

TRANSCRIPT OF TAPED INTERVIEW WITH MR ARTHUR DODD  
ON THE HISTORY OF MR. DODD'S RETAILING AND MANUFACTURING  
CAREER IN THE TAILORING AND DRY CLEANING TRADE.

SUBJECT: AUSTRALIAN HISTORY - OPEN FOUNDATION

LECTURER: MARGARET HENRY

TIME: TUESDAY 1PM - 3PM

INTERVIEWER: GAIL HILL

INTERVIEWEE: MR. ARTHUR DODD

INTERVIEW DATE: 14TH AUGUST, 1989

DUE DATE: 25TH AUGUST, 1989

Interviewer; I'm speaking to Mr. Arthur Dodd who for 42 years as owner of Arthur Dodd & Co. Pty Ltd. was a prominent retailer and manufacturer of clothing in Newcastle and the Hunter Valley. Alongside his retailing business he also had many Dry Cleaning outlets.

Interviewer: Mr. Dodd did you serve an apprenticeship as a tailor?

Mr. Dodd: Yes I did. I served an apprenticeship with George Henderson the tailors at the Cnr. Hunter and Newcomen Sts. Newcastle. I started at the age of fourteen in 1919 and served five years apprenticeship. During that time we would sit on the table with our legs crossed and sew from the knee. This expression "made on the knee" came from the way we used to sew. Today, of course they sit on a chair.

After I left Henderson's I went to Melbourne. Melbourne at that time was the place to go to gain more knowledge. I picked places to work and learnt how to run a workroom and went to cutting school by night and after working at other places for sometime I was out of work and I thought if I could get work from other tailors I could put together my experience having learnt what I did there and the only way I could do it was to have my own premises to rent or rather rent premises and there was a shop in Exhibition St. Melbourne and I got work from other tailors and I put into practice what I had learnt from them and during that time there was a play called "Rosemarie" on in the Exhibition Theatre, which was only a few doors away. I made a suit for a chap, an actor, named Reginald Denning and he was very pleased with it and he asked me could I alter the actors costumes - ladies and gents and I said "What do you want me to do with them?" He said "lengthen or shorten or other incidental matters", so I thought all right I haven't seen these things before but putting it that way I feel I could do it. I got that busy between the work I was getting from other tailor's and the costumes for "Rosemarie" and I was very busy and when that finished - "Rosemarie" the work I was getting was just enough to keep me going and I had to put the tailor off that I employed to help me during that time. I battled along for a while when a chappy came along and asked me did I know of any places that he could rent in the area. I said I didn't know and he said "what about yours, would you sell it?" I said I would think about it. We came to terms. I only had about fifty pounds worth of machinery there at the time and he said "well put a price on it". I said give me one hundred and fifty pounds and its all yours". He did that and he wanted to open a restaurant of course on the premises. So I went back to Sydney and I was there for some time.

Interviewer; Why did you go to Sydney Mr. Dodd?.

Mr. Dodd: I wanted to get more experience in Sydney in there factories too. You know, everywhere had different systems, some for making a suit at a price that people could afford to pay. In those days the Depression was on. The worst Depression we had had in Australia and the suits had to be made according to what people could afford to pay. We made them in different grades.

Interviewer: After Sydney, what did you do from there?

Mr. Dodd: I came back to Newcastle and started work in a little shop in Darby St. but I wasn't happy there and went to a location upstairs, next door to Winns. At this time I met my wife who I married some years later. I met this beautiful girl. She was very pretty girl and she was the one I wanted to marry and that came years later.

Interviewer: Did you stay at those premises near Winns for very long Mr. Dodd?

Mr. Dodd: No, I wasn't there very long when there was quite a number of tailors in Newcastle who sent their work to be made in Sydney and I was approached to make work for them, so I did a couple of suits. It was big business, so I said "all right", so I opened up opposite the Palais, upstairs. The premises weren't big and at that time I was making for separate tailor's who sent their work to Sydney previously and I worked day and night and of course I got very tired of that because I wasn't making any money or very little anyhow, so I decided that that was enough and I decided then to open up my own shop dealing direct with the public.

