

Transcription

Tape 01

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So Ted, let's just begin by talking about your childhood, growing up in Cunnamulla and then perhaps moving on to your move down to Brisbane from Cunnamulla. Let's talk about Cunnamulla first.

Well I don't remember a great deal about it except of course going to school with my sister. It was just a mixed student school. Cunnamulla was only a village. The railway finished at Wyandra those days. It didn't go through

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Cunnamulla. I went there until I was seven years of age at school. We wore those high peaked, straw mushroom hats. They were known as mushroom hats with a very wide brim and that carried the anti fly string which you

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wrapped down around your neck. It was sheep country and the flies were very bad. They sort of attacked your eyes. I should have been born in Cunnamulla but there were no medical facilities, no hospital, the railway finished at Wyandra then so my mother had to come to Brisbane for the birth.

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I was born in Brisbane. That's how I came to be born in Brisbane.

And you moved down here at the age of seven, to Brisbane?

Yes. We came down when I was seven years old to Brisbane. We lived in

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Merton Street in South Brisbane - a rented house there. And my father was a Methodist, a churchman, but sort of a lay preacher. So I had a lot of religion pumped into me when I was young. Church on Sunday morning. My mother

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was the organist. Used to be at church with a big hamper basket. She used to play the organ and it was church in the morning at ten o'clock. Sunday school in the

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afternoon. Church again in the evening. So by the time I was sixteen I had a little bit too much religion. I was a very good church goer for many years after that. Those days on a Sunday, primitive Methodist

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people and they don't believe in theatres, no dances. On Sunday they used to draw the blinds in the house. I remember the story told, I was walking along behind my father whistling and he said, 'Don't whistle! People will think you're happy.'

Was it a happy childhood for you?

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Reasonably so. He was a bit too fond of the razor strap he used to belt us with. He used to use that fairly frequently. There five in the family and though he had a reasonable government job he had to be careful financially.

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We couldn't have butter and jam on the bread. We could have butter or jam but not both. That was one of the rules at the time. Charles was pretty good. Took the good with the bad. But he was a bit too fond of using the razor strap.

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Do you remember what it was like when you arrived in Brisbane, which I imagine, you said Cunnamulla was a small town, it must have been quite a big change for you?

Oh yes it was. Quite a big change. The school was different too. It was a much bigger school of course. Just a boys' school only whereas Cunnamulla was

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a mixed school. So my sister went to the girls' school which adjoined the boys' school at Dutton Park near the Brisbane Gaol at Park Road Railway Station. Quite handy.

And was that where you first did cadets at the boys' school?

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Yes at school. We used to do the cadet drill and we had the Lee Enfield rifles, 25 / 22 calibre. And we used to use that for shooting at the rifle range. There was a rifle range in Adelaide Street where the shrine is now. That

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fence along Adelaide Street was a galvanised iron fence, the whole frontage and the range was in behind that. That's where we used to do our shooting - firing practise. I was a fairly good shot as a youngster. And later on of

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course, we had to, we had compulsory military training. So we had a .303 rifle and we used to shoot at the range up to 600 yards. But as I say I was a fairly good shot.

What would the target be?

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The targets would be about - they used to rise and fall - they just come up and when you finish your five rounds they'd be pulled down. The mark's marked and they're pulled back up again and you see your score, and where your shots had been. But I got the maximum at 200 yards range - 10 out of

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10. But we shot up to 600 yards and that was out at Frazer's paddock. The rifle range at Canoundra

So was it actually a cut out of a figure of another man?

No, no. A target. A target. A bullseye with an inner ring and outer ring. Be

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about, the bullseye would be about four inches across. Then there was a circle outside it. Used to fire your shot, the target would be taken down, the shot would be marked, the target would be pulled up and you could see

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where you hit, so if you made too much allowance for the wind or corrected it. 600 yards was difficult because the wind defeated you. 100 yards was not so bad, but 200 is because it was a fairly big bullseye compared to the 100 yards. I found the 100 yards easy.

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When you were training as a cadet, what do you think you were learning these skills for? Did you imagine you'd go on to be a soldier?

No. It was just part of the school curriculum. Learning discipline. I think that's a good one. There wasn't any thought of war. It wasn't thought of at the time. That came later.

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Were you aware of the Boer War as a child?

No, I can't recall much of it. A bit too early for me.

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Okay, so let's talk a little about now if you finished school, or actually war commences, doesn't it, while you're still at school?

No, I had left school. I was working in the Auditor General's Department when war broke out so I had finished school but in the middle of the school

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year we moved from Kangaroo Point where I was going to Kangaroo Point school, which is where TAFE[Technical and Further Education] college is now. We moved to Dutton Park half way through the year. I wanted to finish the year at Kangaroo Point School because I was fairly confident of winning the Dux medal, which I did. So I walked from Dutton Park to Kangaroo Point, bare footed over gravel roads

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for six months of the year. Stone bruises were a common place because there was no bitumen. It was quite a long walk. About more than two miles. Those days children had to put up with much more than they do today. I mean they're driven everywhere today. We just had to walk.

Do you think that that experience helped you when you eventually...

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I think so. You certainly were not brought up on the belief the world owed you a living. I mean discipline was quite strict. Children were spoken to when you spoke to them, before that they kept quiet. That was the story of the

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upbringing and training. Fairly strict. There were five in the family - four boys and one girl. My sister became a school teacher. She taught at a girls' school - Dutton Park - that adjoined the boys' school. I guess we didn't have

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far to walk from Dutton Park to that school. And then we sat for the junior university exam - the scholarship, first of all the scholarship and I got dengue fever when the scholarship exam was on so I missed it, but I was given it. I was given a scholarship to secondary college so I didn't get to

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grammar school but I went to technical college which was then in a boot factory in Adelaide Street. There was no campus. Three storeyed building in Anne Street with a laneway through from the back door through to Adelaide

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Street and that was the college and I was the star pupil for the college and a bit of a scallywag, up to all the pranks about the place and at Kangaroo Point School we had a Maths teacher whose name was Zero Longworth. He was called Zero because he referred to 'nought' as 'zero' and that was quite

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uncommon in those days. He was the only man we knew that called it zero so he was named Zero and he could use the cane. He'd have to get the approval of the headmaster and I used to cop the cane quite a lot because

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although I was the star pupil I was also the chief prankster and he used to say 'Smout, come out, turn about...' because he always came from the back - 'Hand out!' and six cuts with the lawyer cane - pretty savage! And then in due course when I went to technical college he became a teacher at the

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college. He couldn't use the cane then of course but his penalty was to give you impositions. You'd have to write them out at home. I used to collect such a hoard of impositions which I never did that I wouldn't be able to do any homework and at the end of the term, the beginning of the new term, he used to read out this awful list and say 'We'll wipe the slate clean. Start

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afresh.' It wasn't long before we'd all accumulated some more. But luckily he never had the last class so he used to wait at the back door to try and catch me going out but with all the pupils on my side, they'd tick me off and I'd go out the front door. If he was waiting at the front door I'd go out the back and

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that was the only way he could keep me back was to catch me leaving. He was never able to do it so I never had any impositions. He was a very good teacher because I was popular with him. I remember one time he had

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algebra going along at the black board and half way through I was ahead of him - I was finished. He said 'You're not paying attention, Smout! Are you interested?' And I said 'I'm interested.' and he said 'I suppose you know the

answer?? and I said 'Yes, I've already done it.' So he gave me the chalk and alongside his I just did about three lines and QED [quod erat demonstrandum ('that which was to be demonstrated'), a notation which is often placed at the end of a mathematical proof to indicate its completion]. He scratches his head. He didn't like that.

Ted, tell me, we were talking before about your working in the Auditor General's office when war was declared.

Yeah, well how I came to be in the Auditor General's office, the Deputy

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Auditor General - W.H. Austin, he had twin sons and I was coaching them in mathematics ready for the exam and he asked me if I'd like to join the auditor's office and I had no idea about the public service except the public service had an extra examination for the junior on the Saturday morning and I didn't even go for it. 'That's unfortunate.' he said, 'Because to get in the

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auditor's office you have to finish among the top seven in Queensland.' I don't think I've got a hope. But I finished up second. I just missed the Linley medal. So I was eligible to go to the auditor's office, which I did. In those days you were appointed under a special act of parliament. You weren't a public servant. The auditor general wasn't a public servant. He

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was more like a Supreme Court judge and we were in the same class but unfortunately we had no union and we weren't active whereas with the clerk's union, they were active and they finished up getting better salaries than we were getting and a few of them weren't even qualified. So I'd

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reached a stage where I decided I wanted to stay in the auditor's office and I was still there when the war broke out and I went from the auditor's office straight into camp and of course off to France for four years with the Australian Imperial Force. I joined the army medical corps merely because

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some British general said mateship was bad for discipline. Mates have to be separated. Three of us had enlisted together and we wanted to stay together and they put us into separate units in the infantry. And the only way we could get together was to transfer. So we applied for the artillery but there were no vacancies and we were told there was a vacancy out in the medical

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corps, and that's the only reason we joined the medical corps, which we did. And the three of us went through the whole war together. One of them got the Military Medal at Passchendaele. We three survived. Whereas mateship was one of the best things in the army, not the worst. It enabled you to survive.

