NAME: LORRAINE SLAVEN.

7th SEPTEMBER, 1988.

OPEN FOUNDATION COURSE. WEDNESDAY EVENING CLASS.

AUSTRALIAN HISTORY

RESEARCH PROJECT: REGIONAL HISTORY.

CHARLESTOWN: FROM MINING VILLAGE TO COMMERCIAL CENTRE.

Charlestown today is acknowledged as being the fasted developing area outside the Sydney Metropolitan area. When we think of Charlestown, we think of large scale retail, modern buildings, and a leading commercial centre. However this thriving suburb had a somewhat humble beginning. Charlestown, once known as 'Raspberry Gully', owes its existence to the development of the Waratah Coal Company.

On the 10th of May 1873, the Waratah Coal Company began operations in a gully South of the New Lambton township.[1] In 1876 the company purchased 2,600 acres adjoining the New Lambton Colliery. The company then received a land grant from the Government bringing their total to 4,000 acres.[2] It was soon evident that the men at the pit needed somewhere to live, and thus, the village of Charlestown was born.

From this mining village, that once boosted three hotels and four shops, emerged a highly successful commercial centre. One of the founders of retail in Charlestown were the Pickering family. Even today the Pickering name is very familiar to many Charlestown and Lake Macquarie residents. Mrs Pickering has lived in Charlestown for fifty-two years, and her husband's grandparents, Edward and Elizabeth Pickering were amongst Charlestown's first residents. Edward Pickering came to Australia from England in the mid 1800's and moved to Charlestown to work at the South Waratah Colliery as an engine driver. Edward and Elizabeth Pickering had thirteen children; three of the pickering sons were blind. In order to assist with the families finances Mrs Pickering opened a shop on the front verandah of their Dickenson Street home. The shop serviced the mining community, and she sold items such as pins, elastic, needles, and straps of liquorice.[3] This was one of the first shops in Charlestown, and the beginning of the Pickerings long association with retail in Charlestown.

In 1876 the South Waratah Colliery sold off a portion of land to it's employees. [4] There was much excitement in the community when the Pickering family moved house - literally. The house was moved on wooden rollers to a new location where the Pickering's arcade stands today. The dwelling was moved into the middle of the road, where it remained for some time, as the men were unable to shift it. It took about a fortnight to complete the move, and in that time the family home would be parked in the middle of the road, lit by hurricane lamps, with the family living inside. This caused no traffic problems, because at that time there was no traffic in Charlestown.[5]

At this location, Edward and Elizabeth's eldest son, also named Edward, opened another store. Edward was blind, however this did not prevent him from successfully operating the business. The liquorice straps and pins that his mother once sold, gave way to groceries and horse food.

However the years 1888 to 1890 were very difficult for Charlestown. This period was largely characterized by strikes, most notable being the strike at Waratah Colliery that lasted for nine months. It was the colliery that breathed economic life into Charlestown, but when the colliery did not function the effect was felt throughout the

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1 Newcastle Morning Herald. 15/4/1972.

2 Charlestown Centenary. Newcastle. 1976. p11.

3 Mrs Pickering. Interview.

4 Newcastle Morning Herald. 15/4/1972.

5 Charlestown. Newspaper clipping collection. V2.

community, causing widespread poverty.[6] Throughout this period the Pickering's gave away a great deal of merchandise due to peoples inability to pay, and eventually the business was forced to close.

This was not to be the end of the Pickering's association with retail in Charlestown, tradition was upheld by Alfred Pickering,- the grandson of the Edward Pickering the engine driver. Alfred Pickering, being the eldest son left school at a young age to assist with the family's business, which at that time was a service station. He then started his own business, 'Pickering Cycles', and then moved into a corner store. Through his association with cycles, Mr Pickering formed a friendship with a man who was at that time an agent for a push bike company, but later became a regional development officer for Woolworths. Mr Pickering strongly believed retail in Charlestown could have a very profitable future, but they needed a major retailer such as Woolworths to break the routine of people catching the bus to the Eastern end of Hunter street to shop.[7]After many years of persuasion the development officer carried out a study, and in 1958 Woolworths came to Charlestown.[8] From this point Charlestown developed at a very rapid rate. Other major retailers came to Charlestown, and as a consequence some of the smaller stores, such as the Pickering's store were forced to close. Mr Pickering believed there was still the need for smaller speciality shops to complement the major retailers, so he purchased a block of land and developed 'Pickering arcade'.

