?
- L: Mm.
- M: Did anyone have an inn or accommodation for people passing through?
- L: Not in Murray's Run. In Laguna there was, in the early days, Laguna and Wollombi there was, but not in this area.
- M: And did the depression or the second world war, did it change your life at all?
- L: Oh, er.
- M: You were probably too young in the depression, weren't you?
- L: I was ..
- M: Fourteen or sixteen?

L: No, the second world war I was, er, used to train in the Light Horse, V and D C every Saturday, while the 1938 '45 I used to train, we used to ride from here to Wollombi, we used to train, our captain was at Wollombi, he lived at Wollombi, I don't know what you'd call er, Captain, yes, I think they called him, we used to train er, we used to go to different other areas. One weekend we went to Newcastle, another weekend we went to Cessnock Showground and camped. We used to train in the Light Horse but we didn't have to go anywhere, but like what I mean is .. er

M: In service. And was that because you were a producer here?

L: Yes, they called, they wanted Light Horse training in the area, there was a good few of us, I just forget now, around about 20 of us there would have been.

M: And who else went from Murray's Run?

L: I was the only one from Murray's Run, others were from Laguna, my brother, one brother from Laguna and the rest from around Wollombi and Wattagan.

M: Do you remember your father or grandfather talking about Aborigines in the area? at all?

L: No, Dad never talked about Aborigines, not as I recall.

M: And were there any cave paintings?

L: There were a lot of markings around different places in Murray's Run. Some round here on this property.

M: That's near the house here?

L: Yes. Oh, different markings. Sketches of hands and kangaroos, and different sketches in the caves.

M: On your rides after your cattle, you came across quite a few?

L: Yes, different places. But this one is just around here, a cave here, about 100 yards from the house.

M: Was that used for anything in your time?

L: Not now, we used to use it for a pigsty under the cave. We had it fenced off for a pigsty. I never realised they were there until a chap came looking about four or five years ago. I used to be there every morning feeding the pigs and I never knew they were there.

M: so they were up high and you didn't know...

L: No, not very high, they're not very high up, they're not real clear, but you can see them, they are there.

- M: Have you noticed any changes in the wildlife over the years, along here? Anything that you used to see but you don't anymore?
- L: The dingoes, well we don't see, they're cross-bred dingoes now you don't see the pure-bred dingoes. But used to be around when I was young but nowadays the wallabies are, there are a lot more wallabies coming in closer now than what they did in the early days, a lot more wallabies.
- M: Did you used to see many koalas in the early days?
- L: Yes, there used to be a few about but they are a thing of the past now. My daughter seen one up along the road here, oh it would be a few years back now at the top of what we call the top of the Gap, the top of the tar hill there, Marshall's place, along front of Marshall's. Saw one there, they had to get out and shift it off the road. It was on the road there one night, oh that would be a few years ago now. It would have been 10 years ago now (?17 years ago).
- M: And what about the bird life? Were there any eagles along Murray's Run?
- L: Oh, not a, they're round about the same I think. There were a lot of ducks around, but in the early days, the wood ducks there wasn't many about, there was only the odd pair about but now they come around in hundreds, the wood ducks.
- M: Any animal you can remember seeing a lot more of that you don't now, besides koalas?
- L: Native cats, they used to be a lot, but you don't see them now.
- M: When do you think you saw the last dingo?
- L: Oh, pure-bred dingo? It must have been round about the early 30s I'd say.
- M: And did you have loggers coming in on the property taking any of the timber? Did you have any cedar trees along here?
- L: No there was no cedar.
- M: Just mainly in Yarramalong?
- L: Yes, mainly in the cedar Yarramalong and the Wattagan. The Wattagan mountains was ~~maxxix~~ all cedar in the early days. I don't think there was any cedar, not that I've heard of in Murray's Run.