Can you just tell us a little bit about what the feeling was amongst your friends and your family when it was announced that war had broken out in Europe?

In those days the Australian population was essentially British, not like later,

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there were a lot of Greeks and later Italians. There were a few German settlers living up round the lower area but they returned quite a few of them as soon as the war broke out. They didn't give any trouble. But as I say the population was essentially British and we looked on England as the mother

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country. We always spoke of England as the mother country. My father was a cockney. My mother was born in Australia but of English parents so an English background and ninety per cent of the Australian population had a British

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background. Mostly English but some Scotch and a few Irish but mostly Scotch and English. So they were very much affiliated with Great Britain in the war and the Australian - AIF - Australian Imperial Force was formed and you enlisted in the Australian Imperial Force which was attached to the

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British Army, under British generals who were floating the war on the Crimean War textbook. They were hopeless. We really never saw them at the front. They just put men up against positions, in front of machine guns, casualties very heavy. It wasn't until the Australian division of the Army

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Corps were put under General Monash, later Sir John Monash, that the Australian Army were able to do things. And the first battle was the Battle of Messina.

I'd like to talk about that just in a moment. Could you just come back a little bit because I'd like to go into some detail about Messina and Monash but Ted if before we get to that, if you could begin with your training in Brisbane when you first began with the medical corps. What sort of things did you do in your training?

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In the training we learned first aid of course but I went to the Department of Bacteriology which was up in Wickham Terrace where we made vaccines. They had a cow there, we used to strap it onto the galvanised top table, turn it up on its side and scrape off the mucus off the sores and that was drained off

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and they used to break that down into smallpox vaccination. That was one thing we learned to do. We learned to make flu vaccines too but I became a water specialist. I was trained to test water and treat it because in France the farmhouses there were built like a ?U? and in the middle of the ?U? there

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was this huge, like a huge cesspit about as big as this room or bigger. Everything went into it. And the well would only be fifty feet away from that so it was polluted, but of course the French children had it since they were babies. It didn't affect them but if our troops had drunk it, it would

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have killed them so we used to go forward and lock the well up, test the water and chlorinate it - make it fit for drinking. We weren't particular popular but we did not lose one soldier in the whole of the war from drinking polluted water which was quite remarkable. It was an important job. And I was the only trained water tester in the Australian Army. Because the 3rd Division was a newly formed division, it was the only one that had what

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was called a sanitary section. They call it the hygiene section now. The 3rd Division had only 27 men. All specialists. We had our own avenues and when a stunt [battle] was on we'd use our ambulance and we'd link up with the

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10th Field Ambulance and do the stretcher bearing and man the dressing section. That's the only time we really did any first aid work was when there was a stunt on. The rest of the time we had jobs to go and inspect the camps and put up health requirements. We had plumbers who made grease traps and carpenters who made latrines so we were able to go into the rest camp

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and we had one stripe so we didn't have to do fatigue work and I could go into a camp and give the colonel written instructions on what had to be done in regard to camp health. We had two qualified health inspectors with the unit. From them we learned sufficient to do the inspection of the camps.

Can you remember much of the trip across to England?

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Yes, we went across on a troop ship called the Demosthenes. It was a British ship that had 1200 men aboard - very crowded. The 41st Battalion, there was a cyclist corps and a legal corps and our unit and the troopship colonel was

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Colonel Rankin of Rankin Collieries and he was a retired colonel. He just left everything to a Pommy sergeant major. He was the orderly room sergeant. He was very officious - universally hated - and bingo, then called housie,

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was illegal because we had a housie game and we used to play this on deck and we were all up on deck in our shorts and we'd give warning if he was coming. Say 'Here he comes, here he comes.' and he actually had an order put up on the notice board saying that any troops saying 'Here he comes.' as he approached, anyone found guilty of that would be prosecuted. So when he

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came the next day when he passed and after he passed we said 'There he goes, the bastard. There he goes, the bastard!?' So we still played housie and right at the rear of the deck one of the Pommy soldiers had a Crown and Anchor board so we used to gamble on it.

Tell me what a Crown and Anchor board is.

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It's a board of about nine squares with the anchor and the crown. And you threw dice and the dice were marked 'crown' and 'anchor' and they'd come up one dice, or two and three and you had to pay according to what came up and the winning one took the money.

Would they play 'two up' on the ship?

Oh 'two up' was played regularly. Again illegal but when he come we had

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warning so he was never able to catch us. But when we got to Cape Town, we went to Durban, we left Sydney and went round to Perth where we formed a convoy with about six other troop ships. We called into Durban for a day then we went round to Cape Town to refuel the steamships with coal. There

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were no cranes. Refuelling's done by an endless chain of kaffirs - niggers - and they had a soft basket which they carried on their shoulder, full of coal. Endless chain of them going up and they just tipped it into the hold of the ship. This was how it was loaded and we went to shore every day and

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marched for exercise and we never broke ranks because we were told by the colonel if we were due to leave the last day before we left then on the last day we were told that the mayor of Cape Town was afraid of so many troops coming ashore that he didn't want us there, and the mayor heard about this

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and sent a note aboard that this wasn't true. They were waiting to welcome us. That was the signal for everyone to break ship which we did. We had a great time. You couldn't buy a drink - they insisted on paying for it. And

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eventually - I forget what they call it now - six or ten men go rounding us up and they pulled the troop ship out in the middle of the harbour, took us aboard in dinghies as we went up to check our name and number. The prosecuting officer was Lieutenant Ash, a cousin of Oscar Ash and I was

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a second cousin of Oscar Ash. My mother was his first cousin. And we were manning the hospital so I warned him, when you do field punishment you can't be made to do ordinary duties, so I warned him if we got field punishment we wouldn't be able to man the hospital and there were two or three serious cases there so he came and said 'I'll just ask you some

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questions and you say 'yes' to every question.' Don't do anything, just say 'yes'.' So the exam came and after he said 'Remember the day of breaking ship?' - yes - 'You were standing there at the gangway?' - yes - 'And you were swept off your feet, found yourself ashore?' - yes - 'So you decided as you were ashore you might as well stay??' - yes. So we weren't fined. It was involuntary desertion. We were pardoned. Otherwise they'd have been in real trouble so that was how we got out of that.

You say that there were some people who were quite ill on the boat?

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Going across the line the sergeant there was so unpopular, bit of a showman; we were thrown off - the canvas tub on the deck. We had this filled and we were tossed into it and he wanted to do a bit of a turn so as he was going he

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did a somersault and landed on his head. Fractured a bone in his neck. So he finished up in hospital but that saved his life because he didn't ever rejoin the unit. I'm sure had he rejoined it he would have been shot from behind. He

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was hated by everybody. The Pommy. We were just Australians - colonials. Very much - we were looked on, we were just colonials.

I'd like to talk about that more later but - because obviously that was a very significant part of the Australian experience in Europe - but before we get into that, just quickly, did you pick up South African soldiers when you stopped in Durban?

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No, no, no. Purely for refuelling in Cape Town. We only pulled into Durban - I forget what for. We marched there but we had no particular reason to call in there. And then we went round to Cape Town for ten days for refuelling

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and re-watering but our condenser broke down so we lost the water supplies so we pulled into Madeira Island for water. We were warned that no one was to go for a swim there because of sharks and these native boys would come out and dive for pennies and threepences and they raised the price to sixpence and that

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was the warning. They'd go for nothing so half the ship went overboard. There were no sharks but they sold Madeira wine - two bob a bottle, Madeira wine. And the YMCA [Young Men's Christian Association] note paper it had the king's photograph on one side and a cannon on the other and the letters in red. It was not unlike our ten shilling note and we were swiping these back as change for pound notes till

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the wrong officer got one back in his change. Kicked up such a fuss they realised they'd been taken. So they got screwed. They'd come to the port hole and you'd put out two bob for a bottle of wine and you'd get a bottle of water. This feud went on and we used to pull them into the side of the boat and tip the bucket of offal over them. The capers we got up to. Fun and games.