Mr Pickering, or 'Mr Charlestown' as he was often called, was not only a prominent figure in retail in Charlestown, he was also a prominent local politician. Mr Pickering was a member of the urban council, a representative on the Water Board, and a representative on the County Council, he was also a Councillor in local government for sixteen years.[9] Mrs Pickering, although she may feel her main role in life was that of a supporter to a prominent husband, she is however, a lady, who in her own way, helped to shape Charlestown. The Charlestown Baby Health centre is just one example of her efforts. After the birth of her first child she realized the need for the centre. As an alternative to a long trip into town to a baby clinic, Mrs Pickering began to weigh her baby on the local butchers scales.[10] Mrs Pickering then wrote to Mr George Booth, a member of State Parliament, and offered a room in her home for a baby clinic, if the government could supply a nursing sister. The governments reply was that a clinic would have to be self-funding. At the end of the war, Mrs Pickering proposed that a baby health centre be constructed as a war memorial. A committee was then formed to raise funds, and government funds were then made available, and Mrs Pickering's baby health centre became a reality.[11]

Charlestown has certainly come a long way since the days of 'Raspberry Gully'. The old miners cottages, the grassy vacant blocks,and the winding dirt tracks, have given way to a four lane highway, and all of the modern structures that now represent a thriving commercial centre.

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[6] Ibid

[7] MRS PICKERING. INTERVIEW.

[8] J.C.DOCHERTY. NEWCASTLE: THE MAKING OF AN AUSTRALIAN CITY. p135
SYDNEY. 1983.

[9] Mrs Pickering. Interview.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Charlestown Centenary. p31.

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PICKERING,A. ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW.

1090 WORDS.

SUMMARY OF ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW WITH MRS PICKERING.

During the mid 1800's Edward and Elizabeth Pickering migrated from England to Australia, and settled in the small mining village of Charlestown. From these early settlers grew a family network which went on to greatly influence the development of Charlestown to the surburb as we know it today.

Mrs Ada Pickering grew up in Hamilton, and upon her marriage moved to Charlestown, where she has lived for fifty-two years. Mrs Pickering, although only a child throughout the depression years told of the camps around Newcastle, and of the trauma caused when the young boys of eighteen years of age were forced to leave their families and keep moving from town to town, in order to be eligible for a 'dole ticket'. At the Pickerings current block of land in Charlestown, there is a cement slab which once served as a soup kitchen to help the poor throughout the depression years.

Mrs Pickering attended her first dance at age seventeen, where she and Mr Pickering first met. She explains the amount of chance involved in someone from Hamilton meeting someone from Charlestown. Charlestown was considered almost the outback.

Mr and Mrs Pickering were married in 1936 and made plans to build a house in Charlestown. This was one of the first houses to be built after the depression. The cost of the house was 850 pounds to build, which was considered a large amount of money. Mr and Mrs Pickering approached the 'Newcastle Building Society' for finance, and attended a meeting with a Mr Dent, the manager at the time. After the Pickerings explained their plans, (Mrs Pickering explains) Mr Dent pulled his glasses down on the end of his nose and said, 'your a little man with big ideas', '...we've never lent any money for a house in Charlestown, ever!' Mr Pickering argued that Charlestown was the place of the future. Mr Dent expressed concern for the development of Charlestown because he believed trams would never make it up the hill. The Pickering's initial loan application was rejected because it was not considered viable to lend money to build a house in a 'suburb' so far removed from civilization. After some persuasion the loan was granted.

Mr Pickering's grandparents were amongst the first settlers in Charlestown. Charlestown at that time was a mining village, developed to house the workers at South Waratah Colliery, where Mr Pickering worked as an engine driver. Mrs Pickering opened one of the first shops in Charlestown on the front verandah of her Dickenson street home. This was to be the beginning of the Pickering's long association with retail in Charlestown. This tradition was to continue throughout the generations to Alfred and Ada Pickering, who started with a cycle shop, then a corner store, and eventually developed 'Pickerings Arcade'.

