

NAME MARGARET PROBERT

COURSE OPEN FOUNDATION

SUBJECT AUSTRALIAN HISTORY

CLASS WEDNESDAY 7pm- 9pm

TOPIC RESEARCH PROJECT

SUMMARY OF INTERVIEW WITH MRS. D. PIPER

Doris Piper was born at Wickham on 29-8-1905, the eldest of the two surviving children of Phillip and Lydia Moore. Doris remembers her childhood at Wickham with great clarity and is able to recount a walk around the streets of the suburb presenting a vivid mental image of the houses, buildings, shops and people as they were then. Her description of Hannell St. in the 1910's evokes quite a different image than that present today. Doris recalls a thriving shopping area able to supply the residents with almost all of their requirements. She recalls people used to come from outside the area to purchase pies and cakes from Tommy Davis' bakery. The harbour was extremely busy with great numbers of foreign ships calling regularly, the sailors spending their free time and money in Wickham.

The family home was in Albert St., opposite the park and Doris gained her entertainment sitting on the verandah watching the cricket and bowls. Her grandmother lived in Hannell St. next to the School of Arts and Doris enjoyed watching the dances and other festivities which occurred there.

Phillip Moore was an architect and master builder well known in Newcastle and the Hunter. He had a successful business employing his own tradesmen until the financial reversals of the depression in the 1930's. Many of the places he built are still standing including St. Joseph's Home at Sandgate. He also did some work on

the Arnott home at Toronto.

The death of Lydia Piper in 1914 was devastating to Doris. Not only had she lost her mother but the family was now separated. Doris and her father remained in Wickham, living with her paternal grandmother and Phyllis, aged 5, went to live with an aunt at Cook's Hill. The family lived apart until Phillip's remarriage in 1918 and his subsequent building of a home at Hamilton.

Doris remembers her education being basically the 3r's, reading, writing and arithmetic at which she excelled. She attended Wickham Public School till the age of 11(1916) and then attended Cook's Hill school until she gained her qualifying certificate. On leaving school she attended Business College for 9 months and in 1921 successfully applied for a position with a produce merchant.

The firm was situated in Steel St. Doris recalls a fairly large Chinese population living in terrace houses in the street, most of whom were employed as market gardeners in the area now know as Hamilton South. Doris was the firms only female employee. She was employed as a shorthand typist and book keeper but her duties also included the production and presentation of documents to clear goods through customs. She recalls visiting Customs House as potatoes were regularly shipped from Tasmania and going to Honeysuckle Station to clear those railed from Guyra. She worked 8 hours per day, 5 days a week for 12/6. Doris remained with the firm until she

married in 1926.

Doris and her husband Boyce Piper set up home in Wallsend and remained there until Boyce's death in 1980. They had two children, a son John, and a daughter Barbara. Boyce Piper was descended from two well known families. His paternal grandfather was James Piper a former Mayor of Tamworth. His maternal grandfather was William Arnott founder of the Biscuit Factory. In recent years Doris has been compiling a history of her husband and her own families ancestors in order to hand it on to her descendants.

INTERVIEW WITH MRS. DORIS PIPER

INTERVIEW TOPICS

WICKHAM IN THE 1910's (pp1-9 20 mins)

WORK AT A PRODUCE STORE 1921-1926 (p10-11)

MARRIED LIFE AT WALLSEND & MEMORIES.

THE ARNOTT FAMILY AND FACTORY (p12,20,21)

DURATION OF INTERVIEW

40 minutes

This is Margaret Probert Open Foundation Australian History course 1988. I will be speaking to Mrs Doris Piper about her childhood at Wickham, her married life at Wallsend and of her links with the Arnott family.

M. Probert

I'll get you to start telling me what Wickham was like.

Mrs. D. Piper

Where Hannell St started from?

M.P.

Yes

Mrs. Piper

You know the Bank Corner? Well Hannell St starts from there. And that bank and the hotel were there when I was a child. So that's where Hannell St starts and as you went down to the gates, the Hannell St gates, those gates are called, the railway line, on the left hand side walking down from the bank there were all terrace houses right down to the gates. On the other side there were terrace houses and there was a shop, I think it was a saddlery or something like that but I know it was a very good shop, it earned a lot of money for it's owner. And then when you got to the gates you got actually into Wickham. And when you came through the gates on your right hand side going up Hannell St there was, I suppose you'd call it a lane. It ran parallel to the railway line to save the people in Wickham going down to Hunter St to