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Who would you tip the offal over?

It was put in big - all the scraps were put in big tubs. We used to chuck it over on them.

Interviewee: Ted Smout Archive ID 1145 Tape 02

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Okay Ted, I'd just like to go now to your arrival in France. And you arrived to the coldest winter in 40 years?

We went to England. We had - we left in May. We got to England in late

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June and we were there until November. At Lark Hill Camp, Salisbury Plains. Not far from Salisbury City and Salisbury Cathedral and Stonehenge. We were quite fit because we used to do about a five mile march every day.

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We were very fit. Then eventually in November 1916 we went across to Le Havre - across the Channel - to an overnight camp at Le Havre - disembarkation camp. But I got into Le Havre township that night, polished

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off a few French liqueurs and got back and got into the wrong tent and unfortunately somebody in the tent got mumps. I'd had mumps but they still isolated the whole tent which was stupid so the unit moved on and I was kept in this camp. It was an English run camp. It had a captain in charge who we

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wouldn't see very often. There was a Pommy sergeant major in charge and we were there for a week or more. We had

no hot meals, just bully beef and biscuits and the tents had about a tenth of the sides missing, freezing cold. The blankets were wet and frozen stiff. You could put them up against

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the fence like a board. No charcoal burners and we'd been there a week or more. You couldn't draw any pay because it was a British camp and when you went round to scrub the floors at the YMCA which was run by Frank Beaurepaire, who later became Sir Frank Beaurepaire, and he was off to get

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some morning tea and brought back some rolls, put the bread rolls down, went back to get some butter and by the time he got back the bread rolls had gone. We told him we hadn't seen bread for a week - told him what was happening and he said ?Why don't you ask to be paraded?? and we

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said ?We have asked but he refused to do it.? It was quite illegal. So he told us the next day to appoint a spokesman and he'd get an officer onto it the next day. So I was appointed the spokesman. So we had our blankets up against the fence like boards and showed the officers this and told them the sad story about the food - not having any meals, only bully beef and biscuits,

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and he called in another sergeant and put him in charge and had this other sergeant major under rapid arrest. We marched off. We learned later that he got six months jail and a dishonourable discharge. He'd been flogging the rations to the French people. We got a tobacco ration straight away. But we

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couldn't draw any money because it was a British camp. But we had no money but we got new tents with good sides, groundsheets to lie on, palliasses, which were straw filled mattresses, and we were reasonably comfortable. We had three weeks of this before I was able to move up and rejoin the unit. That was one of the worst experiences in the whole of the war in the base camp.

What was it like, Ted, when you grew up with this idea of Great Britain as the motherland and no doubt, looked to Great Britain as being the mother country and a great country, to encounter the British

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Army in this way - and to find that they were in fact unsupportive and not in any way generous to you as Australians.

Huge difference between English units and the Scots units was incredible. The Scots soldiers were more like Australians but the Pommy, see anyone

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who went to what they call a Public School which was a private school, automatically got a commission. Not a question of his capacity. If he went to a Public School he got a commission. So the strong caste system - the upper class and the lower class - and the ordinary Tommy [English soldier] was the lower class and if the officer was lost, the NCO [Non Commissioned Officer] didn't know what to do. There was

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nobody to take over. Whereas in the army - the Australian Army, and the Scots Army, there was always somebody - officer was killed, somebody would step in - sergeant or private, somebody would step in and take charge. There was

always somebody to take responsibility. The Scots Army was the same. So there was that very great distinction. The poor old Tommy, they

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all sat around. Strong caste system. He was just taught to obey orders and not ask questions. They were just cannon fodder. The British generals were following the Crimean text books but we never saw them. Didn't have much

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of an opinion of them. The infantry was just cannon fodder put up against impregnable positions, facing machine guns. Casualties were terrible. It matched the Australian Army Corps was put up by General John Monash,

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who later became Sir John Monash and under his command the Australian Army - the first battle under his command was highly successful. And of course he finished up in charge of the whole Australian Army Corps. And the Battle of Hamel was a copy book exercise

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in the new use of the tanks - use the tanks alongside the infantry whereas previously they'd go on ahead. That was a copybook exercise which was copied by the other generals.

So Ted, were you there for the Battle of Hamel?

No, no. We were up at Ypres, further north, on that front but not at Hamel.

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Hamel was 1st Division, we were 3rd Division. We were on that advance because we were pulled down there in April 1918 when the Germans broke through the advance. They could have gone straight through

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to Paris in trucks because there was nobody left. The British Army lost all their guns, even their rifles but they stopped to consolidate and the Australian Army shifted down from Belgium to the front and far beyond and we used to

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attack every night. The Germans thought we were strong and we were. So that gave us from April til August to build up, which with American supply, built up unbelievably. On August 8th the advance at Villers Bretonneux, the field police were almost touching each other. Aeroplanes, you name it, they

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had everything. Terrific. So the British advance was quite as successful as the Germans. They went right through and we finished up in the north in an army hospital and of course that was a champagne district so the courtyard of

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the hospital was a big bed of strawberry plants and they were big plants, big leaves. But round every plant was a bottle of champagne so we had a good

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supply. The officers wondered where we were getting it from. It was a well kept secret. But then the advance went from there and was quite successful

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of course. The 3rd Division. Villers Bretonneux was the headquarters of it. That's where the big memorial is now still with more than a thousand names on it. Many died - unknown men - no grave.

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Ypres was well remembered because the whole town was shattered. Even the clock tower and cathedral - practically nothing left of it and we were billeted in the basement of the French prison, underground, so we were

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quite safe there. We sort of moved out of Ypres onto a field near there and we occupied three pill boxes. They were concrete buildings. And there were 27 of us, we split up 9 in each and we were under shell fire and one night we were being shelled and this chap arrived in long flannel

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underwear in the dark and we thought it was a German. It was one of our own unit and apparently a shell landed alongside the pill box he was in and he got panicky and he ran a couple of hundred yards through the shell fire and landed on our unit because we discovered who he was but he was just shell shocked.

I'd like to talk more about the various reactions of soldiers and the experience of actually being fighting in action but just let's for now keep

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moving forward. And let's just talk about Armistice and where you were at Armistice.

The Armistice, we were back a fair way from the front in a rest camp in a little village called Fouquohertnesle ? F-O-U-Q-U-O-H-E-R-T, 'her' meaning

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'near' and N-E-S-L-E s the name of the river it was near. So we were in this little village, there was one hotel we used to drink in and that night the hotel owner just threw the place open - free drinks for all. So we spent the

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whole night there and the next day I decided I'd go to Paris which I did ? AWL [Absent Without Leave] - so I got on the train and got to Paris and I had ten days there before I was picked up by a British MP [Military Police], sergeant, put on the train back to the unit and the OC [Officer Commanding] asked me if I'd been picked up, said, 'I'll have to charge you otherwise I'm in trouble.' I said 'Yes.' So he put me up and fined me 14

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days pay which I thought was a bit silly because the war was over but it was worth it. I had a great time in Paris because I was skilled in French. I'd learned French at school, college, so I was quite good at it - a second

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language. I had a pretty good supply of French money because in the advance in April 18 we struck a group of German prisoners coming back unarmed and we'd just made a pot of morning tea so we boiled the billy and gave them tea and some cigarettes and the officer he had a pocket in the tail

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of his tunic and he pulled out - he'd drawn the company pay, so he handed me this wad of German notes. So when we got back to the village bank I went and cashed half of it in French money, kept half of it in case Germany

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won the war, so when I went off to Paris I had a few thousand francs in French money. It was quite good so I booked into a hotel The Rue Calais,

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about two hundred yards from the Folies Bergere. Just to go to the Folies Bergere. Had a great time. Really enjoyed it. Until I was picked up and passed on the Concord by this Tommy MP and he put me on the train and as I said, it cost me 14 days pay. When the war was over I was on leave in

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England, intending of course to go back to France, and I had a souvenir, I had a piece of the cockpit from the Red Baron's plane because when it landed I was one of the first there and I cut a piece of the cockpit off. I didn't take that because I expected to get back to France but I didn't go back. I applied to the corps at Oxbury Road and they said ?What did you do

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before the war?? and I said ?I was in the auditor general's department? and he said ?Come off it, what did you really do?? So I had this letter from the auditor general which I'd been carrying and showed him so I got a job

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straight away on sergeant's pay and two guineas a week allowance on top of that so I rented a flat sharing with a chap from Western Australia in Chelsea, so six months in London after the war. I got to know London quite well and of course we got theatre passes and I enjoyed that six months in London and eventually I decided I'd better get home but the OC told me that I was

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marked down for cadre duty. I'd been marked down for cadre duty in France but they broke it and kept it here so I thought I'm going to get back so I won't be able to break this cadre. ?There's no work unless you get a commission.? I said, ?I don't want a post royal commission.: so I went around to see the auditor general Sir Arthur Robinson, I had this letter of introduction

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to him ... which I produced. He said ?You've been carrying this around in your pocket for nearly four years, I suppose you've got a reason?? I said ?Yes.? I told him I wanted to get back to Australia so he called a typist and dictated a letter to the editor in general, signed Peter Secondra from the auditor's office. ?For the duration of the war my services are required???