- M: So did your father ever sell timber, did they ever have timber-getters come in on the property?
- L: Oh, yes, we had timber-getters come in on the property all around it. Yes, pit-props and logs, log-timber. The saw mills from the Yarramalong in the early days used to get it, Freddie Carsons used to get it from the acreage, what we used to call the acreage. Used to get it in the early days with the wagons and the caterpillar.
- M: And how did you come to break this property up, because you said you had 2000 acres? So when did you break the property up?
- L: I had a brother with me in 1972 I think, '72 or '73 when he wanted to retire, so I bought his half out and I sold the back country, the bush country to a developer and bought my brother's half out. I bought it all off him, more or less, and paid him half the money for the property.
- M: So that's now Bucketty Estate up there?
- L: Bucketty No 2. Bucketty No 1 was Nicholls, Len Nicholls down here, his wife Eddy owned Bucketty No 2. McKays used to own it in the early days. They sold it to Nicholls and they sold it the same developer, just before I sold, he was developing out there when I sold him mine. Bucketty No 1 he was starting to develop.
- M: Well, thank you very much Les.

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Name ...

MARGY BARNETT

Course

Open Foundation History

Tuesday 1pm-3pm

Lecturer

MARGARET HENRI.

Research Paper

Murray's Run is a valley on the south arm of the Wollombi Brook in the Cessnock Shire, bounded on the east by Brush Creek leading to Yarramalong Valley thence to Wyong, on the north by the Wattagan and the west by Yungo.

Prior to white settlement the Darkinung tribe lived in this area. Their territory extended southwards to near the Hawkesbury River and east towards Peat's Ridge near Gosford. Their territory bordered the Awabakal tribe on the east, the Wonarua near Singleton and the Kamilaroi on the west of the Divide. The Darkinung shared similar beliefs with the Awabakal with whom they traded regularly. One of their trading routes lead from the headwaters of the Wollombi Brook on to Kulnura which was a popular camping ground, not far from Murray's Run and down to Ourimbah near Gosford.¹ These two tribes have left advanced forms of cave paintings and rock carvings. This appears to have been a most important spiritual area for surrounding tribes.²

In Murray's Run there are some unusual and controversial sites. One of these has been named 'Maiden Defloration Cave' where there are charcoal drawings depicting various male and female figures with enlarged sexual organs, some apparently in the act of sexual intercourse. According to historian Mr P L Haslam the cave is the only site in the Hunter Region depicting women's ceremonial law.³ Another cave referred to by researchers as 'immoral or fornication cave' is a sandstone overhang at the top of a cliff and in the middle of the cave is a piece of fallen rock the shape of a mushroom or anvil and is questioned whether it was used as a couch for ceremonial significance or sexual encounter outside tribal law.⁴

Murray's run is believed to be where Aboriginal women held their initiation ceremonies. Early settlers were reported to have seen lines of women walking the mountain area but not being aware of the implication of this sporadic appearance of women from more than one tribe.⁵

There are also unconfirmed burial grounds in Murray's Run. Some sites have been vandalised. In less than one hundred years the Aboriginal population of the area was decimated; in the 1860's blanket distribution at Wollombi only numbered 14 and by 1889 there were none.⁶ In the adjacent valley to Murray's Run, Yarramalong Valley, the last Aborigines were Bumble and his wife Mary who died in 1870.⁷

1 Needham W J Burrigurra- The Aboriginal relics of the Cessnock-Wollombi Region in the Hunter Valley of NSW Adamstown, 1981. Introduction p 14