Interviewer: Where did you open the shop?

Mr. Dodd: I opened it at the Bank Corner or what's commonly known as the Bank Corner and I started there and after I had been there two years things started to really pick up and I was doing well. I decided to have an efficiency expert come in to advise on labour saving machinery in the workroom and tailoring and we put in many kinds of machines on the workbench for the tailoring side and we acquired a new pressing machine. At that time we were employing four pressers using the hand iron and this pressing machine was just the answer. We put the four pressers off and it worked a lot better.

Interviewer: So, with those new pressing machines could you do the pressing yourself?

Mr. Dodd: We done the pressing with the pressing machine. All the work. During that time there was a young man named Wal Grayson, who was a very good presser. He said to me "Why don't you start brushing and pressing the suits while you wait for an appointment with the businessman?" which I did. We had a very good response and then of course they asked me could I dry clean them. Well at that time we didn't have a dry cleaning press but the demand was so great that we put in a little dry cleaning plant. As you know we were in Maitland. I paid rent there.

Interviewer: So after you opened in Newcastle West Mr. Dodd did you open in Maitland soon after?

Mr. Dodd: Yes, in the tailoring side. The tailoring up there went very well.

Interviewer: After your marriage did Mrs Dodd play a major part in the business?

Mr. Dodd: When I was married. I married two years after I started in Hunter St. West and I asked her if she would like to play a part in the business. Well she came and had all the enthusiasm about the place. She was in the office. She played a big part in the office. At that time she wore a beautiful tailored costume. She was the right figure for it. She had a 22inch waist, lovely square shoulders - beautiful girl. When the ladies

came in to buy a costume they would say "I'd like it like Mrs Dodd's.

Interviewer: Everybody that came in wouldn't have been the same size as Mrs Dodd!

Mr. Dodd: We had a lot of difficulty there. Had a lot of difficulty. They'd pick the style from a fashion plate and say that they'd like to look like Mrs Dodd. Sometimes I'd think "now, how am I going to do that", because, some of them were very short, very fat, you just couldn't do it. You just had to do the best you could.

Interviewer: Did the war years affect your business?

Mr. Dodd: Ah yea! The war years were such that we had to close a lot of avenues of our business. We had a very nice shop near the Strand Theatre which we had to close down owing to the shortage. Everything just went over for the war for the manufacture of uniforms, air force uniforms, you name it - shirts, trousers and of course we just couldn't get the cloth. It was all confined to the war. We had a very small quota. It just wasn't right to keep these other avenues going. We kept Maitland shop going. At that time it was very small, the shop in itself but the tailoring business was difficult but there again we were rationed and just had to get enough work to keep the particular shop open employing one man at that time.

Interviewer: What about the Dry Cleaning side of the business during the war?

Mr. Dodd: Well the dry cleaning side of the business, that flourished. When the Yanks came here, I should say Americans probably, they were up around the area around Nelson Bay and they used to bring their uniforms down in truck loads and of course I was away at the war myself and it just kept us going. It's a marvellous thing - when we started dry cleaning at that time before the war because it really kept the business going.

Interviewer: When did you go to war Mr. Dodd?

Mr. Dodd: Yes, the war was well on its way, about 4 years before the war was over I enlisted and I was in the army for 2 years. Mrs Dodd carried on the business and did a mighty job. When I came out I wasn't too well for some time, but she carried on and I am very grateful to her for doing all this, but, I got well and I got back into it so I got all my enthusiasm back to keep it going.

Interviewer: Did it take long after the war for the business to pick up?

Mr. Dodd: Yes it took a long time. The dry cleaning was alright. It started to grow rapidly and it helped us along the way. You couldn't get materials for good while after. Not enough to really keep progressing like we would have liked to, but, it did take a long time in that section. However, as time went on it got better and we progressed very fast in both sections - the tailoring and the dry cleaning.