So you arrived back here. You travelled back here on a ship?

A thousand tonner which was a small ship. I came the southern route direct to Melbourne, apparently an English short cut. The weather was atrocious.

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Absolutely atrocious but two of us helped each other reconciling the papers with the ledger sheets so we were able to get up onto the bridge next to the captain's cabin where we had this desk to do this clerical work every day. So we got fresh air. The rest of the troops of course were terribly sick. We

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weren't because first of all I'd never been seasick in my life but on top of that we had this fresh air. We had this job of reconciling the pay book which was quite interesting. We did that. Then I discovered that Eric Abraham, the other World War I digger surviving, he came back on the Eureka, the same ship. I hadn't met him but when he mentioned Eureka, I said I

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reconciled your paper. So we still see Eric. He and I are going to lead the Anzac march. The other World War I veteran surviving in Queensland.

And you'll do that in Brisbane?

Yes. We go up to Brisbane. He'll be in one and I'll be in the other and we lead the march.

So you arrived back here in 1919, yeah?

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Yes. Got back here in September, 8th September or was it August. I was discharged on the 8th September.

And what was that like, coming back to Australia after four years? Had things changed in that time?

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Not greatly but the great disappointment to me was when I left the auditor's office, I was promised that my seniority would be preserved. Well when I got there the chap preceding me, Bill Cardigan, he was killed, he'd been only been in France a week, he was killed. No other returned men in the

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office and I discovered that between me and the next senior member were five others ahead of me. I was quite unhappy with this so while I went back to the old office to work there I had no intention of staying and while I was there I had a complete breakdown, delayed action from shell shock, and I

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went out on the grading property outside of Cunnamulla, spent three months there, got my physical health back became quite fit physically ... but still mentally I was a bit troubled. So I set myself a course of six months. There

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were two things - I considered any man who could get up and sing socially deserved a VC [Victoria Cross] and anyone who could get up with a strange girl for a dance, so I learned singing and dancing. I went to Leonard Francis who conducted the Apollo Club which is still going - he was the leader before the war - to learn singing and took up dancing and after some months I was quite

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comfortable doing this so I went to Francis and told him I was throwing it in and he said 'Oh you've got a voice ? it's developing. You want to keep going.?' So I told him I really wasn't considering singing and he said 'Why did you come to me??' and I said 'You wouldn't understand if I told you.?'

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So that was that. I learned dancing too and I was comfortable with that. So I got on top of the two things that I was afraid of and it taught me a good lesson because right through my business career I never had a hard basket. I always

tackle a tough job first. Six months was a good training for later life.

Let's talk a little bit about that - the business because you said after this period you joined Equitable ...

I joined the ... I left the auditor's office and I joined the Equitable Life

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which was a newly formed insurance company, life company. I went there as an accountant on a salary - much more than I was earning at the auditor's office and I became general secretary the next year. I was probably the youngest general secretary of a public company in Australia and later on I

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switched over onto the agency organisation work. Took on the training of staff I kept my secretary job as well but by this time I was earning a salary as much as the auditor general cause those days they used to pay you for what you were worked so I was quite well paid. After five years I gave away the

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secretary side and concentrated entirely on agency management. Agency trading, at which I was quite successful. In 1935 the Credential opened and I joined the Credential and they had appointed a manager who was an industrial manager - didn't know much about ordinary branch management

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but when I was officially in charge of South Queensland I finished up in charge of all of Queensland. When he was appointed agency manager for Australia, I was appointed Queensland manager in 1938. So I stayed there as Queensland manager until 1952 when I was transferred and appointed to Sydney as agency manager Australia and New Zealand. And while I was

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manager here, I bought that site - the old Barnes Auto building which was opposite the Treasury building where the Credential building has been pulled

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down since ... and right opposite the Treasury building which became the Treasury casino. So I was quite successful in my job as agency manager. There was a function at which one of our agents attended in Adelaide and he got up and said 'The man who should be here is missing. He's retired. That's Ted Smout.' He said 'He had a record of training. In 1917 every branch manager in the company in Australia and New Zealand and the general manager, was a Smout trained man.' Extraordinary.

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We'll just stop it there.

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Okay Ted, so we were just talking about your work with the insurance company. If we just take it back a little bit to the beginning of the Second World War and ...

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When World War II came we had a young male staff, we weren't protected manpower, we had no protection. There was nothing to stop them enlisting which they all did, except one who was medically unfit. So I lost

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all my male staff bar one so I had all female staff. And you couldn't go north of Rockhampton without a military permit, restriction on travelling and you couldn't do any business, any new business with a war on, so one day at the

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Rotary Club, the president read a letter from the Governor Sir Leslie Wilson, saying he'd been appointed to the Red Cross Appeals Committee and he wanted volunteers to serve on it and of course they promptly asked me and I said 'Oh no, I've got too many irons in the fire now.' Plenty of others would like to be with the governor, so at the first meeting he said 'Where's

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Smout?? because what happened, we wanted a former Sir Leslie Wilson Library, I was Vice President of National Affairs... and they said they'd have to raise two thousand pounds to pay for the library and I said 'That's no problem. You could do that in an hour?' and they laughed. Got on the phone

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and within an hour I had it subscribed so the Governor learned about this and when this first meeting was called I told him I had a lot of other things to do so a person handed me a letter from him saying he'd like me to join, so I rang Stone, the Secretary and I said 'How do I get out of this??' and he said 'You don't.' He says 'There's no way you get out?' He says 'You've just got to go.' So I turned up to the meeting and I've never been a seat warmer and I was

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immediately put in as Chairman of the Appeals Committee, Chairman of the Publicity Committee. And Queensland was the only state in Australia that never paid a penny for advertising. Cause I knew every business in Brisbane and tax was eight and six in the pound, I said, 'Keep your advertising going, it's a tax deduction. I'll put the ads in for you - 'This space donated for Red Cross.' Built up good will. So all of this advertising and then we had Kitto, the Chairman of

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Red Cross Australia came up to sell us the Patterson Advertising scheme to spend 15,000 pounds on advertising. I said 'No, we don't pay for advertising.' I said 'We start paying this and it's paid for the whole lot.' so I finally convinced him that Queensland was excluded from this campaign. We never paid for advertising. I had all this space. It was quite a successful

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operation and I was very busy. I cracked a full time job because I used to go into the office early. In those days you didn't have tape recorders you had a dictaphone and I'd spend an hour on the dictaphone sending out what was required and then the rest of the day was given over to Red Cross. Well we

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finished up, five of us put up 500 pounds to equip a cafe next to the post office - it became Telegraph House - we set up a cafe there. We used to make 15,000 pound a year out of it. Very successful operation. We ran a concert in the city hall every Tuesday lunchtime. Singers gave their services

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free. They used to just walk down with a big sheet and they'd throw their money in. That was a good way of raising money but by and large we had various methods of raising money for Red Cross and then we had the Prisoner Of War Committee which was a separate committee and that was well supported.

Ted, did you think about enlisting during World War II as a soldier?

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I did actually. I had enlisted. The British Army were calling for volunteers for officers to join the flying corps - administrative job - so I was interviewed immediately given straight away as a pilot officer so I enlisted but when the

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Governor heard about this he called me up and he said "This is preposterous." He said "This is just a clerical job. It's way out of your league." He said "The job you're doing at Red Cross is more important?" He said "I want you to think about it. I said, "I've enlisted." and he said "I suggest you go down to Melbourne to the Air Board and see if you can explain what I've told you."

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which I did and they agreed to wipe the enlistment. I was then manpowered of course. So as a result of that I was able to give my time to Red Cross which I did. I actually had, my wife had knitted a jumper you know. Luckily I didn't

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go because I would have got caught up in Singapore and I wouldn't have survived because I was 35. Too old to go for that caper. I wouldn't have survived.

And your son did join up.