get to Honeysuckle station. When you got up opposite the station there was an overhead bridge and that saved a lot of walking. Still on the right hand side there was a Timber Mill. I don't know whether it's in that book, I don't know whether it's Armstrong and Royce or Earp, Woodcock and Beveridge, just a timber mill. And that side of Hannell St, the right hand side going down there were all houses along there. Their backyards ran down to it was then known as Throsby Creek of course, but it's the harbour now, and the ships used to come up there and load. It was pretty active and there were some pretty colourful characters too around there. Want me to go further up Hannell St? M.P. Yes Mrs Piper Well those houses ran down to the water. And then you had a space and this is where I first heard of Linwood since i've been doing my family tree, couldn't make out where it was, which was Linwood, so I rang the Historical Society and they gave me this information. They said it was through Peter Fleming, he lived there on that side of the road and he'd been such a civic man for Wickham that the government, or the council, gave him 25 acres of land and he built a stone house on it in 1850 and called it Linwood, and it's marked by a Morton Bay fig tree, which I believe still stands there, and next door to him James Hannell was given the same amount of land but it wasn't because of that I don't think, it was just that he wanted the land. But then, later on, I was in the K-mart at Waratah, and an elderly lady was talking to me and it came up about Wickham and I said I was interested in Linwood. And she said I can tell you

where is I'm a Hannell. She said it's down near Carrington bridge. Now there's the difference between the Historical Society and her story, which I believe because she was a Hannell. And she said that these two places that were granted to Hannell and Fleming and when they closed the gap up between that side of the road and Carrington, it was all filled from ballast from the ships that came in, and that's how it was connected. That's that side of the road, that's about all that was there. On the left hand side as you came through the gates was allotments, and there was a flourishing butcher's shop, everybody went to this butcher, then the School of Arts which was a very, very nice building, even to this day. That's the one I was telling you the fireball hit the ornaments on top of the house. And my grandmother's house was next door. It was a beautiful home, it was all cedar you know doors, skirtings, a lovely old place four bedrooms upstairs and five rooms downstairs. And I lived there with her, my father and I, until he married again. M.P. Is it still standing? Mrs Piper Just been demolished, Margaret, about six months ago. That's where they are putting the road through, or they say they are. Well all of the next space, they were all houses, two-storey houses, and in one of them, do you want to hear this little bit? M. P. Yes Mrs Piper In one of them a very old lady lived in it alone. A two storey place, the children used to be scared stiff of her. She was all lined and wrinkled and skinny wore dozens of beads and rings on her fingers and

she used to stand at the door all day long. She had a haberdashery shop, and she used to stand in the door and stare, she never spoke and everybody was a little bit frightened of her. Next door to that there was a baker, Tommy Davis was his name, he was famous everywhere for his bread and his pastries, they'd come for miles to get Tommy Davis' bread and pastries. Then there's a bit of a blank. Then there was a barber with his red and white pole, you know, and they had one child, a boy. And he came home from school one summer afternoon and put his swimmers on, dived into the harbour, into practically the mouth of a shark. Some of the seamen on a ship saw it happen he was never seen, nothing was seen of him again, he was just swallowed up. That was there then came Wickham school, you know where the Aborigines have their, is that the primary school still? M.P. I'm not sure Mrs. Piper. It was a grey building M.P. I think it is the same building Mrs Piper. Well that was where I attended until I was, well I must have been 11, I must have been. Then I went to I think it was Hamilton M.P. What did you learn at primary school? Mrs. Piper Just the ordinary basic things, you know tables and songs. When I left there I went to some other school, now isn't that terrible, it wasn't Hamilton, I don't remember. However next to that was the most magnificent church, St. James Church of England, it was a beautiful church. Everybody, who was anybody, went to St. James. And there were a lot of moneyed people in Wickham you know, tons of money. The Goninans were there. And it's a strange thing in that church there were some windows,

and Boyce's grandmother, maternal grandmother, and three of her daughters had dedicated windows in the Church of England at Dungog and they are a replica of the windows that were in the Wickham church. I only found that out about two years ago. It was beautiful. I'm a little bit lost after the church, Margaret, I think the shops started then, and there were numerous shops, all flourishing, right up to Albert St. I don't think you'd call Wickham really an industrial area but it had a lot of business's. There were numerous things, you could buy anything from clothing to newspapers and all sorts of things up in that area. That's were everything was just about three blocks of it. Even Linstroms had their first shop there, in a street off Wickham, and you know how well they've done. Then you turned into Albert St. that's where the Council Chambers is. There was an ironmonger along there somewhere, an Iron Factory, a Foundry that was it. My father was born in the house opposite the Council Chambers and I was born about four houses up in Albert St., opposite the park. It used to be quite the thing to sit on your front verandah on Saturday afternoon and watch the bowlers and the cricketers, you know. That's were a lot of the money was because that's where the bigger houses were. Goninans still stands their old home, I don't know what it's like now. But that street hasn't really altered, it's just the same, the same houses are standing, and of course the park's still there, but the Bowling Club's gone kafutt, I think. The Cricket Club, I think it's still there still. And from