2. Coaldust May, 1986.

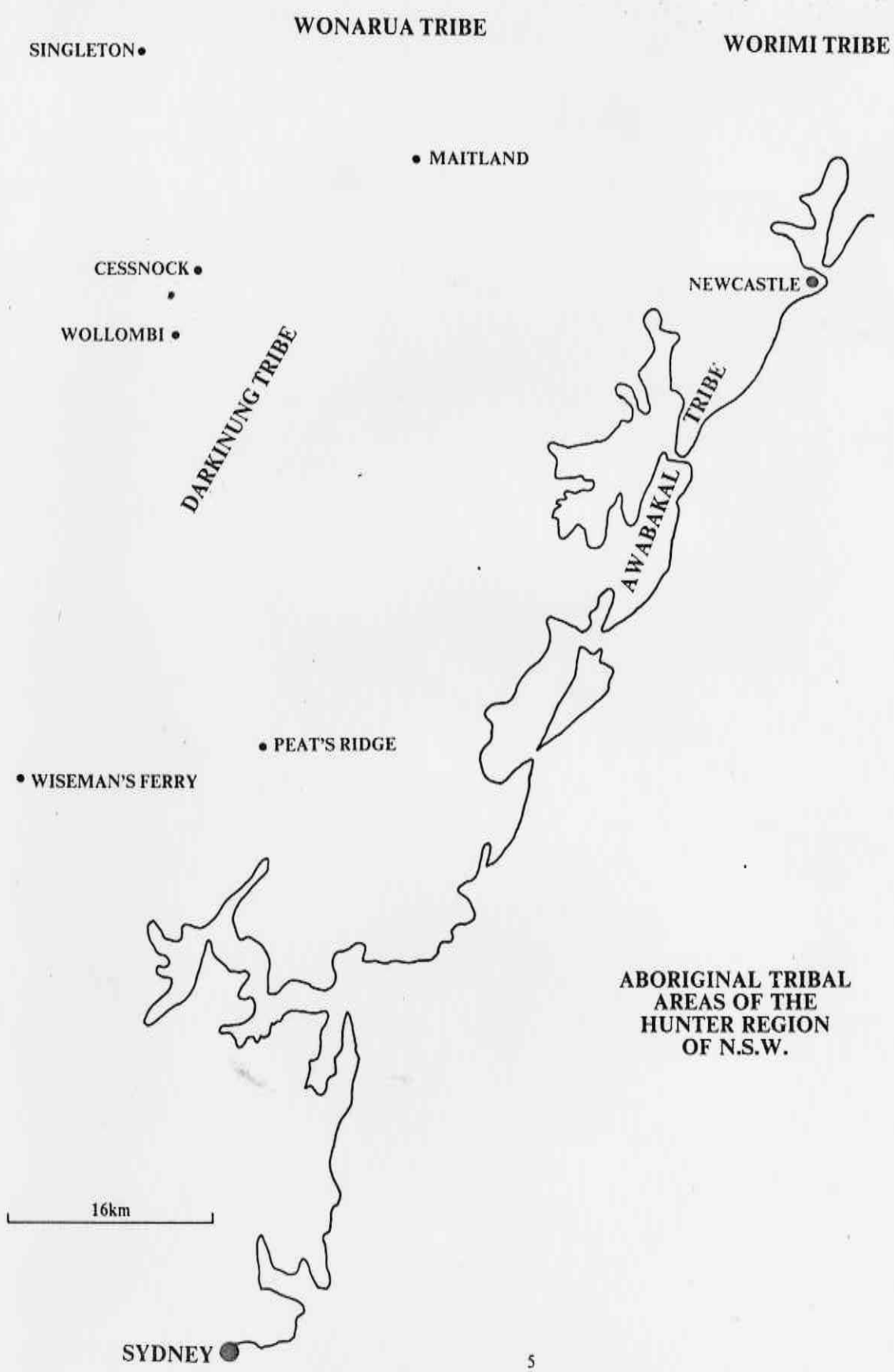
3. Newcastle Herald, 5th Nov, 1982.