Yes. He joined. He enlisted in the air force and became a bomber pilot and

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they were coming back to the drome in England in heavy fog - a bomber, crew of four, and he was the observer and he went up and stood beside the pilot and then coming in to land and they hit the bomb bay and the lights of the bomb bay flew up and he went out through the perspex windscreen backside first, fractured his pelvis and his jaw and he broke his ankle so he

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had nine months in hospital and by the time he got out of hospital V-Day [Victory in Europe Day] was on. And by the time he got back to Australia the war was over in Japan. So while he had nine months in hospital, he was very badly injured, he was fortunate because had he gone back, there's only one ending to flying - bombing raids are a big killer. Although one chap, Churcher from South

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Australia, had forty trips back over Germany and survived forty.

And at the same time as you were doing that Red Cross work you were also working for the Volunteer Defence Corps.

Yes. I was finished up in charge of Beaufort gun, anti-aircraft gun, at

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Newstead Park, right at the back of the river in the basin there. And we used to man that at night which relieved the permanent army, Australian Army, to go off to war so we manned this gun. The instruction was to protect the

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workshops because there's a lot of workshops around there - and General Motors mills so I had a job getting round to try to recruit a crew of volunteers amongst these stay at homes, or reserve occupation. And I was warned then

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not to be surprised so I went and spoke to them all at lunch time - ten or twelve hundred men - called for volunteers, there was one volunteer. Ex-Australian Army, discharged medically unfit. Couldn't have tested of course so that was the story. So that was the flop. Eventually I managed to rake a

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crew together and one young chap who was a very good shot with the gun. We beat the Australian Army gun with the Bofors. He came to me and he said he wanted to enlist but he'd been already out of reserved occupation - he was a fitter and turner. So I said the army never asks for birth certificates. Didn't ring a bell. Couple of weeks later there he was walking up towards

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our men. He was under a different name. He came back and there he was with two stripes and I said 'How come??' and he said 'They asked anyone to step forward that had any military training. I just stepped forward and got two stripes straight away.' So he finished up in New Guinea, survived the war.

We've just got a few minutes left, Ted; just what was it like in Brisbane when [General] MacArthur arrived?

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Brisbane was more or less an armed camp for the Americans. Negro Americans all stayed on the south side - they weren't allowed on the city side but Brisbane was more or less taken over by the Americans. They were everywhere. There you go. You had to queue for food, queues everywhere.

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You could just stand there and look up and point and a queue formed behind you. Come back half an hour later and a queue half a mile long. Quite funny. That was one of our jokes. Amusing. So Brisbane became more or less an armed camp for the Americans. Shortage of everything. Everything

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was restricted but I managed alright because we used to - American Red Cross, ...unlike the Australian, looked after the Australians as well, so they like our Comfort Fund combined with the Red Cross and the Lord Mayor was up from Sydney, Lord Mayor - that was the Admiral's barge and we were

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approached by the American Red Cross to take the officers game fishing cause the ships used to come into port in Brisbane and anchor there and unload their cargo.

Interviewee: Ted Smout Archive ID 1145 Tape 03

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Ted, can we go right back to the beginning. It's very hard for us to imagine what life must have been like in Brisbane at the beginning of the century. Can you tell us a bit about Brisbane, about how people got around, about going shopping - just daily things like that?

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Well the first thing to realise is that motor cars were practically unknown. That's the big difference. Today, two to three cars per family and those days there were no cars. You took public conveyance - train or tram. They had trams then in Brisbane more than buses and they were run by an American

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company. The name of the General Manager was named Badger. They owned the tramways and they had a two track tram with a compartment in the middle, carried about twelve passengers and then there were four seats in

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the back and four seats at the front. Or two rather, two front and back. And they had a trolley going up to rise up above. It was quite a good service and the closer suburbs used the trams but those days of course Brisbane wasn't built like it is today. It was just close in.

Did you go into the city very much?

No. No. No

And you didn't get a bus?

No.

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And you didn't get a bus to school or anything did you?

No you walked. The bus to school was horse driven - a big coach with four horses, two or four horses and the driver used to have a very long whip that

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could reach the back of the - we used to jump on the back of the bus, back step, and some kid on the footpath would yell out 'whip behind?' and he'd lash round with his whip. You had to jump off the bus before the whip got

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you and then walk the rest of the way. They just got jealous you know of anyone riding. The terminus for these was just at East Brisbane - the Courier Bus and Courier Rope works was at East Brisbane. That was the terminus. That was considered well out of Brisbane. East Brisbane.

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And what about shops and things. Were there department stores and things like that?

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No. No they came later. The first department store was at Chermside - a subsidiary of Allen Starks. The then manager was tossed out because it wasn't a success. He was years before his time. Of course eventually it became a great money spinner. Chermside Shopping Centre. It was owned by Allen Starks at the time.

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So when you were a child, where would you go shopping? Would your mother take you shopping?

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No. She went on her own. We didn't go with her. She just bought in the local store - local corner store. There weren't

any big departmental stores. You just bought at the local convenience store. Of course milk was delivered to your door and bread was delivered. Butter came - there was a van selling butter and smallgoods, ham and butter and lard what have you. They came round to the house. The greengrocers came around with a van selling vegetables. A lot of shopping was done in the home. Vehicles coming around.

And what sort of things did you do for entertainment?

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Well I had a steel hoop which you used to trundle with a stick and another thing was a cat which was a piece of broomstick handle that long, cut off at a point at each end. You used to put that down on the ground and then throw it up in the air and try and hit it while it was up in the air. And they were our toys. Later on we had a trolley made with kerosene - kerosene came in four gallon tins - and there were two cases - wooden cases. So we got a set of

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wheels and made a trolley. We used to take that up the top of the hill and set off down the hill. Sit behind it and come back and pull it up the hill again. The gutters, the storm water gutters, they were cement and they used to form a track and you could slide down those in your bare feet - slide down. But they were our toys - the hoop and the jack so that compared to today, my great grandchildren, I mean they've got everything. Bikes, mountain bikes, computers, the lot. But those days a different story.

And what about at home because you didn't have television did you?

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No. There was no wireless. That came very many years later in the thirties actually. The first wireless set they broadcast on an amateur station from what became the Acril building - owned by doctors in Queen Street and three

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doctors had this radio station there - amateurs you know. And they used to broadcast. The announcers said ?4QG Brisbane. Bris-bane.? That was radio. We had a radio set with a bit of whisker - tune it in, very crude.

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And how old were you when you got a wireless, when you got the radio at home?

I was about 18 or 19. When I got back from war it was.

So you didn't have a radio at home during the war?

No. Didn't have it before I went to war. It was after I got back. Many years later.

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So did people only find out about what was happening from the newspapers?

Yes. The Brisbane Courier was published and the front page was all advertisements. All the advertisements straight down. I have a 5th January 1898 Courier Mail - that's the date of my birthday. I have a copy of that. I also have the only surviving copy of the London Times - 5th January 1898. My friend in London got that. It was sent out for me to study. It was quite rare. But the whole front page of the Courier - it was The Brisbane Courier then - not the Courier Mail. It amalgamated, the Daily Mail came later. All the front page - all the columns were drapers' advertisements.

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So the war came on the second page?

Yes. The front page was given over to advertisements.

Was the news about the war like Gallipoli - because you were still in Brisbane when Gallipoli happened weren't you?

Oh yes.

What kind of things were in the paper? Was it accurate?

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No. You were told what they wanted to tell you. Quite a bit of the information was not correct - dressed up. Same thing in the Second World War. I can remember in Sydney they said the Queen Elizabeth was in Vancouver in the dock there having hull repairs and it was in Sydney Harbour. Press report. Another time the First World War, we were in France in Algiers in a cathedral there, the spire was an observation post for Germans and that gave them control over the Seine and there was a statue we called Leaping Fanny but it was a statue of a girl and it was wired up and hanging out at right angles. I saw the British shoot it down because it had to be shot down because it was a German observation post - first shot, shot it down. And the Daily Mirror came out from London with the heading 'German Kulture? K-U-L-T-U-R-E. Told the story about when this happened. If that was the story the war would be over. It was shot down by the Germans. That was the type of thing that used to happen.

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So, in 1915 did you believe what was in the papers? Did you find out later that it wasn't true? Did you believe it at the time?

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You believed it at the time. Because 90% of it would be true. But you relied entirely on the newspaper for news. No radio. Newspaper was the only avenue conveying news.

And did they have many photographs of ...?

Oh yes, yes.

Did reading the newspapers make you want to enlist?