Interviewer: Did you start to advertise at that stage?

Mr. Dodd: Yes, we became very publicity conscious in that time. We first started advertising in the Sun newspaper. Mr. Quinlan, who was mayor of the town at one time, was a young man and a journalist and he said to me "I can write up your ad for you. It will cost you eight pounds for a half page". He wrote it up and we got a response from there. Then I thought to myself that I would like to advertise on the wireless, so I purchased the wireless adds and I advertised the racing session with an add on before and after each race and the response was terrific. The man who was doing it was terrific as a racing commentator and also as an advertiser, putting the message over good and clear. Bill Hemsley was his name and when he finished and left the station Billy Hill, yeah, God love him, he did a terrific job. We became very friendly, and the advertising became very big and the response was great.

Interviewer: What about the advertising in the sky?

Mr. Dodd: There was a chap who had a kite sign. It was a kite sign that flew high in the air and with cut out letters and we advertised "Dodds for made on the knee tailoring, with extra trousers free". All that type of advertising, many types of of advertising. There was the little man who taps on the window. Yes, not long after I was trading in Newcastle West I felt that I would like to have a slogan and that slogan was "made on the knee". Being in the business of tailoring sitting on the knee sewing I thought, "well this is it", so, "made on the knee" was my slogan and we got a model of a little man tapping on the window. They were made in Germany. We finished with the adds saying "where the suits are made on the knee and the little man taps on the window" and that was there for 40 odd years and it's even bought up when I meet people in the street today. They talk about the little man. They know how the little man tapped on the window when they were little boys and their children saw it too. It went on for years.

Interviewer: Could you explain the most noticeable changes that occurred from beginning until the end Mr. Dodd?

Mr. Dodd: Ah yes. There was a lot of changes in the business particularly after the war when cloth was scarce and the colour scheme wasn't there that you would like, but, that became very good in the tailoring section. After the years things went a little bit towards casual wear and this was about the time when I thought about retiring. The casual wear in those days didn't look good to me but today the better quality of casual wear looks very good to me but some of the things the younger people are wearing, I just can't describe it. It just didn't look right.

Interviewer: So when you made a suit, you made it specially fitted, you couldn't go into a shop and buy one off the rack?

Mr. Dodd: Well in those days you could, but mainly in those days it was made to measure, which is why there were so many tailors about but we got our share of the work. It was a terrific business. Of course, in the latter years it died a little but gradually when the ready made came into it, but, there again the tailoring got and the casual wear became greater. Look today, you don't see too many wearing a suit - during the day anyhow, particularly in Newcastle or industrial areas where its worse. Casual wear is here to stay I'm sure because of the climatic conditions in Australia.

Interviewer: Was it all classes of people who used to come and have suits made from you?

Mr. Dodd: Yes, we made several grades. This was the experience I got when I was working in Melbourne and Sydney to be able to make suits at a price they could afford to pay. In the early days when I started in 1933 or 1934 we were going through one of the world's worst Depressions and Australia had its share and it was a must that you wore a suit no matter what. You weren't allowed anywhere without a suit. That kept us busy doing different grades of tailoring.

Interviewer: Well Mr. Dodd, you have been very successful. What do you owe your success to?

Mr. Dodd: That's a very good question. I couldn't have done without the help my wife gave me over 20 odd years. She was terrific in every way and that's the one who I owe all my success to.

Interviewer: Did you own many properties with the outlets for your business?

Mr. Dodd: As we progressed many years after the war of course we brought the premises we were in off my chappy that owned it, Harry Taylor and I used to have to do any display and remodelling to the premises-I had to do it. It was part of the deal, but, he said that whatever you want to do to the building you just do it and that's helped progress in business. As time went on he said "How much did that alteration cost you"? I said "two thousand pounds" and he said "You'll get it back" and I felt I would with the response I got from the advertising and the display and I thought to myself that was very nice of him and when he passed on and in his will it was that I was to get those premises from the estate whatever they valued them at and I was Executor of the estate and I had to get them valued and when it came to the value and the will was written I got two thousand pounds off the price of the property.