When Mrs Pickering first moved to Charlestown in 1936 it was still purely a mining village. There were no footpaths formed, and there was only one cement road in Charlestown. Communication by telephone was limited to the hours the corner was open, and there no use of the telephone on the weekends at all. After having lived in Hamilton prior to Charlestown, Mrs Pickering felt that she was '...really out in the bush'.

The old mining village of Charlestown stood still for many years, in fact there was very little change in Charlestown until after the Second World War. In the fifty-two years that Mrs Pickering has lived in Charlestown, she has seen the face of Charlestown change dramatically. The changes that have occurred in retail in the last twenty years have been staggering. Mrs Pickering has witnessed the transformation of Charlestown, from a small mining village to a highly successful commercial centre.

TRANSCRIPT

FOUNDATION RESEARCH PROJECT - AUSTRALIAN HISTORY

WEDNESDAY EVENING CLASS - 13TH. JULY, 1988

INTERVIEWER - LORRAINE SLAVEN

PERSON TO BE INTERVIEWED - MRS. PICKERING

LORRAINE: How long have you lived in Charlestown Mrs. Pickering?

52 years I've lived here - my husband was born here and his father was born here and his Grandfather was one of the first settlers and bought the first block of land in Charlestown - one of first at the public auction a record of which is now in the Council Chambers. My husband had the plan of the subdivision and the book accounting for all the sales and the payments that were made by the miners to the Coal Company who had organised the auction and owned the land and it was paid off through their pit pays and that is now in the possession of the Council.

LORRAINE: And whereabouts did you grow up ?

In Hamilton in Newcastle.

LORRAINE: Could you tell me a bit about the Depression years.

Well as I say it was only what I saw - I couldn't honestly say that the Depression affected me personally.

LORRAINE: And how did it affect your family - how did they get through.

Well I was reared by my Grandparents and they were you know comfortably off and they had property and I didn't feel any result because of their cushioning.

LORRAINE: And how did people get by in those days - how did the unemployed survive. I know there were camps in Newcastle.

There were camps at Newcastle one up on where they've done all the new area up there at Horseshoe Beach and there was a big camp at Hollywood they called it out near the Jesmond Centre in the back of that shrubland past the park and people would get sheets of old galvanised iron cartons and you know hessian bags that sugar and everything used to be wrapped in and it was a terrible area - really poor souls and you know just had to get shelter really there was nothing there for them but they just had no money and there was no dole with money - the dole that was handed out to them if they were absolutely broke - was for food just to maintain their body physically and you know from families that had been working before and used to eating properly the dole didn't really do very much for them. It was very hard and then the young boys had to keep moving - they couldn't stay in the home - from town to town where they would go and register at the Police Station and apply for another dole ticket to last them for the next week.

LORRAINE: So they couldn't stay with their families:

No that was the only way they could receive the dole after a certain age - I can't remember I think it was 18 or 19 and they were on the road and on the track and that was their life - they had to go to the police when they hit the town, register that they were there and apply for another dole ticket which they would get. They'd have to show them where they'd been the night before and that's how they would trace it - it was dreadful - really dreadful! I don't know when it would have really started because as I said previously when I married in 1936 the Depression was over really and it was just starting to come up again but it was a terrible period.

LORRAINE: How did the local residents feel about the camps - were they helpful to these people ?

Well I'm not able to answer that question very well because as I say I was more or less a child that my interests weren't really - I knew they were there and felt sorry for them but I don't know how they survived apart from getting the dole and I think like there are today that people that did help them that the money was raised and it was tried but the burden was so great it was almost an impossible task.

LORRAINE: You were telling me people would just knock on your door.