the park up to Maitland Rd. there was very little doing, only a couple of houses there, no shops, in fact I think there was only one shop in Albert St. and it was a mixed business but of course you didn't have far to walk down to Hannell St. and it had everything. The trams used to run to Maryville and I think Carrington and that's why I wanted to have a look in that little book to see the route of the trams. Perhaps you could look it up for me. M.P. I did have a look, I'll look it up again for

you

Mrs Piper

Even the fares, they give the fares in that too. That's about the extent of Wickham really because the back streets of Wickham, they were all residences. There were no shops, only Lindstroms that I can remember, the rest was all residences. And Mullens cordial factory and Aerated Water on the first turn to the left as you came through the railway gates and those factories were on the right. And down that street people used to be able to walk to the Store, the Newcastle Store, because it was just over the bridge. That was a pretty popular place. I can't tell you very much else, Margaret, because there's not much else to tell. M.P. What about your father? He was a builder. Mrs Piper He was a builder, he was born on the corner of John and Albert Sts. and that house still stands, I often pass it and think of it and wonder what it's like inside but of course it wouldn't be anything. And we were about eight houses up

where I was born. It was an interesting suburb really and living next to the School of Arts, this was a two-storey house of my grandmothers, and my father bored two holes into the verandah because they had all there dances and balls in the School of Arts and we could see everything. M.P. That was your entertainment?

Mrs. Piper. Yes when I was a child, yes. Of course we had to be in bed at 8 o'clock. I really enjoyed it. And most of all I loved the house, it was a beautiful old house, there were beautiful things in it.

M.P. What did your father build? Mrs. Piper Houses, he built a house for H.T. Lewson in Cook's Hill. He also built a brick butcher's shop, he built St. Joseph's Home at Sandgate, De Glorian's the printers that's up in Zarra St. and that was one of the first parquet floors put down in Newcastle. And he built a home for the Le Monte's they were the first hotel keepers in Stroud, that's the Slab Hotel I was telling you about that burnt down. He built that house, oh, I can't tell you, he was one of the biggest builders and he was an architect too, and he had all his own painters and decorators and plumbers and they all worked together for years and years, and then the Depression came and of course that was it, nobody had anything. But it was a very interesting place, it was a colourful place, because you can imagine the ships all tied up at the wharf, and the different characters, from Indians to Norwegians, and they all shopped in Wickham. Very rarely they went into Hunter St., they just stopped in Wickham.

I had a good life there, and I think it was such a colourful place, even as a child, you couldn't help comparing the people who came off the boats. You know you'd see them and you'd wonder what was their nationality and of course they'd all have different languages. They were noisy, they were noisy on the boats M.P. Where used they stay? Mrs. Piper. On the boats. See the houses on that side of the road all their back fences ran to the creek but behind their fences there was a roadway, so they only had to step off the ships and off the wharf onto the roadway. But you never ever knew what was going to happen, you weren't allowed, well especially I wouldn't want to be going out at 12 years of age, you were a bit sort of wary of these people, I don't think any of them would have hurt you at any rate, not in those days. And there was a man, I wish I could think of his name, he was a very, very big man, with a bit of dark blood in him, and he used to shanghai the men for these boats. I can't think of his name, he was notorious, he was a character in Newcastle and he was there for years and years, he just used to shanghai these fellows, drunk or whatever they might be and give them to the Captains of the boats for a price. You can think of things I may think of a whole lot of things after you've gone M.P. Well that's been great, all that about Wickham Mrs. Piper Has it? Well that's good. See when you get to turn into Albert St. there's nothing but residences. There might have been a factory, I can't remember but the thing that used to thrill me was the

Council Chambers, I don't know why, but I used to love that building and to see all the people sitting on the verandah with their cups of tea on a Saturday afternoon. You know it was really interesting but, of course, all that's gone M.P. What about the councillors, did your father have any dealings with them? Mrs. Piper. No, no he didn't, he didn't have anything to do with the council at all. He knew most of them because he was amongst them all the time but he always said he was too busy, he had too much work to do to be interested in that. But that Peter Fleming he was marvellous for Wickham. But isn't it strange how you can get one story from someone you think is going to give you the right details. And it was strange how I met this lady, she must have been about 80 I'd say, and it was pouring with rain, and she got up and she walked to the door, and she came back, and she said I don't think I'd better venture out in this. And I knew she was well educated, and she sat down beside me and I said Have you far to walk? Not now, she said, but I had a long way when I was in Wickham. Immediately I pricked my ears up and said, well I'm interested in Wickham, I was born and bred there. She said, What was your name? I said Moore. She said I've heard of Thomas Moore and she said where did you live? I said I lived with my grandmother next to the School of Arts. She said I know that house, she said I'm a Hannell. Oh, I thought, this is it, so I said Do you know I've always been interested in Linwood, the suburb, I've never known where it was. And she said I can tell you where that is, she said, that's down near our place.