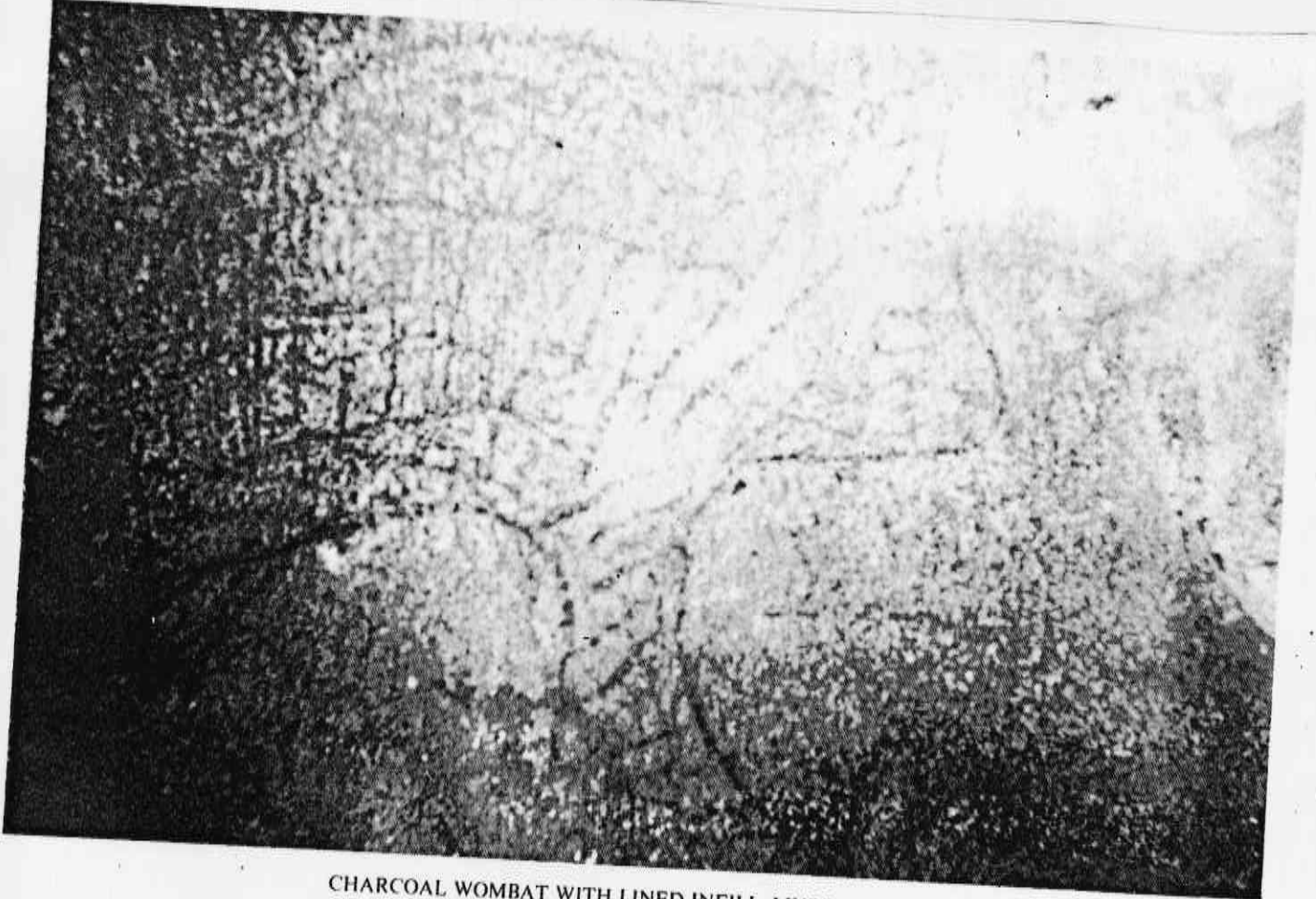
4. Newcastle Morning Herald 26th April, 1980.

5. Newcastle Morning Herald 26 th Sept, 1975.

6. Miller J Koori Will to Win

7 Stinson E A Pictorial History of Wyong Shire, Vol 1
Wyong 1979. P12





CHARCOAL WOMBAT WITH LINED INFILL, MURRAY'S RUN

21

Photo: Author

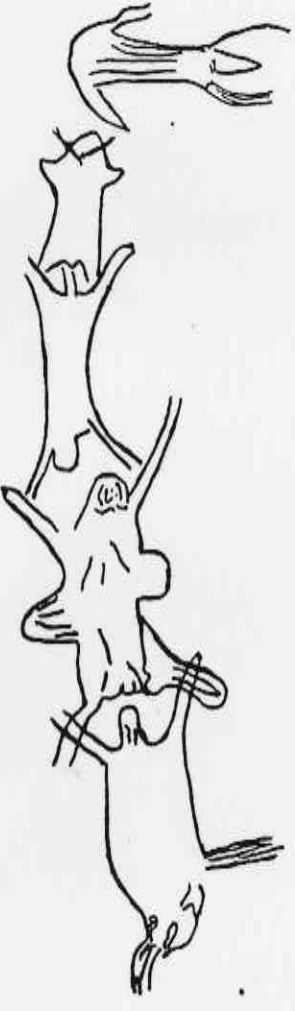
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CHART OF THE MAIDEN DEFLOURATION CAVE AT MURRAY'S RUN

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From

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P 19.