Interviewer: So everything you put into it you got back?

Mr. Dodd: I got it back. He was a mighty man. I realised what he meant when he said that I would get it back.

Interviewer: Along with Newcastle West what other properties did you own?

Mr. Dodd: With the Maitland shop within the early stages we were in part thereof and we brought those. The lady that owned it - she gave me ten years to pay for them at 4½% interest and it was considered that I was paying too much for the building but they didn't realise how much business was coming through that business. If I hadn't have brought it someone else might have and I'd have been out, but I brought it and it happened to have been very successful. When I progressed with the Dry Cleaning I opened little shops in the suburbs, some I rented, some I built, some I had alterations done to them. They were the outlets for the Dry Cleaning side because that hadn't stopped.

Interviewer: Did you do mobile Dry Cleaning?

Mr. Dodd: Mobile dry cleaning! We had trucks picking up and delivering. We operated from Newcastle right through to Cessnock. We were dry cleaners for Co-operative Store and that was a mighty avenue too. We were tailors for the Co-operative Store.

Interviewer: Did you make suits for them to put in their shops to sell?

Mr. Dodd: We used to make their made to measure suits. The client had to come to us with the authority from the Store, as they closed their tailoring part at that time. That all added to our success.

Interviewer: When did you decide to retire?

Mr. Dodd: About 4 years before I did retire I thought to myself, what am I going to do. I'm getting old, the day had come that I had made enough money. I had enough assets around me. I thought that I would like to see my staff take it over. They had been very good staff and 4 years before I put it to them if they would like to take it over, but that would be in 4 years time and they worked very hard for it. I said "you've got to make it easy for me from now on". During that 4 years I thought - well what other line could we put in and we put in the Hirewear for young men for Dinner suits and that was a great success during the time.

When the time came at the end of the 4 years years I retired and I've enjoyed my retirement but I was sorry to see the business lasting only 10 years. It was very hurtful to me, however, that's how things went.

Interviewer: Now that you've retired how do you spend your time?

Mr. Dodd: When I retired early my wife and I had a couple of trips round the world at different times. She loved going to Hong Kong. She's been there since we retired about six times. It's a very fascinating place for women you know. They love the shops, but it is also very exciting to be in a country where people are different. Life is very fast over there. A lot of people. We had many trips.

Interviewer: And what about now?

Mr. Dodd: I'm a mad gardener. I got too old for that eventually and had to employ a chap once a week. He's very good. I work with him and we've got the place looking very nice - lots of annuals and shrubs. It's important because the house is right on the corner and it has to look right. A lot have gardens around the back you know - you can hide a lot of things that you don't see but it's got to be perfect.

Interviewer: It's a real showpiece!

Mr. Dodd: Well I'm very proud of it.

Interviewer: And so you should be.

Interviewer: What else do you do?

Mr. Dodd: Well 8 years ago in 1981 I got very restless and felt I had to do something. I was fascinated with birds and started to go to bird shows. I loved canaries. I thought I'll breed them. had an aviary built that I've since extended to twice the size and each year since 1981 I've been successful winning prizes. Some of the years I've bred a champion but I got a lot of firsts and seconds. Their very time consuming and I just like doing it. I'll keep on doing it until I feel I can't do it.

The other hobby I've got now is tapestry and I went to a dear old lady in Lambton for a few lessons and I had 3 lessons and I wanted to come back for another one but she said "you don't need another one" and so I battled on and the first one I did I was very proud of and made me feel that I should do some more.

Interviewer: That would have come with your experience with the needle!

Mr. Dodd: Yes, I feel that helped a lot and you've got to have a lot of patience. Every sewer has got to have a lot of patience. It's very time consuming. Sometimes I sit for 4 or 5 hours. You feel as if you've put a couple of hours in and when you look at the clock you've put 4 hours in before you know where you are, but I'm enjoying life still and on October 10th I'll be 84 - that's a pretty good age you know and I feel I've got a few years left.