And I thought this is terrible, however the place I was told about there is a Morton Bay fig tree on it still but it is not the right place. So you can get two different stories M.P. That's why you do need to check your facts Mrs. Piper. That's right. And this is when you're doing your family tree you can quite easily get the wrong dates, especially if you're going back years and years. But people have to put up with those mistakes and rectify them, get them fixed up. But I don't think I can tell you anything else, Margaret.

M.P. How about when you worked ? Mrs. Piper That was a colourful job. Well as I say Steel St. in my time, it was a street all right it was all Chinese living in houses, terrace houses, there were no markets there in my early days and it was a bad, bad street. That one, and you know the little street that goes runs along parallel with Grace Bros. Dickinson St. I think it's called, that was another one, oh, it was a bad street. But working down there was an absolute education you know you met so many people, so many different walks of life and so many different customers, a lot of them nice, some were pretty terrible but it was interesting because you had people around you all the time and I used to love it I used to think isn't this interesting to see all these different types. And the way they used to work then, the store man might be down at the bottom of the shed, weighing a bag of wheat he'd call out the weight of the wheat to you in the office you had to hear him and write it down quick and lively to give the

person their docket. And all this was intermingled the fruit market was there and Camerons Hotel on the corner well that's one of the landmarks of Newcastle that hotel. But I really enjoyed it down there M.P. What hours did you work? Mrs. Piper 9 till 5 M.P. 5 days a week? Mrs. Piper Yes M.P. For how much? Mrs Piper 12/6 a week 12/6 a week, and I did shorthand typing and bookwork, that was 12/6 a week. I went to the business college when I left school for 9 months just on 9 months I applied for this job it was mental arithmetic they tested you on and I happened to get 100% so I got the job on the spot. But it really was interesting, Margaret, because you don't realise how many different characters there are in one business you know, different types all together M.P. Were there many women working there? Mrs Piper No. I worked there I was the only girl when I went there and then I trained two girls. They had a Hamilton shop too, you know where they are now, that was the produce store I don't know what it is now and they had one of their girls working in it and that's all. But it was so colourful. It was hard work but it was colourful the people I loved more than anything else. They didn't sell poultry in those days, it was all grain and potatoes and onions. I used to do the shipping the imports if they had any exports I used to do those. M.P. It was mainly a local market then wasn't it? Mrs Piper Yes They used to get potatoes from Tasmania and onions from Tasmania or Guyra the potatoes used to come from, but when they came from

Tasmania of course it was by ship and you had to go to the Customs House and get all the paper work done before they could unload the ship you see. And from Guyra the same applied to Honeysuckle Station you had to take the papers and get them cleared and things like that. But it was interesting work, I liked it. M.P.

And you left there when you got married? Mrs. Piper Yes. And so that's the story of my life. M.P. And Boyce is related to the Arnott family? Mrs Piper His father, no his mother was Eliza Woods Arnott and there's more in Dungog than there is here about them there's oodles in Dungog. He had a colourful life too you know he used to spend a lot of the holidays with his grandmother down at Cronulla they had a house on the beachfront called The Breakers and he used to spend all of his school holidays there with his cousin who was a twin and these two boys used to go down and spend all the Christmas holidays six weeks with her, had a marvellous time. But Boyce was a colourful character himself his mind always amazed me, absolutely marvellous I think really Arnotts have got the greater history than the Pipers, although, Boyce's, wait till I think, they came from Tamworth, he was the Mayor of Tamworth, James Piper, he and his wife, the wife actually, turned on the electricity in Tamworth, threw the switch on M.P. They were Boyce's parents? Mrs Piper No, grandparents I've got it all written down in there but I don't know whether I'll get it finished now, it's a lot of work

M.P. Interesting though Mrs. Piper Oh, it is

M.P. What made you start doing it? Mrs Piper Well

I've always been interested in it Margaret, I've always been interested in the history of people my own family and connections but I thought what's the use of being interested if I don't do anything about it so I thought, well I'll start on my mothers' people first. There is an interesting story there, she was only a tiny little girl when she came out from England by ship,, I don't know I might have told you , and she had a doll when she got on the ship and it was lost overboard and the Captain was so sorry for her he made her a wooden doll out of a piece of mast it was flat faced oh it was in the Wickham place for years and years, I'd loved to have got it I don't know what happened to it, it had black boot buttons for eyes and of course a red mouth with a flat nose with the nostrils carved out it had twine for hair it's arms it's legs it's body was stuffed with anything the Captain could get and he gave her this doll on the ship and she had that well, I suppose 20years after I left there and it used to be kept in a cupboard under the staircase and some of the children they used to be naughty and they'd say well you know where the doll is No one ever liked it but me, I loved it , you know where the doll is and they'd say yes that's all they'd have to say no one would go in the cupboard where this doll was because it was stark you know it was really stark I thought it was beautiful it used to keep all the children quiet make them behave themselves I think that was a very nice story for the captain of a ship to make a wooden doll for a little girl who was

brokenhearted. Oh there's lots of things I could think of Margaret but M.P. I think that's great what I've got, really good. Mrs. Piper That enough for you?