Oh yes they used to have a signal with one another and I heard the tale that they used to put a little notch or a mark on your letterbox. They were in groups you know and as they moved out of the town the others would be told where to go to get food. Where people would help them they clung together - they'd meet and they'd talk and they'd all go and search around but the people would help; them if they could but some people just couldn't help and as I say to go and collect the rent on the Monday morning many a time they would find an empty house with nothing in it and absolutely no possibility of tracing where the tenants had gone - they'd done a "moonlight flit" and you just wiped it off and said well that was gone but of course there were evictions -that was another terrible thing. In the Depression people didn't have any money - they'd have a few sticks of furniture and if the landlord so desired he could go to the police and get an order and the people would be physically put on the footpath - people with young children and their sticks of furniture would be around them and I have seen that - I have seen that.

LORRAINE: Were these the sort of people that lived in the camps ?

Well there was no other way - see once you had been evicted from the house and I don't suppose you had much chance of getting into another so they would scramble into these areas where these people lived. In fact on this very block of land my husband told me that there was a soup kitchen up in the backyard and there was a block of cement up there and I said to him one day _"Whats this here" and he said " through the Depression we had a soup kitchen up there for the poor in Charlestown".

LORRAINE: And who organised that ?

Well the townspeople - I don't know but I can guarantee that Alf's Grandmother and Grandfather would have been well and truly in it and there were other business people who would have - see there were four hotels in Charlestown in

those days - in a mining village with practically only miners in it and a few shop people you know.

LORRAINE: Moving on to Charlestown - how did you meet Mr. Pickering ?

Well that's a story - is that really necessary - well it was wonderful because I often think how the tide blows sometime when you're meant to be in a certain place at a certain time and that's your destiny and that's what happened to me.

I belonged to the Novacastrian Hockey Club and we formed the first Novacastrian Hockey Club and I played with a teacher, Hazel Dawes, who was a physical culture teacher at the Girls High School which I had attended then I left. We formed this Novacastrian Hockey Club and Hazel I rang today - she is 80 years of age - it was her birthday yesterday and she was so happy you know - she'd had such a lovely day. One of the girls that used to be a pupil of hers at Hornsby is living in the same Retirement Village and she said they'd all made a great fuss of her so that's a memory - but anyway we had to raise funds for our you know our first hockey team so there was a dance arranged at the St. George's Church Hall which its the same position but it was just a weatherboard church we could convert to a social hall. You'd pull the screen across the altar and there was a dance held there and I wanted to go to the dance but no way - my Grandparents were old and they didn't think it was right for me to go to a dance - but I'd always been very friendly with this teacher and she was a lovely person and she lived in Sydney and she used to come to my home and my parents would be very happy to have Hazel with us and you know and very friendly and Hazel spoke for me and she said "Oh I'll go with Ada - we'll go together" - so when I was with Hazel under great stress and administration - "now you do this and you do that - and you be careful - and don't go outside the Hall" - so there were all the instructions - major event _ I went to my first dance down at St. George's Hall.

LORRAINE: How old were you than ?

I suppose I would have been 17 and a bit I think and I had a beautiful blue velvet dress with a scalloped white collar and buttons down the side and one of the girls in the team had a boarder living with her - Rae Hedley had a boarder and the girl had a brother who used to live in the house next door here and his sister said to him - "you must come down to the dance - I've got no one to dance with - you've got to come down and dance". Poor Sid was a country boy - came from Tamworth he was looking for work and living out here - they'd had to come from Tamworth and his sister was boarding with Rae Hedley and he was boarding with Val's aunt a Mrs. Young and of course Sid went over to Alf at the service station and he said "Oh Alf will you come to a dance with me in Hamilton - my sister wants me to go" and Alf said "Well I've got to stay at the bowsers here" you know they had the service station - as I said his father was blind and he just had to say there - so he said "Well I'll close up at 8 o'clock tonight and we'll push our bikes down to Hamilton". So Sid and Alf (because there was no bus at that time) rode their bikes down to this hall in Hamilton - you know where St. George's is well that's where the dance was and Sid wouldn't dance all he wanted Alf to do was go and dance with his sister and Alf said as soon as he got in the Hall he looked around all the girls that were sitting there - we used to sit very primly and hope we'd get a dance and he came straight over to me - and he asked me to dance - so I thought well this is alright. He sang to me

all the time then asked me for another dance and he'd sing all the time. That's how we met and it was on for ever. It was lovely, it was wonderful and there would have been such a lot of chance of me meeting him from Hamilton out to where he lived - there's no other chance it would have been that I met him and that was it. He sang to me "I'm playing with fire - I know I'm going to get burnt". Its an old song.