Murray's Run was named after Andrew Murray. He was a nephew of Sir Walter Scott and son of David Murray of Greenwells, Scotland. He arrived in the colony in 1817 with references to the governor. He befriended James Milson who shared Murray's horticultural interests. They became brothers-in-law, Andrew married Eleanor Kilpack and Milson married her sister Elizabeth. Murray became overseer of Government gardens at Parramatta in 1821.⁸

In the 1820's there were severe droughts and in December 1822 Andrew Murray and Milson took up land as relief country where pastures were suitable for agistment. Blaxland, Milson and Murray had set out from Castle Hill accompanied by six assigned servants, searching for pastures suitable for cattle. They swam their herd across the Hawkesbury River and about twenty miles ^{past} the crossing, Murray's stock was left behind in the area now bearing his name. They drove the remaining cattle northwards to areas now called Milson's Arm and Blaxland's Arm and onto the fertile areas around Wollombi. Discoveries around this region saved the stock from starvation, and Murray's Run was used as relief pasture for many years.

Murray was granted several portions of land in this area as well as land in Pennant Hills, what is now Beecroft, in 1823. In 1827 he was appointed superintendent of Carters Barracks in Sydney and managed the cultivation of the government garden. He had a residence in the proximity of the present Central Railway Station. After Carters Barracks were abolished Murray was given two career options by the government, both of which he found unsatisfactory. After disputes over a retirement allowance, he eventually retired in 1838. He bought a further 155 acres east of his land in Beecroft. A house in Murray's Farm Road is supposed to date to this time. He died in 1858 and is buried in St John's cemetery in Parramatta.¹⁰

Early settlers, particularly from the Macdonald and Mangrove Creek were attracted to the headwaters of the southern arm of the Wollombi Brook, partly because the area of Murray's Run lay close enough to keep in contact with relatives and friends from these areas and also it was easier to acquire land here than downstream.¹¹

⁸ .Hornsby Historical Society

Pioneers of the Hornsby Shire
Sydney, 1979. P.54

9.