M.P. What would you say out of all the things you've experienced what would be the thing that stands out in your mind the most? Mrs. Piper Well that's a sad thing. I can remember as clear as I'm looking at you the night my father came home from the hospital. She used to go to a hospital called Peppersi Park, where Wirraway Flats are there used to be a lovely old grey stone house there facing King St. that was the hospital, and I can remember him coming home late at night and just walking into the lounge room putting his arms on the end of a rolled couch and saying that Lydia had died. And I've never been so, how can I explain it, I've never heard anything so stark in my life M.P. It's stuck with you all these years Mrs. Piper And I was 9, and it stuck with me all that time I can see it as plain as day and the only person because everybody was devastated, there was a friend of the family visiting, his name was Arthur Baker and his wife and Arthur Baker picked me up and put me on his knee and that's another thing I'll never forget it was from the stark to the comfort you know what I mean? And I think that is the biggest thing that I can remember in my life. The other one is when I lost my sister that's not so many years ago, it might be 10 years ago, and I, I used to go, she lived at Arcadia Vale, I used to go over there to see her and she had terminal cancer and I thought, well how dreadful to end

your life like this and that's another thing it seems to me that those things stick in my mind more than anything M.P. More than the happy things? Mrs. Piper Yes and I don't know why because I'm not a morbid type of person but those things just stick there and I can also remember when they were clearing my mothers clothes out of the house we were living in Dangar St. then my mother, my father, my sister and I, 11 Dangar St. one of the side streets off Hannell St. and I can remember them packing her clothes up and I can remember seeing her one night with my father two of her sisters and their husbands at a Masonic Ball in the School of Arts M.P. You were looking through the peephole were you? Mrs. Piper Yes. She was a lovely looking woman, she had beautiful skin and beautiful hair she was tall and slim and she had a cream light serge evening frock with long sleeves and black and white satin panels on it and for years I had the shoes she wore until they fell to pieces they were white satin. I can see her as plain as day dancing round that floor and that's about the happiest thing Of course every day things are happy too but that's something that sticks in your mind and I'll always remember her like that so you get some queer ways of looking at things don't you. But I suppose if you're only 9 and your sister's 5 and you're faced with a stark thing like that, you no longer have a mother, it's pretty hard, although I was well cared for. My father and I lived with my grandmother and my sister lived with an aunt in Cook's Hill and we were always well cared for

And we always, every Sunday afternoon, my father used to take us up to Newcastle Beach and he used to always stop at the Niagra Cafe and buy us some Bulgarian Rock and some chocolates and we used to walk up to the beach , it's a stupid thing to do you know for kids, there was a fruit shop on the corner, a Greek had it, and we used to go in there and have a lime soda or something like that That wouldn't satisfy him, he'd buy a bag of fruit that big we could never eat it and then when we came home we used to get on the tram and my sister lived in Cook's Hill and we used to take her home and we'd come back to Wickham. M.P. How long did you and your sister have to live apart Mrs. Piper From when I was 9 till when I was married M.P. So you never lived together as a family again? Mrs. Piper No, that's wrong. My father remarried when I was about 13 and 1/2 and that's the only time we were apart but Phyllis had the yen to go back to Cook's Hill she was always wanting to go back to her aunty, naturally, she really didn't know her father and I because we only saw her once a week and she sort of grew apart. That's about all, it was a sad time those few years, but you get over them the same as anything else, don't you. That's about all I can tell you Margaret, I've nattered on. M.P. That's really good, we've got time on the tape if you want to natter longer. What about when you lived at Wallsend? Mrs. Piper I loved living at Wallsend. Do you remember when the trams used to run through Jesmond? M.P. Yes, my great grandfather was the tram inspector Mrs. Piper Was he. Well we lived

facing the tram line along from Newcastle Rd. if you look now and you look down at Woolies, we were living on that street that faces Woolworths. And I really loved Wallsend, I had a lot of friends and I had a lot of interests I played a lot of tennis and I was interested in the Presbyterian Church but apart from that we used to entertain a lot at home it was nothing to have 40 people in the house at a Christmas party I used to do all the cooking That was part of my life because I loved music. My nephew was a beautiful pianist and I really loved it. And then when Boyce died, in 1980, I lived there for about 13 months I suppose and I wasn't too well so that's when I can out here. But my life in Wallsend was very, very good and very, very happy I think too because I had a lot of interests. See, I've got no real interests here Margaret I can't go out unless there's transport and that makes a big difference. I used to go in the bus when I first came here but those days have passed, you must expect them I suppose. But I loved Wallsend, I really did M.P. Where did you do your shopping? Mrs. Piper In Wallsend in the early days but then of course when Woolworths came on the scene and my husband he retired on his 60th birthday. He said he was going to and his 60th birthday happened to be a Friday and he retired. They were building Woolworths just before then and he was the sort of man who was interested in everything, always used to wear khaki bib and brace overalls he'd wander down to Woolies and he'd tell them what they should do and they