LORRAINE: And when did you get married ?

We were married in 1936.

LORRAINE: That was how many years later?

I was nearly 21 then.

LORRAINE: And you moved to Charlestown then ?

We built this house - this is the original home and we built the house and when it was getting built it was so different. When we went to borrow money to build the house down at the Building Society - Newcastle Building Society - a Mr. Dent was the Manager and I told you my dad was a property man and Alf was very friendly with Bill Cannington the solicitor and we went and we asked you know if he could help us. This house cost $850.0.0 to build and we needed a mortgage we had so much you see but we needed a mortgage - I don't know what figure we needed the mortgage for but I can see Mr. Dent. We showed him the plans of the house which we'd drawn up ourselves. We'd driven around in a car looking for houses and we saw one in New Lambton Heights that was just the design at the front that we wanted so that was going to be the house - so we sat down and worked out what we'd have inside of it. We took that plan down to him and he pulled his glasses down on the end of his nose like this and he looked over them to Alf and he said "you're a little man with big ideas" and Alf said "what do you mean" and he said "we've never lent any money for a house in Charlestown ever" and Alf said "well Charlestown's a coming place", (Mrs. Pickering) he was boosting it up you know and he said "Oh young fellow you'll never get a tram out to Charlestown - they'll never get up that hill". And Alf said "we don't want a tram we've got buses". So he said "well I'd have to consider that - and we got a letter back that they just couldn't do it so my dad went and had a talk to him and Alf rang Bill Cannington up and Bill Cannington went and had a talk to him and between them and a bit of help he decided he would lend us the money to build the house and that's how we got it. That was the attitude to Charlestown - it was a no man's land.

LORRAINE: Charlestown was the sticks was it ?

It was the end of the earth and you know there was no building going on - this was the first house that had been built since well the Depression you know and the miners coming home from work used to keep on - they'd come out and they would walk around you know the skeleton of the house (big rooms etc.), you see they were used to the small mining type of house. But you know I'd come from a house in Hamilton where the lounge room was 24 x 26, big rooms and lovely big ceilings with five bedrooms and anyway Alf's parents had the same sort of lovely brick home because they had seven children and they had a big brick home on the corner. Neither of us had been used to a funny little house so our minds didn't work to a small house.

$850.0.0 to pay for a house in those days that was a lot of money - it was really a lot of money and the people were so interested. Each day they would come going home from work and you would see them walking around having a good look at everything and then we got sliding doors - they had never seen sliding doors in a house and I had a sink - a heater you know - we didn't have the big heaters that we've got today for your water. It was an automatic one about that size - it was over the sink and they'd look at that and they would say "Mrs. what's this for ?". Well all you'd do would be to turn the tap on and the hot water come out - they'd shake their heads and they'd look at it - big ideas - too flash - and then later on when the house was built some of them would come along with a bit of a bush and say "look stick this in your garden Mrs. its a nice shrub" - you know they were really quite friendly. And of course it was different - it was really different. No footpaths ever formed there was one concrete road down the centre and gravel just running and water formed its own way you know - trailed around. Houses were higgledy, piggledy - it was a real funny place for me to come with my friends you know - these hockey players and school teachers that I used to be friendly with. They'd say "you know you are really out in the bush" and when we first built we didn't any paths - we had to cut out the paths - we had paths in the contract but of course we couldn't get that much money so we had to try to build the paths a bit later on. Cement was 5 shillings a bag and that was a lot of money so the paths were about two years getting formed. I had this friend Hazel that I told you is just 80 today and another friend Ef Frazer who was in the hockey team. She was in the Y.W.C.A. hockey team. They used to come out every Wednesday night after school and work and we'd have a nice hot dinner and then the babies were coming you know and they'd all come and say "what have you got for me to do". One of them would sew buttons on and do buttonholes - the other would put rose buds on the babies clothes.