Interviewer: Your staff. You were telling me about a gathering of staff in September. Your having a get together!

Mr. Dodd: Oh yes, the staff rang me a few weeks ago and said "Mr. Dodd we are having a reunion on the 16th September at the Leagues Club in New Lambton and You'll be there for sure, we want you to be there". At the moment they've got one hundred and fifty registered for that night. I hope they all come. It will be great to see them.

Interviewer: Well that's wonderful. At 84 years of age Mr. Dodd you've certainly had a fulfilling life. Thankyou very much for sharing your memories with me.



UNIVERSITY OF NEWCASTLE

OPEN FOUNDATION COURSE

1989

I,.....Mr. Arthur Dodd..... give my  
permission to ....Gail Hill.....

to use this interview, or part of this interview, for  
research, publication and/or broadcasting (delete one of  
these if required) and for copies to be lodged in  
the.....University of Newcastle Library.....

.....  
for the use of other bona fide researchers.

Signed .....A Dodd.....

Date .....25. 8. 89......

Interviewer .....Gail Hill.....

The war years affected Mr. Dodd's tailoring business. He served two years in the army. During that time Mrs Dodd ran the business. Because of the shortage of cloth and the fact that the war was on there was not much tailoring work around. However, the dry cleaning side of the business flourished, because at that time the biggest part of the business. After the war it took a long time for the tailoring side of the business to pick up due to the unavailability of the cloth. The dry cleaning

**NAME: GAIL HILL**

**SUMMARY OF ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW WITH MR ARTHUR DODD ON THE HISTORY OF MR. DODD'S RETAILING AND MANUFACTURING CAREER IN THE TAILORING AND DRY CLEANING TRADE.**

**SUBJECT: AUSTRALIAN HISTORY - OPEN FOUNDATION**

**LECTURER: MARGARET HENRY**

**TIME: TUESDAY 1PM - 3PM**

**DUE DATE: 25TH AUGUST, 1989**

Mr. Dodd owes a lot of his success to Mrs Dodd who worked in the bookkeeping side of the business as well as providing customer service. His investments in properties through many business outlets also added to his success.

At age 67 Mr. Dodd didn't want any more hassle and hassle and handed his business over to six of his loyal employees. For the four prior years Mr. Dodd had been preparing these staff members to take over. The business lasted another ten years before it was closed. It was then that Mr. Dodd sold his properties.

At 84 years Mr. Dodd now enjoys beekeeping, carpentry, gardening and tapestry, the latter done through his talents with the needle.

The war years affected Mr. Dodd's tailoring business. He served two years in the army. During that time Mrs Dodd ran the business. Because of the shortage of cloth and the fact that the war was on there was not much tailoring work around, however, the dry cleaning side of the business flourished, becoming at that time the biggest part of the business. After the war it took a long time for the tailoring side of the business to pick up due to the unavailability of the cloth. The dry cleaning business was what kept the Dodd's going during these difficult years.

When things started to improve, Mr. Dodd who was very publicity conscious, decided to advertise. He advertised on Radio 2HD on the Saturday races with Bill Hemsley and later on Billy Hill. Before and after each race there was an add~~x~~ on. There were also adds in the Sun newspaper and he used kite signs also to promote his business. His slogans for his advertisements were "WHERE THE TROUSERS ARE MADE ON THE KNEE AND WHERE THE LITTLE MAN TAPS ON THE WINDOW". He had a model of a little man tapping on the window displayed in his shop.

With the casual style of dress becoming the fashion of the day the demand for tailoring decreased. The fact that people could now buy a suit off the rack with greater choices also diminished demand.

Mr. Dodd owes a lot of his success to Mrs Dodd who worked in the bookkeeping side of the business as well as providing customer service. His investments in properties from his many business outlets also added to his success.