all called him the supervisor. Every day of his life after he retired he went down there and he enjoyed it but his mind was so active he had to have something. Then of course he was so ill the later part of his life he couldn't do anything. But that was his life, he enjoyed Wallsend too He was a bowler he was a, what do they call it not grand master, master of the Masonic Lodge St. James in Wallsend and he enjoyed all that but once he retired he stopped all that didn't play bowls, didn't go to Lodge but he was still an honoured member of the lodge and he just wandered around, an avid crossword doer he was, get to the end of it and he'd say what's that? you may be sure it'd be a word with about 10 letters in it. But he had a good time he enjoyed that part of his life till he got so ill he couldn't do anything. But I really did like living in Wallsend see people condemn suburbs they say fancy living in Wallsend but you shouldn't do that should you? M.P. No Mrs Piper Well that's about all. What I was going to tell you was my father brought a John Brinsmead piano when I was 12, magnificent instrument it was, and I immediately started to learn the piano you know how you hate scales and theory and what have you anyhow I did it and I used to go into eisteddfods quite a lot. Anyhow there was a girl in Newcastle, her father had the Rawson Hotel, and her name was Nelly McCartney, no one ever defeated Nelly McCartney on the stage playing the piano, she was magnificent and I think she was about 19 when she went to England to further her studies and she became world famous she's given numerous command performances I don't

know whether she's still alive, she's a bit older than me I'd say she'd be about 85 now, if she's still alive. But no one ever defeated Nelly McCartney and I always think of her how marvellous she was about the piano she just made it talk you know. Pretty traumatic being in eisteddfods I don't think children should be shoved in. It's too competitive and makes you too competitive but that's how things ran out. this was a beautiful piano it was rosewood M.P. What happened to it? Mrs. Piper Hate to tell you, better not report this, my father married again and when he died my stepmother sold the piano, didn't tell me just sold it. It was rightly mine so that's a little sad thing I think that that should happen because I loved it. And I have played up to the last 12 months but of course it's been an impossibility M.P. You might be able to start again now Mrs. Piper I have started on scales and chords and things just that I can see close but I can't play anything not yet . We had this pianist I'm telling you about he'd sit down, our parties would start at half past eight, he'd sit down and he would play and play 4 o'clock in the morning he'd say well get up early in the morning Doris and I play you some classicals M.P. These were the parties you had at Wallsend? Mrs. Piper Yes they were the happiest parties they were absolutely beautiful. And he'd get up 4 o'clock in the morning and he'd be at the piano he could play anything. We'd have all these people sitting in different places in the house and everybody would be singing and I used to always stand at the piano and he'd

say to me Let's sing this I'd say right and I knew dash well he wasn't going to play it. He'd strike a few chords of this song perhaps O you beautiful doll or something start them all off and he might, they'd be all singing, and he'd be playing Alexanders ragtime band he was real humorous at the piano. That's some of the happy times of my life I really enjoyed his company and I enjoyed his wife's company because they were very close to Boyce and I. It was his sister's child's husband Joan and Lance Penfold, you might have heard of them in Toronto have you? M.P. Yes Mrs Piper His tragic death. He was a marvellous man, he was marvellous and he was so nice especially when Joan was ill he used to do everything. I used to make him a Christmas cake because Joan couldn't do anything and the last Christmas cake I made him, he worked at the Customs House, he dashed in and I said well here's your cake Penny, I said will you have some lunch he said no, I've got to get home I've got to get the brassware cleaned before Joan gets home and I always remember him sitting in my kitchen saying that to me and that was the last time I saw him, he was marvellous. And he gave me and everybody else hours and hours of pleasure. He'd say to me what did I play there and I'd show him what he'd played and he'd say I don't remember doing that that's how good he was, you know. Don't record all this Margaret, just record the other. That's all I can tell you, I can't think of anything else really. Probably when you've gone I'll think of a whole lot of things M.P. Well we can always record

some more if you want to later on. That's all really good thank for doing it Mrs. Piper My pleasure M.P. Thank you for agreeing to do it Mrs. Piper I was as nervous as a cat ~~ADDITION TO TAPE LATER SAME DAY~~ M.P. We'll get back to the Arnott factory Mrs. Piper What do you want me to say M.P. Just what you were telling me. Mrs. Piper Well i suppose that would have still been Parry St. on the corner of Parry and Melville St as it was then was the factory I think the building still stands and there was a door and a window and you used to pop your pillowcase through the window the door wasn't open, just through the window hand in your sixpence or your shilling or what ever and you would get your pillowcase filled with broken biscuits M.P. And you did that yourself? MRS PIPER Yes ,I just put the pillow case through the window and they would take it and out it would come filled with biscuits and everybody used to look in the pillowcase and try to find those little coconut macaroons you know and that was where you got them I think that building's still there I think the factory itself is gone but that building is still there what about the paddock do you want to know about that? M.P. Tell me about that MRS PIPER On the paddock opposite the house and he had it for his horses that carried his carts and things and he used to allow the circuses to pitch their tents or do what they wanted there when they came to town and I don't know whether he was paid for it knowing him I suppose he would be but that's his way of doing things and then behind that all