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I think it had an influence but the main influence was the girls. I was fairly big for my age and let alone presentable and girls used to hand you a white flower - meaning you were a coward, you know. The whole peer pressure. It was easier to enlist than to stay at home. The pressure was so heavy. Although I was a year ahead at school most of my mates had gone so I was kind of susceptible to this pressure which resulted in my enlistment at 17 years of age. Put my age up.

And what did your parents think?

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My father was quite happy about it but I think in those days you had to get your parents' consent as 21 was the age of consent. My father was quite happy about it but I had a great job persuading my mother to agree. Finally she did.

What did you pack to take with you? Can you tell us about getting ready to go to France?

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Yes, we'd been in camp at Fraser's paddock for quite a few months and eventually in May 1916 we left Brisbane by train to go to Sydney to go on the troop ship the Demosthenes, 1200 men. We went round to Perth and waited there and formed a convoy there of about eight troop ships. Went across in a convoy.

And what did you take with you? What did you pack?

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Your pack, which you carried on your back, was a kit bag, shoulder straps - weighed about 40 pounds. And that carried your spare underclothing, that was long sleeve, grey flannel long sleeved shirt, underpants, all winter gear,

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and your rubber ground sheet you used to strap around it and I've got a picture there. I could sort out some photographs tomorrow. I've got a photograph standing with all this kit on ready to enlist - ready to entrain. We went by train to Sydney and got the ship there. But it was 40 pound weight to carry. There was no problem. You were young and strong.

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Did you take anything special from home - anything to bring you luck?

No. No. No I didn't take anything.

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Just going back a step there. Just tell us about going out to see films.

We lived right opposite the main entrance to Dutton Park and the tramway company built an enclosure, fenced an enclosure in Dutton Park and put up a screen and they would charge for admission into the enclosure. They couldn't charge for admission to park. That was a voluntary donation. To

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get into the enclosure, to get a seat to view the film was a charge but we used to go around behind the screen - it was a screen that the pictures went right through the screen. So we used to go round there and we had to read the programme backwards. They used to come round and chase us because we

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hadn't paid. When they'd go we'd go back again. So we used to see the pictures for nothing. But it was a silver coin admission - voluntary - threepence or sixpence. Mostly trey'bits. Trey bits were threepennys. You know, it was something in those days. I think it was a shilling to go into the enclosure. Of course we didn't have any shillings or trey bits.

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What kind of films did they show?

They were talkies of course. The first talkie was Al Jolson [American entertainer] - that was in the twenties. They were mostly newsreels, mostly. There were odd stories but they were mostly newsreels.

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So you'd see newsreels about the war?

Oh yeah. No talkies of course. Just silent films. The first talkie was Al Jolson - that was the first talking film.

And let's get back to you getting on the ship. Now I was interested that you said you stopped off in Cape Town and Durban. Was that the first time you'd been in a foreign country?

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Yes. Oh yes. One day in Durban and ten days in Cape Town. I think I told you about coal - replacing the coal in the hold in the ship in Cape Town. Kaffirs.

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And what did you do when you went out on shore leave? Tell me about what it was like onshore.

We weren't allowed leave so while we went ashore we were controlled - we just marched and in Cape Town we marched every day for ten days on a promise that we'd have the last day for leave. But that was cancelled because the

reason was given that the mayor of Cape Town didn't want us ashore but the mayor heard about this and got a note aboard the ship to say

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that wasn't true so that led to the troops breaking ship and they had a guard on the gangway with a fixed bayonet. He panicked and stabbed a chap in the stomach. He was holding his stomach and the whole ship got ashore and there were eventually armed guards going around and collecting us. They took the ship out to the middle of the harbour and took us aboard in dinghies. Took our names and numbers as we went up to prosecutors and I think I told you about what happened.

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And what had you been doing on shore though? What had you actually been doing?

Oh we just went round to the hotels and we couldn't pray for a drink, the locals insisted on shouting for us. I well remember we had a beautiful lobster lunch for two shillings - magnificent. Served in a top class hotel. They wouldn't take any payment and that was typical of the South African people. They treated us very well. So we had a very good day before we were caught and put back on the ship.

So did it all seem very exciting at this stage?

At that time it was. It was fairly exciting.

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And what were your first impressions of England when you got to England?

Well we went to Salisbury Plains - a big army camp with fibro cement huts, holding about 30 to 40 people in bunks and Salisbury Plains which was quite close to the city of Salisbury and Stonehenge and we had a few months there. We were very fit physically. We used to march every day about five

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miles. We'd do five miles in one hour without any kit so we were very fit and we travelled round through daylight saving - it was daylight at ten o'clock at night. What pay we got we used to spend on food because if you had tea at five o'clock and by ten o'clock you were hungry again. So what money we had we spent on food mostly.

And what did the British think of having all the Australian soldiers there?

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Well, I think they liked the Australians all right. We didn't have a great deal of contact with civilians. And of course all the men were gone. Just old men and women working in the munitions factories and what have you. We didn't have much contact with the civilians. We did get around. We got to Stonehenge to see the Stonehenge big stones and the cathedral.

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And then when you went to France, what were your first impressions when you actually got to where you were going to be in France?

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We went across to Le Havre which was down towards the Spanish end of France. The Channel was much wider there and Le Havre was a big city. The overnight camp there was quite a big establishment. But it wasn't very well equipped. Bell tents and half the sides were missing in the Bell tents. Of course if people were just there for one night they could tolerate that and

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the Irish guard sergeant, if they were only there for one night, all they got was bully beef and biscuits and he flogged the rations. He got away with it because they left the next day but we were caught up there in isolation because of mumps and we were there for three weeks. That was a horse of another colour. He still kept flogging the rations and we had no bread. We were getting biscuits, army biscuits, no fresh food till we complained about it and he was eventually charged and dishonourably discharged and he got six months jail.

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So what was your view of war at that point? Had it changed a bit from what you were expecting?

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Well conditions were bad in this camp. We were there for three weeks. We couldn't draw any money until we got paraded and got the camp straightened out and we got new tents and palliasses and charcoal abrasives. It was tolerable. But your sheets were just frozen like a board. They got damp and they were frozen stiff. Very cold. But eventually after three weeks I was discharged and caught up with my unit.

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So where was your unit at that stage?

At Armentieres. They were billeted in the Lake Profession which was a technical college. We had mattresses, quite comfortable. About twenty in each room. And so that was quite comfortable there. It was about five miles from the front - the sector which was kind of a training ground for

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both sides for trench warfare. The trenches were dry and well established on both sides. There was never any serious fighting there but this was as I say a training ground. I remember there was one spot, the Germans were very methodical. There was one place there they use to come right on the dot of half hour. They used to fire off about 50 rounds of machine guns. So you'd just wait at your post until you'd hear these 50 rounds then you could walk across - quite safe. But the first casualty I saw there was a chap by the name

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of Purdey - champion chess player for NSW - six foot one tall. He was a fatalist . ?If I'm going to be killed....? and be killed he was. He wouldn't duck in the trenches. Fatal bullet right in the head. That was the first casualty I saw. He was killed outright. But except for snipers there was no activity. Occasionally they'd land a shell or two but there wasn't anything serious fighting.

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And what was your job at this time? Were you doing your sanitation work at this time?

Yes. Inspecting the camps.

So what would you do every day? What would be a typical day for you?

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A typical day - you'd go to one of the camps and go round and check and you'd find they were short of latrines and you'd order a pit to be dug and our carpenters built the seats and put them there and then the plumbers built grease traps. You establish grease traps and the kitchen and generally ensure that sanitation was reasonable with the grease traps and built latrines. Prior

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to that they'd be strolling all around the camp. That was our job daily and then at night we used to go into the township, the town square. The establishments used to go till 8 o'clock at night. French beer two shillings a glass, which was a penny. We were able to drink the French beer. For two shillings a glass it was cheap enough. That filled in quite a while we were there. Coldest winter in 40 years. Really cold.

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And were there girls in town? Did you go out with the girls?

No. No, most of the French girls had gone into more work. There was one French lass about 16, living with her mother and I used to teach her English. She used to - the mother was sitting down and she asked if I could teach this girl English. I remember one day she said to me 'He's a fool?' So I made her write it. U-S-E-F-U-L. So I explained what useful was.

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So where was the next place you went to? You were there for a while. What happened next?

We moved down to Belgium into Dieppe which was close to the front. But that village was deserted. We were billeted in one of the houses there - French houses, but that was close to the line, subject to shell fire. And that's where we struck our first gas. Clary gas, not mustard gas. That's when I got my first exposure to gas which didn't do me much good because though we had gas masks they were pretty primitive. They were hard to get on and if you didn't get any warning the gas gets you before you get them on. So that's the amazing thing that I've had gas, heavy cigarette smoker, fifty a day, and never got lung cancer. Quite amazing. Very fortunate.