At age 67 Mr. Dodd didn't want any more hustle and bustle and handed his business over to six of his loyal employees. For the four prior years Mr. Dodd had been preparing these staff members to take over. The business lasted another ten years before it was closed. It was then that Mr. Dodd sold his properties.

At 84 years Mr. Dodd now enjoys breeding canaries, gardening and tapestry, the latter coming through his talents with the needle.

1.

Mr. Dodd began his apprenticeship as a tailor in 1919 with George Henderson's, located on Cnr. Newcomen and Hunter Sts. Newcastle. He served five years apprenticeship and came out of his time as a tailor at age 19. During his time as an apprentice they used to sit on a table with their legs crossed and sew from the knee.

After leaving Henderson's he went to Melbourne to gain more knowledge as Melbourne at that time was the place to go. He picked places to work and learnt how to run a workroom. By night he attended a cutting school. After being out of work for a short time Mr. Dodd opened a shop in Exhibition St. Melbourne which was located near the theatre. He wanted to put his knowledge into practice. He was promised work from other tailors.

At this time there was a stage show on at the Exhibition Theatre called "Rosemarie". Mr. Dodd had made a suit for one of the actors who was appearing in the play and because this actor was pleased with his workmanship he gained the contract for the alterations of the costumes for the show. This contract meant a lot for him, so much so that he had to employ another tailor to help him. After the show finished work became very scarce and he had to put the other tailor off. He was approached by a man who offered to buy his business. After an initial investment of fifty pounds he sold it for one hundred and fifty pounds.

From Melbourne Mr. Dodd went to Sydney to work for two years. He gained more knowledge working with different grades of cloth.

Mr. Dodd came back to Newcastle and started work in Darby St. He didn't like the location and so moved into an upstairs premise near Winns. It was at this time that Mr. Dodd met this beautiful young girl, who, some years later was to become his wife. He didn't stay long at these premises, moving next into a building opposite the Palais. At this time Mr Dodd was manufacturing for other tailors, working seven days and nights a week and not making much money.

The desire to make money for himself instead of other people was the reason he opened his own business at the Bank Corner, at first, only renting the property but later on purchasing it along with many other properties. Alongside his tailoring business he also ran a Dry Cleaning business from his Hunter St. site as well as from other outlets.

NAME: GAIL HILL

SUBJECT: AUSTRALIAN HISTORY - OPEN FOUNDATION

LECTURER: MARGARET HENRY

TIME: 1PM - 3PM

DUE DATE: 25TH AUGUST; 1989

TOPIC: THE HISTORY OF RUNDLES

Retailing in Newcastle has shown a succession of family businesses since the late 1890's right through until today. Some that dotted Hunter St. for many years were Winn's (1878), Scott's (1890), Lights (1894), Mackies (1896), A. Dodd & Co. Pty.Ltd (1933), and Rundles(1908)<sup>1</sup>. Rundles is the only one of these businesses still operating today. It has a very long and interesting history.

Richard Thomas Rundle served his apprenticeship as journeyman & coatmaker with Messrs Peapes & Company, Sydney in the years 1885 - 1888<sup>2</sup>. During his apprenticeship he went to Sydney Technical College at night and learned tailors cutting. At that time bodycoats were in vogue - morning coats, dress coats, long and close fitting, and these had to be impeccably crafted.

After completing his apprenticeship he worked for Lasker & Lasker in Sydney. On February 11th 1901 he joined Barnett Phillips, merchant tailor, in Newcastle as a cutter.<sup>3</sup> At that time an agreement was drawn up by a solicitor's clerk between Barnett Phillips, merchant tailor and Richard Rundle, cutter, whereby Mr. Rundle covenanted to work in Newcastle for Mr. Phillips as cutter from 9am - 6pm upon 5 days per week and from 9am -1pm on Wednesday and any other reasonable times that the employer should require his services. Mr. Rundle also covenanted that "during and within the hours and times agreed he would diligently and faithfully employ his whole time in and about the business of the Employer and be just and faithful to the said Employer". On his part Mr. Phillips agreed to pay Mr. Rundle a salary of six pounds a week, payable weekly and in addition a bonus of ten pounds per centum on the increase of profits made in the business of the Employer.<sup>4</sup> Mr. Rundle was also required to sign that he would not, within four years of the termination of his services "set up in business or accept employment as a cutter within twenty five miles of Newcastle.