the China men had their gardens and that is now Hamilton South . M.P What about Leslie Arnott's house? MRS PIPER It is in national trust now a friend of mine just took some pictures of it , for me to put in my album but that is a beautiful home and strangely enough there is a friend of Barbara's who comes here quite frequently and her mother she would be older than I am she used to visit the Arnott's in that house she lives at Catherine Hill Bay and I live here but of course she was too old to remember anything much she used to go and visit them and was quite friendly with them there's lots of other things Margaret but I'll have to look them up M.P He had his own cattle to get the milk for the Milk Arrowroots MRS PIPER Yes I won't quote the streets because I don't think this is the right place Pat is talking about, there's a house in Waratah a beautiful old brick home I think it's the one opposite Stevensons florist and he bought that property no he built it and he bought 200 head of cattle because he had such a demand for Milk Arrowroot biscuits and Milk Coffee he wanted the milk supply and he ran the cattle on that and that was classed as his country home M.P What about the house at Toronto MRS PIPER Well when I lived at Toronto Arnotts lived there permanently at some time or other because my father did some work for them and they lived there and so did one of the daughters and they seemed to be always there Margaret M.P And that's the house that's now the yacht club . Well once again thank's for talking to me, thanks for agreeing to the interview. Thats

the end of the interview Margaret Probert and MRS Piper.

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I, DORIS PIPER give my
permission to MARGARET PROBERT

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 ARCHIVES OF NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY

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

Signed D. Piper

Date 13.7.88

Interviewer M. Probert

NAME MARGARET PROBERT.

COURSE OPEN FOUNDATION

CLASS WEDNESDAY 7pm-9pm

SUBJECT AUSTRALIAN HISTORY

TOPIC RESEARCH PROJECT

William Arnott The man and his
factory till 1908

By the latter half of the 19th century Newcastle had shed its image as a place of secondary punishment for convicts and was being established as an industrial area. A number of industries were emerging which would compete with, and eventually overtake, coal mining as the areas traditional source of income and employment. Included amongst these industries were the Copper Smelter, established at Burwood in 1853; the Hunter River Smelting Works established in 1867 and the Tin Works opened at Stockton in 1873. (1).

The population of the area was increasing as can be seen from the census figures for the District of Newcastle and Northumberland recorded in 1881 and 1891. These show a population increase of 26,482 persons in 10 years. (2). Goods for domestic consumption and household use were always required and a number of small firms were established to produce these goods locally. This had two major benefits, it provided an additional source of employment and reduced the cost of many items as transport costs were reduced. Although most of these firms provided only for the local market some achieved success throughout the colony.

1 J WIndross Historical Records of Newcastle 1797-1897

facimile reprint Nth Sydney 1978 pp17-19

2 Ibid pp 57-58

Of all the small business's established bakeries were the most prolific and a large number of these are mentioned in Turner's Who Was Who In The Hunter Valley Towns in 1888 and in the 1901 Federal Directory of Newcastle. Amongst those listed was one who, from a small shop in Hunter St. expanded his business to the extent that his name is well known today.

William Arnott was born in 1827 at Pathead, near Fifeshire, Scotland. After serving his apprenticeship as a baker and pastrycook William and his brother David emigrated to Australia arriving in Sydney in 1850 on the sailing ship the Sir Edward Parry. After spending twelve months as bakers in the Maitland district the brothers set out to make their fortunes in the Turon River goldfields but William soon discovered he was able to earn more money making pies for the miners than by gold prospecting. (3)

In 1853 William set up as a baker and confectioner in West Maitland but was virtually ruined by the floods of 1857, 1861 and 1864. (4) He left Maitland owing his creditors 6000 pounds, a debt he later repaid in full(5) and in 1865 with a capital of 14 pounds he leased a small shop in Hunter St. He built a small oven at the

3 Arnotts Limited. A message to our employees 1985

4 Ibid

5 Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate
5/8/1901 p5

rear of the shop and was soon established baking bread at night and biscuits, cakes and pies by day. The business flourished and in 1874 William's eldest son James Hayden Leslie Arnott became involved in the business (6).