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And because of the gas. What effect did it have on you?

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More like emphysema. Same type of thing in your lung. Of course mine wasn't a bad attack but it wasn't good.

Were you sick for a few days. Did you recover from it?

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I didn't go into hospital. We kind of looked after ourselves you know, the army medical corps. We had a doctor, Dr Kelley, from a near farm and he was our RAC [?] so we had a doctor on the spot. Otherwise we would have been put in a hospital.

Were some of the other soldiers more badly affected?

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Yes. Some had to be evacuated. Of course it was very primitive. It was just released from cylinders. And the wind took it to you but if the wind changes it took it back onto their own troops. So it was very dicey. Later on of course mustard gas came on and it was delivered in shells.

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But did you experience that later on?

Terrible. Fortunately I didn't. I saw many soldiers that did. Terrible, Used to burn them. Mustard gas was terrible. That came later. In 1917.

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So what was the first really sort of big action that you saw.

The Battle of the Messine. In June 1917, under General Monash, quite a successful operation. My cousin who was with me was killed there. And the other chap from the unit, Officer Cunningham, he was killed there. He'd only been in France for a week. But it was a very successful operation and it made Monash's reputation as a general.

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You were part of the 3rd Division so you'd already served under him but what was the closest interaction you had with him? What kind of a man was he?

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I saw him. Didn't have any contact with him. He was too remote, you know. But at least he used to come down to the front line which was more than the British generals did. Never saw them. We had a very poor opinion of them.

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And you were saying before about the difference between British soldiers. Their officers were public school. Do you think the British soldiers - did their attitude change seeing what the Australians were like, do you think?

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Oh no. They ... there's that T.V. programme - I forget the name of it now but it was the story of the British during the war. It was absolutely true because I remember the Earl of Curzon. He had the home in Haymarket and he was on war work and his wife was on war work over in France and they had this house being run with a butler, there was a butler, a housekeeper, a kitchen maid, the gardener cum chauffeur. He used to sit there with his port wine and fat cigar with the staff waiting on him. Talk about rations. You name it they had it. Cream, butter milk, lobsters, so what went on during the war, you know. The class distinction was terrific. And there wouldn't have been a Labor voter amongst the whole crowd.

That was when you were in London? And how did you come to be there?

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I got friendly with one of the maids that gave me access to the kitchen and good tucker. The Earl and his wife weren't there and here's this establishment going on. All the staff kept going. And they put this film on. It was so true.

Was that ?Upstairs Downstairs.?

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That was it. It was absolutely true. True to life. That's exactly how it went on. The class distinction was incredible.

Interviewee: Ted Smout Archive ID 1145 Tape 04

04:00:26:00

Okay Ted, while we're at Messine, can you tell me about the action using the mines, the explosives? Can you tell me about that? Explode underneath the trenches.

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Yes well at Messine they'd dive under ground, excavate under ground and blow up part of the hill. Great big caverns. It was part of the victory and went back there in '93 and went to there because they were filming that area, most of it was used but we took a lot of pictures there. Messine.

And what were you doing during that action. What are your memories of that happening?

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We were manning a field hospital at that time. We had our own ambulance and we linked up with the field ambulance so it became the field dressing station treating the wounded.

Can you tell me the kind of things that you had to do?

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Well the worst was Passchendaele. We were looking after a field dressing station there and stretcher bearing to it. We had our own ambulance and I worked 72 hours with very little sleep. Just lie on the floor of the dressing station and they'd run you over with their feet going out for stretcher bearers.

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You had to get out then for the stretcher bearing. That was on for three days. 72 hours with very little sleep. You had to be young to take that. The casualties were horrific. Horrific. The chloroform - they just stuck a thing over their face and poured the chloroform on to put them out. No question. As for a cardiogram or monitoring, that was unthought of. The doctors

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manning that dressing station would learn more surgery in a week than they would have in years. Some of the wounds were terrible. Arms blown off and one British major had both his legs blown off. He died from loss of blood before we could save him. But they came and the British gunner and the big gun and they established about a hundred yards away from our dressings table. We remonstrated but it made no difference but a German spotting plane came over and directed the German artillery and the first shell landed

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on the trench side of the field station and the second one spot on. It blew both this major's legs off. We went out and brought him in but he died from loss of blood. But they were guilty of that kind of thing. Like the Germans. You'd see a church with a big red cross on the roof be stacked with small arms ammunition. We were guilty of the same type of thing.

How did you cope with seeing so many wounded? I mean you were a very young man.

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You didn't exactly become callous but you were dispassionate about it. You kind of just treated them, not so much as individuals, just as human beings and the casualties just became immune to it. That's all there was about it.

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It must have been dangerous for you going out with the stretchers and it was very muddy too. Can you describe that for us?

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The whole area was one mass of water. In town the water supply had been blown up and it flooded the salient so the whole place was just a mass of mud and shells. Half the shells, the German shells, coming over didn't detonate. The ground was too soft to explode them and you had to stay on duck boards which was slatted boards and the pioneers would lay these

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tracks and you couldn't get off the duckboards. If they blow up part of it you had to stay there till they replaced it so you could move. Because if you got off you were over your knees in mud. Be immobilised. We had men in these big shallows dying, crying out and you couldn't get to them. Couldn't get to them. Couldn't get off the duckboards. It was really bad. Passchendaele was terrible.

And the fighting went on all through the night?

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Shelling all the time. Mustard gas, gas shells, and as I say a lot of the shells didn't detonate - the ground was too soft. So the ground was riddled with unexploded shells. Men being put up against impregnable positions, just being slaughtered by the German generals. Terrible.

And did you take German prisoners at all? Did you have any contact with ...

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Not there. We took German prisoners in the April advance - April 1918. Advance of the British to the Germans. We were at Sal au Sec[?] and German prisoners were quite frequent. Of course we advanced about 70 miles. A lot of German prisoners.

What would happen with them?

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They were coming back unarmed, typical.

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Did you talk to them? Because you spoke a bit of German.

Oh yes. One group of about 14, we were at Brais on the field there. There'd been a battle there and the corpses were there - fly blown. We'd just boiled the billy for tea and the German prisoners came along about 14 of them, giving themselves up and this officer apparently collected the company pay and these German uniforms had a tail pocket so we gave them tea and

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cigarettes and he pulled out this wad of German notes. He'd collected the company pay and gave us the lot. So I think I told you, I cashed half of it and kept half but ... they were young men you know.

How did you feel towards them? Did you see them as the enemy?

I felt sorry for them. They were about my age you know - youngsters. Obviously unhappy about being made prisoners, prisoners of war, but didn't have any animosity towards them.

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Did you feel that way earlier in the war when you saw all the deaths and casualties?

No that was later. 1917. Later.

So how did you feel about the Germans in the really hard action when a lot of Australians were dying?

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We hated them. We used to hate them but as I say these young soldiers coming back, you felt sorry for them. You realised they were fighting for their country and conscripted. The slaughter and casualties were terrible. Quite unnecessary. I mean the way the British Generals used the men as cannon fodder. It was disgraceful. The Australian generals would speak but they took no notice of them. Of course the Australian Army at that time were very much

under control of the British Army.

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But that changed didn't it when Monash ...?

1918. Late 1918 that the Australian army fended for themselves under Monash.

Was there ever a time when you felt it was all not worthwhile?

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Oh yes. The interesting thing was conscription. Although we weren't 21, 21 was the age for voting, because we were soldiers we were given a vote. They all voted completely anti-conscription. Surprising. But our attitude was if they don't want to come we don't want them to be with us. We didn't want any compulsory soldiers. So the Australian Army generally were against conscription.

Were you fighting with French soldiers as well?

No. No we had American soldiers with us at one stage later in the war but at no time did we ever have any fighting with the French.

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And what were the Americans like?

Very badly led. Didn't think much of their officers. But they were very conscious of their manpower. You know they'd use vast amounts of artillery shelling before they went in. Whereas the British were inclined to be a bit careful with that. The Yanks, then of course, they fed their troops so well.