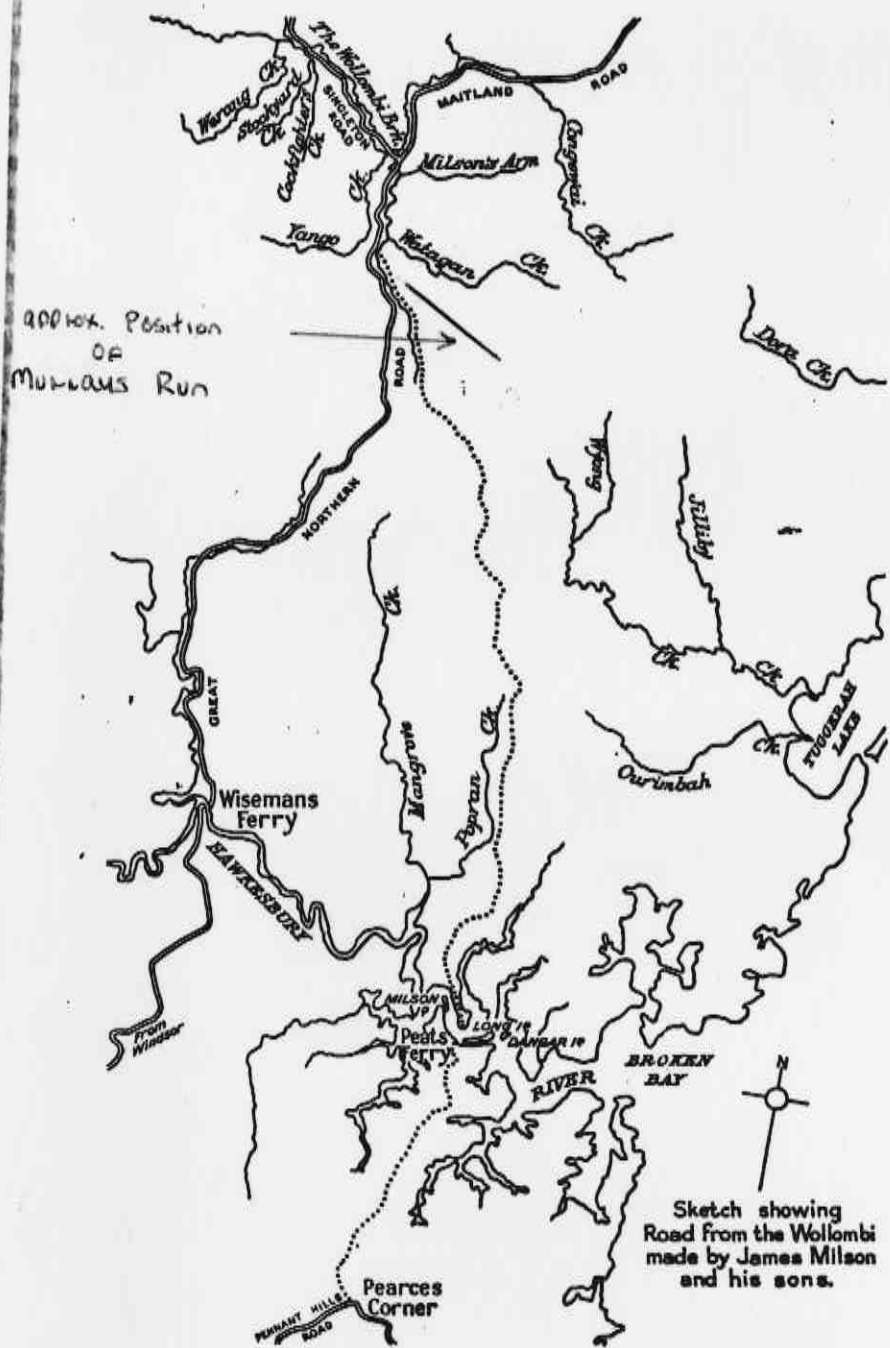
Extracts of the life of James
Milson of Milson's Arm, Wollombi

10.

Pioneers.....P56--

11. Parkes W S

Mines, Wines and People, Cessnock 197



From Extracts of Life of James Milson...

Thus ,some of the STernbeck family came across the Great Divide from North Portland and bought large portions of land near Wollombi and a section of the Great Northern Road to Murray's Run turnoff. George Sternbeck (son of Christian Sternbeck who came to the colony in 1802) purchased a major portion of land granted to Andrew Murray. The Sternbecks went on to acquire about 4,288 acres in all and approximately 2,500 in Murray's Run.

Other families to acquire land in this area were the Mckays, Nicols, G Goldsmith, brothers William and Joseph Clarke and their brother in-law James Bellamy, a portion of whose land was to become the site of Murray's Run public school. 12

There were two schools ,one as recalled in the accompanying tape, by Les Sternbeck, great grandson of George Sternbeck. This was a private subsidised school on the family property. Schools of this classification were not regarded as government schools although the Department of Education did pay a subsidy for each pupil and parents, ^{were} required to supply buildings and teacher. The other school recorded was a provisional school from March 1877-November 1883. Schools were categorised as such when there were more than fifteen children and less than twenty five. In the 1880's this changed to a minimum of twelve and in 1898 to a minimum of ten children. Parents were required to supply building and furniture and the Dept. of Education paid for the teacher and books. This school changed status in November 1883 to a public school and eventually closed in February 1898. 13

12. Parkes

Mines, Wines, P68

13. Fletcher and Burnswood.

Govt Schools of NSW 1848-1983

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I, Leslie Albert Sternbeck give my
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to use this interview, or part of this interview, for
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Signed L. A. Sternbeck