In 1877 the first Arnott factory was built at Melville St. (now Union St.) The Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners Advocate reported on the new factory describing it as a brick building comprising two stories with piped water throughout. The factory included a number of labour saving devices such as a revolving pan and rolling and cutting machines. The paper stated the biscuits were of excellent quality, the ship biscuits

"equal, if not superior, to any imported to Newcastle, and being sold at 2d per lb are considerably cheaper than those which are made elsewhere." (7)

The business flourished and in 1880 the Herald reported the factory "is among the foremost of local industries" employing 40 to 50 hands. The factory had been increased in size by the addition of extensive out buildings and cellarages and the machinery was capable of turning out 1 ton 15 cwt of biscuits per day. (8)

6 Arnotts Message

7 N.M.H. 1/9/1877 p2

8 N.M.H. 8/9/1880 p8

In 1882 the factory began sending biscuits to Sydney and by 1885 had grown to such an extent that it now provided employment for 300 men and women.(9). Two farms were also established with 200 cows to ensure a constant supply of milk for the factory's most popular product(10 Milk Arrowroot. Mrs Doris Piper recalls family stories of cows being kept on William's country property at Waratah and in 1904 the Herald reported on a dairy at Kennington where 80 cows were kept. (11)

In addition to his business interests William had a deep concern for the needs of the community and was involved with many charitable institutions. One charity he was deeply involved with was the Newcastle Benevolent Society to which he bequeathed 1000 pounds in its formative years. (12). He was president of the Society from 1897 until his death in 1901 (13). In 1888 the Government made a grant of 5 acres of land at Waratah to the Society and William was one of the first trustees involved in the plans to build a hospital on the site.

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|----|------------------------|-----------|----|
| 9 | <u>Arnotts Message</u> | | |
| 10 | <u>Ibid</u> | | |
| 11 | <u>N.M.H.</u> | 6/7/1904 | p6 |
| 12 | <u>N.M.H.</u> | 23/7/1901 | p5 |
| 13 | <u>N.M.H.</u> | 5/8/1901 | p8 |

When the building fund was established in 1893 it was opened with two 50 pound cheques, one from William Arnott the other from Mrs. Arnott. In 1894 the Arnott family erected one of the two memorial cottages for aged couples on the Society's land.(14). William was president of the Young Mens Christian Association from 1888 till 1897 and was Superintendant of the Newcastle Wesleyan Sunday School for 22 years and later held the same position at Mayfield for 6 years. (15)

The Arnott factory was a source of employment for many especially with the growth of the firm after 1894 when William took his five sons into partnership. The sons eventually took over the management of the factory which expanded with the introduction of new ideas and machinery (16). From its 40- 50 workers in 1880 the firm employed 500 men and women in 1902 (17) and by 1904 it had 650-700 employees.(18).The factory was one of the main areas of employment for the women of Newcastle as in 1904 three quaters of Newcastle's female factory employees worked at four major firms, the dressmaking sections of Kingsboroughs, Scotts and Winns and at the Arnotts Biscuit Factory. (19).

- 14 Newcastle Western Suburbs Hospital 1885-1985
100 years of service Printed Lambton 1985
- 15 N.M.H. 23/7/1901 p5
- 16 N.M.H. 6/7/ 1904 p6
- 17 N.M.H. 13/2/1902 p4
- 18 N.M.H. 6/7/1904 p4
- 19 J.C. Docherty Newcastle the making of an Australian city Sydney 1983. pp 51-52.

No record of industrial dispute can be found in newspapers of the period reports show the employees to be treated fairly. In 1880 the two tinsmiths employed by the firm resided on the premises and were paid 9 pounds per fortnight. (20). When the Arnotts Great Northern Bread Factory was established at Hamilton in 1902 the twelve employees were provided with a bathroom and dressing room (21). Each year all employees were treated to a picnic day, travelling by train with their families and friends to Toronto where luncheon was served and entertainment and sports events were provided.

The completion of the Newcastle to Sydney rail link in 1889 along with the increasing popularity of the product eventually led to Newcastle's loss of this thriving business. In 1894 the Newcastle factory was unable to cope with the demand and a second factory was established at Forest Lodge. In 1908 a new factory was constructed on six and one half acres of land at Homebush. Many leading hands were drawn from the Cook's Hill plant which was then partially closed. (22) This partial closure reduced the female workforce to 100 (23)

20 N.M.H. 18/9/1880 p8

21 N.M.H. 1/12/1902 p7

22 J.Turner Manufacturing in Newcastle 1801- 1900
published Newcastle 1980 p67

23 J.Docherty Newcastle the making of an Australian
city Sydney 1983 pp51-52

Why did Newcastle lose such a valuable asset in terms of local employment? Newcastle's advantage of close proximity to coal for use in the ovens was greatly outweighed by the Homebush factory being ideally placed for ready access to the State's rail system (24) and therefore to markets throughout the colony. Perhaps the cost of upgrading the Newcastle factory was prohibitive. Perhaps the apparent apathy of the people was a factor as no public outcry was recorded when the decision to partially close was made.

24 J Turner Manufacturing in Newcastle 1801-1900
published Newcastle 1980 pp 67-68.

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