LORRAINE: So there was a lot of community spirit too.

They would come from Newcastle but I tell you what else they would do they'd bring another old pair of shoes to walk up the drive because it was all muddy - oh dear they were different days. Then the babies came. There was an old Baby Health Centre to weigh the babies and I had been a voluntary helper in a baby clinic with Sister Walsh in Newcastle. My Grandfather wouldn't let me to to work - he thought that wasn't right.

LORRAINE: It wasn't right for a lady to work in those days ?

Oh well that's not so - but my position was different as I say he was my Grandfather - with that attitude - see your daughters didn't work - no way - so they didn't work. But I had things to do. My sister had a baby boy and of course I got involved in going to the Clinic with John and John was John McKay - do you know John McKay the Pathologist in Newcastle ? Well he is the baby I'm talking about - he is my nephew and I got involved taking him into the Clinic and I used to go every Friday with Sister Walsh and nephew.

I used to help Sister Walsh in the Clinic. Oh what do you call it - you know the card system - all in alphabetical order because she being such a busy woman that it would all get out of place and I used to do that and I used to help

made a lot of money in our business because we were always extending to the need without making what you could call profit with the rush of people that are in the town today. The population was so small that you couldn't make a lot of money but that didn't worry us we were happy with what we had and we developed it as we went along and as I said before I think I said to you that he was so interested - we started in a bike shop in one of the smaller shops before it was developed - sold push bikes - which were called "Pickering's Cycles". We had them specially made at the Malvern Star Factory and we had them made "Pickering's Cycles" and they sold for $4.5.00 and $4.10.00 or something like that and people paid them off 2/6 per week. And it was hard going to sell a bike $4.10.00 - 2/6/ per week. They were very good cycles but of course some of them wanted a chrome frame and a bronze frame and it grew you know we sold a tremendous lot of cycles in Charlestown and then we went from that into a Corner Shop and as I say we just developed and grew as Charlestown was growing. But from selling the Cycles one of the agents of the Cycle business - oh what was his name - he'd developed and he was a Woolworths man they sent around the district in later years to explore for new development - it was when Woolworths were just branching out into a place like Charlestown. Because Charlestown was developing all this time and he came into the shop and he talked to Alf and of course he'd been doing that for years you know as a traveller and he had his man who used to live at New Lambton and Alf convinced him that this was a marvellous place for Woolworths to buy and he used to stand on the corner this young fellow you know and as the buses would pull in he'd write down the number of people that got off the bus in Charlestown and he'd look and count the number of people on the bus as it was going into Newcastle and he did that for some considerable time. They put a lot of thought about coming to Charlestown and then when he came to Alf and said "yes we're going to come to Charlestown" and they bought one block - 66' frontages and I think they bought one block - but I know what Alf said to them - there were four houses - buy the four houses - get the four blocks. "Oh Alfred never! and Alf said look you want to buy that it would be wonderful - but anyway we got half of what it thought and Woolworths opened and of course when Woolworths opened like everywhere else you go to the big fellow and all the things - all those little tiddly bits we were selling - buttons etc. - they sold it.

LORRAINE: So you were servicing the mining community mainly weren't you ?

Yes - we were supplying all the things people really wanted and didn't want to go to town for because of the traffic or something - but anyway - look am I talking too much ?

LORRAINE: No that's good

Anyway eventually Woolworths came and we found that the people would come down and I will just give you one example. This lady said "Alf I want some red cellophane gift wrap" and Alf said look I'm sorry but because we started to work out of those smaller lines - we were trying to concentrate on the good things - we had beautiful china, we had jewellery and we thought we would expand that but we found that she said - and Alf said "I haven't got it I'm sorry" - she'd been a woman who had always come into our shop you know for every little thing she needed and we always helped her and she said - "oh Alf what are you thinking about giving that away" - she said "Woolworths haven't got any either - and Alf said "Well you went there first - you've answered your own question - you went there first". And he said we've got to cut back and try and specialise - and anyway in the end we just had to walk out of it but by that time we had bought

because he had to come and be the man and do the things for his family - I mean they had a business that Father had started the garage and he couldn't pump the petrol up or know what to do to help. He was a wonderful man.