Date 3/9/89

Interviewer Margy Barnes

INTERVIEWEE:	MR LES STERNBECK
INTERVIEWER:	MARGY BARNETT
SUBJECT OF INTERVIEW:	LIFE IN MURRAY'S CRUISE
DATE:	3 SEPT 1989
DOCUMENT AVAILABLE	

NUMBER

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Name
Course

Margy Barnett
Open Foundation Australian History

Tuesday 1pm-3pm

Lecturer

Margaret Henry

Assignment

Interview
Summary of Interview

Research Paper

Topic

An interview with Mr L Sternbeck
concerning his life in Murray's
Run.

This is interview with Mr Les Sternbeck taken on 3rd of Sept., 1989, concerning his life in Murray's Run.

Les Sternbeck's family have lived here for six generations. the original family home, a sturdy slab cottage built of possibly ironbark or white mahogany, in 1838 by Les's great grandfather, George Sternbeck, is still in use today. It is the only remaining slab residence in the valley.

Les was one of eleven children. His mother died when the youngest child was six weeks old. The household duties and child rearing were left to the older sisters. Les recalls his days at school which was situated on the family property. It was built by 'Uncle Jack Mckay' and Les's father and was attended by children of neighbouring families; the Nicols and Mckays and a number of 'state boys'. Les's father owned three farms; one in Wyong, Blaxland's Arm and Murray's Run. He also owned Laguna House about 1928 and worked on Brush Creek road before 1902, when it was a main thoroughfare to Wyong.

Les recalls changes in the dairy industry, from handmilking before he went to school, to the introduction of milking machines in 1925. He describes changes in administration of dairy farms and the shift from home remedies such as homegrown garlic for cattle illnesses, to the dependency on veterinary surgeons. He also recalls other services such as travelling hawkers, the advent of the telephone in 1933, electricity in 1966 and the movement of tramps when Murray's Run road was a main route to Wyong.

Les describes the evolution of transport from droving cattle and pigs to Wyong where they were sent to the Sydney markets by rail. He has fond memories of the vehicles bought by the family. The family's 30cwt truck which transported approximately ten calves or 'porkers' to market and cream to Brush Creek and Laguna where it was picked up by a carrier. His father also bought a six cylinder Buick in 1918, a Nash in 1928 and a Nash in 1938. Les's first car was a 10 hp Austin which he used to drive to the fortnightly dance at Wollombi, loaded with neighbours. The dances, Sunday tennis matches and church were the extent of recreation in the life of a hard working dairy family.

Les recalls Dan Langham maintained the road for many years. He was a resident of Wattagan and used two draught horses, cart, plough and scoop and was in charge of a tractor for many years, before Cessnock Council graders took over.

For Les and his wife, Flo, days began very early. He would set off at 4am to get the cattle ready for milking. Flo would arrive at the bails about one hour later, sometimes with the children, to help milk the cows.



Sternbeck's slab cottage built in 1838.



VIEW OF MUNDAY'S RUN

It took her one and a half to two hours ~~morning~~ and afternoon to drive children to the nearest school at Laguna. This she ^{did} ~~did~~, for twelve years on a hazardous dirt road. As a supplementary fodder crop was grown, evenings, after dinner were spent 'chaffing up feed'.