He stayed with Barnett & Phillips in Newcastle until 1904 when he accepted an offer from Webb & Company in Bathurst where he remained for four years, where, after a disagreement over a game of billiards he was fired.

1. J.C; Docherty, NEWCASTLE The making of an Australian City Sydney 1983 p.122
2. Winston Turner, A Clothier Takes Stock of Seventy Years, (unpublished) p.9
3. Ibid
4. Ibid

By this time Mr. Rundle was married and family responsibilities. Lindsay and Irene were both born in Bathurst. In Newcastle the family was to be completed by the arrival of Frank (1909), Enid (1911), Nelson (1913) and Phillip (1917).<sup>5</sup>

The first Rundles business in Newcastle opened in 1908 in Thorn St. which stood on part of the site now occupied by Best & Less. Later it moved to the 1st Floor of Atkinson and Hughes, hatters and mercers, at that time, then to 108 Hunter St. where the shop was in the old market building. The City Council owned the building and actually asked Mr. Rundle to take the shop because they were having difficulty letting their properties. The rent was six pounds a week.

Mr. Rundle faced heavy opposition in his business. The "Federal Directory of 1909" lists 27 tailors and mercers, all but one of them operating in Hunter St. He did not appear to be downcast by the opposition. Instead he counteracted by taking five advertisements in the "Directory".<sup>6</sup> This was at a time when tailors used gaslight in the sewing room and gasirons for pressing. They were very heavy implements called "gooseneck irons". To heat his gooseneck irons a tailor would slide them into a gasfed stove. It was custom at the time for tailors to put their bolts of serge along a form in front of the shop so prospective customers could examine them more closely for feel. As a safeguard, the junior shopboy was stationed close to the front of the shop and armed with a long cane. It was his duty to ward off offending dogs who might have been tempted to pollute the stock displayed.

Richard Rundle later expanded his tailoring business to a point which necessitated him occupying the adjoining upstairs premises over Atkinson & Hughes. This expansion coincided with the opening of the B.H.P. together with the development of a competitor for coal gas.

During the war years 1914 - 1918 Newcastle's industries boomed and by 1920 Rundle's had grown to be one of the largest tailoring businesses in the district, employing 5 cutters, 25 male coatmakers and 6 vest makers plus apprentices, tailors' trimmers, pressers and salesmen.<sup>7</sup>

5. Turner, A Clothier Takes Stock of Seventy Years, (unpublished) p.12

6. *ibid*

7. Turner, A Clothier Takes Stock of Seventy Years, (unpublished) p.23

At 16 years of age Lindsay Snr. left school and joined his father. In 1927 shop values had increased and Richard felt that he should move to premises in Scott St. where he opened a branch which he took over from Corns, the tailor. This branch traded under the name of "The Newcastle Tailoring Company". Suits were sold at the cheaper end of the trade and on time payment. In 1931 Nelson joined the Company. There began the close association between Lindsay and Nelson which was to continue until Nelson died in 1968.

By the early '30's the credit situation and generally difficult trading conditions being experienced by the business required Richard to have a meeting of his creditors. They agreed to him entering into a "Deed of Agreement" for time to pay. This arrangement covered a period of two years. On the advice of a Solicitor Richard filed a petition in bankruptcy in order to be relieved of the effects of the bank guarantee. It was at this stage that Mrs Rundle (Richard's wife) was asked to make an offer to acquire the assets of her husband's estate. She offered the creditors ten shillings in the pound, payment to be made by completing twelve promissory notes for one thousand pound, to be presented over twelve months.<sup>8</sup> Her offer was accepted and it was from this difficult situation that she nursed the business back to a state of health that continued until her husband's death in 1936. After his death she continued to operate the business through Lindsay Snr. and Nelson.