LORRAINE: He was blind and he still founded the business ?

He was definitely blind. There were three Pickering sons blind - not Alf's father but his father's family - there were three Pickering sons blind and that's why they went into business to help apart from the Grandfather who was a miner - not actually a miner - an engine driver you know for the mine.

LORRAINE: That was Mr. Pickering's Grandfather ?

Yes - he was an engine driver at the mine and it was his Grandmother started the business but that didn't appeal to Edward and he went to Boys High and then he wanted to do Chemical Engineering but he didn't want to go and do it at the University he wanted to get the work and do it as an Apprentice at the College and he did that and went straight through his five years. He was married before he was finished and they have five children - but he got his Chemical Engineering degree very well and after he got that degree he was working in the BHP and they were just putting in while he was apprenticed a new sort of coal washery and he was intrigued with it you know - he'd get up on Saturday morning - wasn't supposed to be at work - but he'd be dashing off to see what they were going to do over the weekend - didn't want to miss anything you know - he watched it develop and he finished up he left the BHP. He went to work for Gold Mines of Australia and they were sending him all over the States you know - different States and he became a specialist in coal washeries - Coal technologist was his term and he was earning a tremendous lot of money. They were sending him up to Queensland to draw this plan and that plan and he was earning a terrible lot of money for his companies and I suppose he had the Pickering spirit and he said what I can do for them I can do for myself and he formed his own company and work just flowed to him but at the same time he was politically inclined. When Alf went up for Parliament when Richard Face went in and of course you had absolutely no hope of getting a Liberal man in this area but he thought he'd give it a go and he got the highest vote that had ever been recorded in Charlestown against the Labor because of his personal appeal - people loved him they really did. They called him Alfie but he belonged to them and when the Local Government things came in he always beat the Labor candidates in Local Government - he never failed and everytime he had enough carry over votes to bring another Independent in with him. Of course he went in as an Independent - there should be no politics in Local Government but of course its full of it but anyway he lived the life that he wanted to live - he got great satisfaction out of doing his public work and I was never one that complained. You know he'd be out night after night at meetings and I know - you know - I knew he was enjoying himself so much that it didn't worry me and we used to go to all the schools and different functions.

LORRAINE: Did you enjoy that ?

Yes I liked it and I became interested in Torchbearers for Legacy at the end of the war and formed the first Torchbearers for Legacy Group in Newcastle, Hamilton came second two or three days after and I worked for 23 years for Legacy here and we raised an awful lot of money.

down to Adamstown to alert the Fire Station to come out and by the time they got there they had just knocked the last standing post down so things like that took a long time to develop. When I came in 1936 Alf had the telephone number 1 - Charlestown 1. I've still got this number 434201 and you couldn't - I'd never lived in a house with a telephone so this was very strange for me. You couldn't ring until 9 o'clock in the morning because the telephone was handled by the shop (Marlins Shop) up on the corner where the Mattara Hotel is now and you could ring through at 9 o'clock and you'd ask for the number and she'd get it for you see - but it finished at five o'clock at night so if somebody was dying in the middle of the night you were still without a telephone unless you could rush up to Marlins Shop and plead for them to open up and do something - I suppose in an emergency something could have - but you couldn't use your phone.

LORRAINE: What about the weekends ?

There was no weekends - no weekend telephone and 9 to 5 Monday to Friday - no mail deliveries. You went up for your mail when I first came here and we were still going up for the mail when Edward was born. He was born in 1939 because I always remember 1939 because Alf had a young brother and he was 10 years older than Edward, my baby, that was the youngest child of the family and Keith was very shy but of course he'd come at the end of a big family and he couldn't understand why there wasn't a baby there for him to play with.

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I, Ada W. Pickering give my permission to LORRAINE SLAVEN

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for the use of other bona fide researchers.

Signed A. W. Pickering

Date 13 July 1988

Interviewer L Slaven