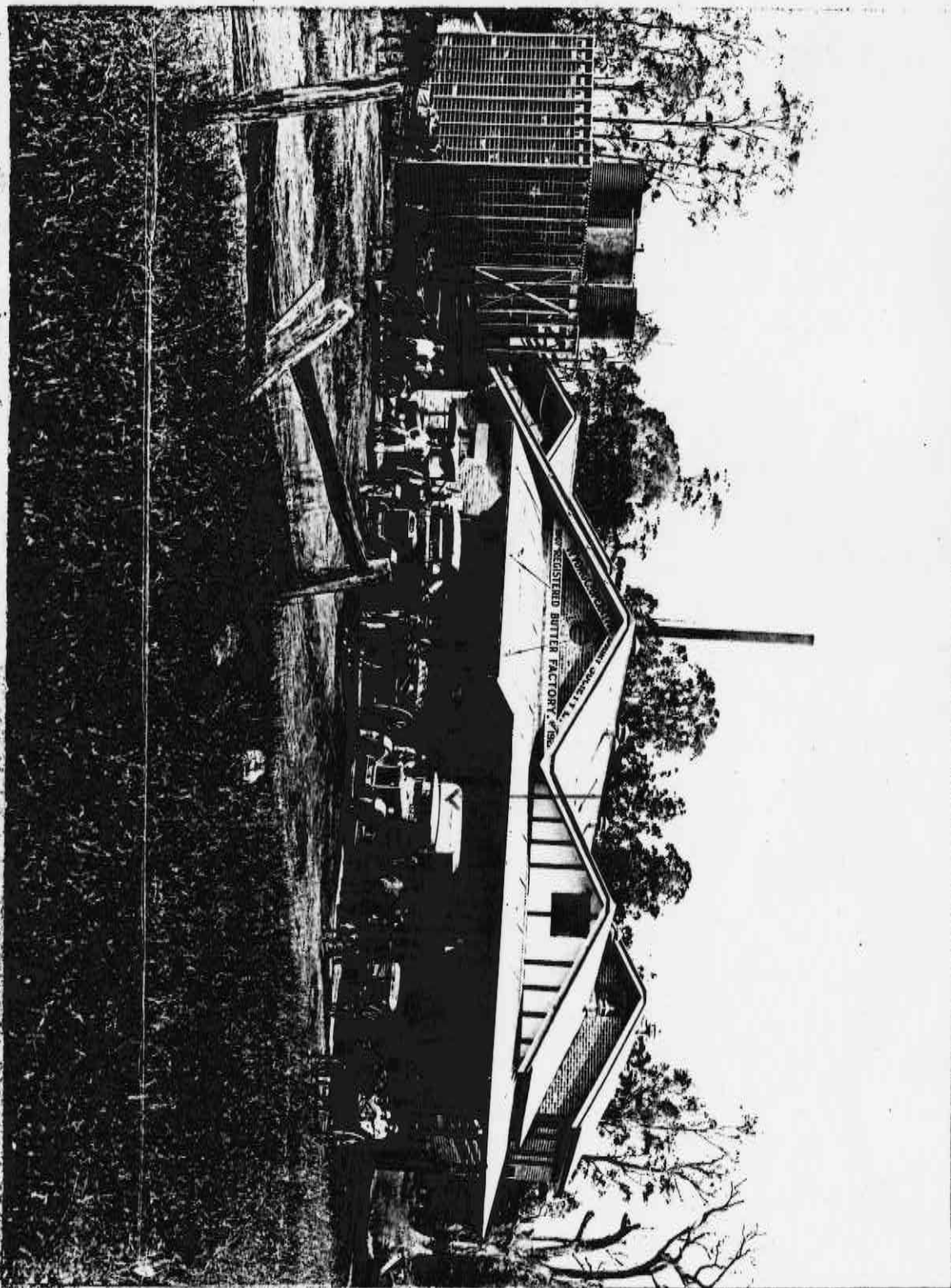
Les recalls disasters in Murray's Run; a flood in 1949 when cows could not be milked for days. Fortunately the terrain is such that the cows could escape flood waters, to high ground, with little or no casualties. He remembers a fire at Laguna in 1925 but the biggest fire was in 1965. The worst drought he recollects, he had to drive cattle (100) to agistment pastures at Ravensworth, near Denham, where the cattle stayed for thirteen weeks and it rained not long after.

The area is rich in fauna and has been logged over the years. Les describes ^{changes} in wildlife and what were considered pests to the farmer. He also relates how his property was subdivided and sold to a developer in 1974 leaving ^{him} with 800 acres. Today, Les and Flo's three children all live within a few kilometres of them. Of the pioneer families there are still descendants of the Nicol and Mckay families.

Note

Some of this information will not be found on the tape but was taken from notes prior and after interview.

Wyong butter factory showing the Sternbeck truck



SUMMARY