From experience gained in Sydney, Lindsay was able to become experienced as a cutter. It was the time of draped coats - double breasted American coats with American shoulders and sleeves and cheese-boarded chests. They gave a keen cutter some scope. The work was greatly admired and business started to boom. Beautiful window displays helped attract people to the shop. The suits were so well made and the cloths so carefully selected that they went to the top very quickly.

In 1937 Mrs Rundle bought the David Miller Estate, the Hunter St. premises previously occupied by the retail grocers, Lane & Trewartha. She moved the tailoring business into half the new premises on Christmas Eve and a new era for Rundles as a private Company began.

Mrs Rundle opened a mens wear store that ran paralell to the tailoring business. When war broke out she was able to get the machines to make ready-to-wear clothing. This idea of hers came about because of the unavailability of cloth. From small beginnings they came up during the war. They then began to make clothing for the Stamina Clothing Co.

8. Turner, A Clothier Takes Stock of Seventy Years, (unpublished) p.25



During the 2nd World War business boomed. They got a lot of work making uniforms and when the Americans came so came the increased demand for uniforms. Because of the trading boom of the war Mrs Rundle was able to finish off paying the shop. She died in 1948. On her passing Nelson and Lindsay Snr. inherited the shares in Rundles.

Nelson wanted to buy shops and open shops and do all sorts of enterprising things, however Lindsay was very conservative and hesitant to get out of his depth financially. In desperation it was suggested that they convert to a Public Company. This was suggested because of the onerous tax bills they were getting. Most of the money they were making had to go in tax. They were trying to grow and tax left very little behind to carry out the expansion that Nelson wanted. In 1952 they converted to a Public Company.

In 1950 they purchased the adjoining property and during this prosperous time bought machinery enabling them to make a wider variety of clothing.<sup>9</sup> 1958 saw the opening of the basement for selling schoolwear. In 1960 they bought the warehouse of R. Hall & Son in Scott St. and turned it into a factory. This gave them the scope to develop a better garment. The factory was renovated with the chairs and tables being purchased very cheaply from the R.A.A.F. Base at Rathmines.

It was at this time that they were selling the Ernest Hiller label but because Hiller wouldn't restrict his label to Rundles they decided to look elsewhere. Nelson went overseas and whilst there visited the Hammonton factory. Upon his return to Newcastle the Hammonton Park suit was nominated by the Directors as the best and they entered into an agreement with William Kessler Inc. on a license fee of six thousand pound per year and John Feltham, tailor, went overseas and learned how to make American suits. He came back and started to make genuine Hammonton Park suits. From humble beginnings they began to build up sales of these fine suits. Agents were appointed to sell the Hammonton Park clothes. The better shops were chosen to handle their product.

9. Turner, A Clothier Takes Stock of Seventy Years, (unpublished) p.56

Rundles has continued to prosper. At present they have retail outlets in Hunter St. Newcastle and at Charlestown. In April they moved all of their factory operations from Newcastle to Northcott Drive, Kotara to premises they purchased in 1984. The total workforce at present is 450.<sup>10</sup>

The success of Rundles in a most difficult and competitive field - the designing, manufacturing and selling of clothing is a real accomplishment. It has been achieved in the face of fierce competition. The main reason for success is that Lindsay Rundle snr. with all his business acumen always thought of himself as a tailor and a tailor's son. He had a deep love of the craft and a skill that earned him the title "Prince of Cutters". Lindsay Rundle jnr. emphasised to me that his grandmother (Richard's wife) played the biggest part in the establishment and the success of the business.

10. Information given by Lindsay Rundle Jnr.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Docherty, J.C. NEWCASTLE; The making of an Australian City, Sydney 1983

Rundle, Lindsay Jnr. An Oral History Interview

Turner, Winston, A Clothier Takes Stock of Seventy Years, (unpublished)