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When they arrived they had these civilian tan shoes, pug-nose shoes and of course they were hopeless. They pulled them off and made a huge mountain of them and gave them the Australian waterproof boots, you know. So I pinched a pair of shoes, put them away and when I went off to Paris on leave

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some months later I had these beautiful tan shoes. Amazing. They had a khaki wool shirt and trousers with epaulettes with two pockets - beautiful. In public baths - used to come out of the trenches and you were riddled with

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lice, you'd strip off your underwear and chuck it in and go in the steam bath. You'd be given new underclothing. Well the steam would kill the lice but it doesn't kill the eggs. So the armpits were riddled with eggs. Used to light a cigarette or small cigar and go ... explode them. Then you'd put the clothing

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back on. We'd go to the public baths on Tuesday, put all your clothes in and you'd get new underclothing and then on the Thursday the clothes that you put in on Tuesday came out on Thursday. So the Yanks went on Tuesday

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with these beautiful shirts and passed them in. We all went for baths on Thursday and we got these Yankee shirts and they got our grey flannels. They weren't happy about that. But I got this Yankee shirt with two breast pockets and epaulettes and when I went off to leave with the jacket under my tunic and the tie and I had leather leggings - part of the uniform and these fancy shoes, I was really Beau Brummel.

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And what about your two friends because - the two mates you had with you, were they with you the whole time?

Yes, the whole time. We never separated. We survived - the three of us went right through the war. We came back separately but we stayed together right through the war. One of them got the Military Medal at Passchendaele, stretcher bearing. It could have been anyone, like the medal was awarded to you, right. Dr Kelly had the choice as to who was to get it so Norm Travel got it. He was a rather bovine type and you know a shell would land right beside him and he wouldn't bat an eyelid. No imagination. So he deserved the Military Medal.

What was it like having a shell land right next to you because that affected you later, didn't it?

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Yes. If a shell was coming towards you or past you there's a big scream. Whereas a bomb landing was like a steaming noise of a train ... but the shells would scream and if you could hear it you knew you were alright - means you were still alive. And if one landed quite close, it exploded before you heard the sound of the fire. The shell travelled faster than sound. The

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sound of it being fired came after it arrived which is quite interesting. Memory plays strange things. I think I told you didn't I, that experience in City Square. I'd gone into receive the Citizen of the Year Award and we went

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out on King George Square afterwards for a flag raising ceremony. My daughter was with me and they fired a twelve gun salute from south bank and the first shot I went to dive for the ground. My daughter caught me and every shot that was fired it was like I was having a fit. And that was 1988 I think.

So would that still be the same now? Would that still have the same effect on you now?

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Yeah. Just dive for the ground. Yes, it's automatic. So there's your memory
So men that were shell shocked at the time, did they recover from that?

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Not entirely. A lot of them went for the grog [alcohol], you know. One friend of mine he finished up sleeping in parks because he went for grog, you know, and he used to come up, the officer would give him some money and my secretary would say 'Why do you bother with him??' and I said 'But for the grace of God, that could be me.' I said 'He went for grog, I didn't.' You never forget. It's just an automatic reaction. We were having an officers'

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training camp at Ennoger and the colonel warned us that the Vickers machine gun would be firing on this site, make sure we kept within bounds and he said 'I'll just let you hear the Vickers?' and at the burst of Vickers everyone was laughing. We were there with the militia. He said 'I can pick the 14

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returned war veterans.' He said 'you all winced.' None of the others did you see. We just - it was automatic. I had an office in Parbury House which is where the big building is on Eagle Street - that was Parbury House backing onto the river. My room backed onto the river and the City Mutual Building was round in Adelaide Street, a couple of hundred yards away. And I was interviewing a man in my office and the City Mutual flag pole was struck by lightning. There was a big noise and I finished up under the table. The cove looked ... I got back up and sat in the chair. As soon as it

blasts I dived.

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Okay Ted, while we're talking about being back in Australia, was there any kind of support for troops coming back who had shell shock and things like that? Can you tell us about what was sort of on offer at that time. What kind of support did you get from the government when you came back as a returning soldier?

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Very poor. First of all when I returned and went into the Veterans' Affairs office and when I got back we went over to Charleston House and the mayor of Brisbane, they put on a meal and my mother had phoned waiting outside for me so I wanted to get home and the mayor gave us an address - the orderly stood at the door and repeated it word for word so it was a stock address - and then we came out and they asked if I intended to claim any pension. I said 'I was gassed and I don't know.' 'Well you'll have to go to the General Hospital and stay the night there.' I said 'Oh forget it.' so I

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signed a form that I had no disability and of course later, when the shell shock caught up with me, they just produced this and wiped me. Weren't interested. No help at all. Different today, they're terrific, but in those days they were quite tough. So that was my experience with the Veterans' Affairs Department for Repatriation as it was known then. As I say it's different today. They'll do anything for you.

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And when you say that the shell shock caught up with you, did something happen to trigger that? Why do you think you managed for a while and then...

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I think it's the pressure trying to settle back into office work. That was partly it and the dissatisfaction of the job. I was not happy there because they'd put men ahead of me and hadn't reserved my status. The salary was very low because we had no active union. We were professional officers - be infra dig [not acceptable] to have a union and by and large apart from which the deputy - there was no consideration for returned men. If he checked on an order I used to throw the pen at the wall and get out

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and walk around town. I couldn't stay there any longer. He'd ring up and find - he'd get carpet ring. No consideration at all. So that was all part of the picture after the breakdown. It was a big bottle up for all that time and I was a real cot case. Lost weight, be out in the streets and see them not treated

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well I'd burst out in tears. You know, no control at all. So I went down to the station property down from Cunnamulla owned by friends of the family and I had three months there. A jackaroo was killed a week after I got there, chasing a fox through the country so I finished up working as an unpaid jackaroo. I did everything. Shearing, and lamb marking, biting his tail with your teeth, droving, did everything. So after three months were up I was as fit as a fiddle physically but still mentally in trouble. A long way back. Veteran Affairs Department are absolutely terrific. They can't do enough for you.

And could you talk to your family about your experiences?

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No. No. You never talk about the war to anyone. Except I was on leave with my second cousin and the son came over

on leave and we started talking to each other. And the girls said 'We'd never heard anything about the war before.' But they wouldn't understand so there's no place to talk to civilians at all.

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And what about your friends when you came back? Could you talk to them?

No. I did immediately but later on I cut adrift because they were totally different sections in civilian life to me. We had nothing in common so I lost track of them. Apart from which I felt I wanted to cut away all the - anything associated with the army - cut away from it.

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So what about Anzac Day?

No. Never went to the march until many years later.

What made you go eventually?

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I can't recall the reason I went to the first one but many years after the war - some particular reason I went and I've been going regularly ever since. Used to go to Sandgate - the local one. One year I took the seat there and then later they required me to go into Brisbane with Eric Abraham and we lead the march there. Have done for two or three years and every day the crowd gets bigger and bigger and bigger.

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And you joined the League [RSL 'Returned and Services League] didn't you but then you left and then went back. Can you tell me why is that?

I wanted to go political but they were non political and they wouldn't. I mean to get elected you have to go political. The League was non political so they were a spent force. I found they weren't much use. I just resigned. Many years later I joined a union.

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And what sort of things did you want them to get political about?

Well mostly about the treatment of returned men. It was pretty bad. Pensions, all the attributes. I was made to join and I used to regularly go down to the monthly meeting at the local branch. I was quite active in the League and of course I had Legacy work. I joined Legacy in 1936. I was very active in Legacy, looking after families.

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What sort of things would you do for that?

Well you took over and looked after families. You became more or less a father to the families. To the children, and I mean they were like a second family. My wife used to supply them with clothing. This one family with five children, father died of TB [Tuberculosis], baby six months old so they were suspects of TB and Legacy had no money so they went to the local milkman, told him the story and arranged for milk was delivered then to their home to make them the last ones on his round. So he gave them all the milk that was left

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over. Then I went to the green grocer and told them the story and I got vegetables, green vegetables for the family. I went to my dentist and I said 'You've got a new family.' No dental insurance as we know it now so he became the family dentist for free and Dr Ernst Shield became their family

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doctor. This is what you did. And I used to go around to that family once a week at night because the mother wasn't very strict with them and one of the essential things was to put the bed legs up on bricks so his chest would drain you know. And he'd fall out of bed and she'd take the bricks away. I used

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to go around there and inspect it and find the bricks gone and blow the tripe out of her. And so you more or less took over the whole family. The daughters grew up and I eventually gave each one away when they were married. One of them married an American soldier - was off to America. Very nice thing happened - many years later she came out to Australia got her two sisters who I'd given away. They came down home here with morning tea and just reminded me of what I did for them. A very nice gesture. Because my wife was interested too.

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Talking about American soldiers, tell us a bit more about what it was like having the Americans around in Brisbane.

As I was saying, the black soldiers had to stay in south Brisbane. They couldn't come on this side. The Americans took over - they had the Primary Producers building on the corner of Creek and Adelaide Streets. It was a canteen. Of course they had everything you know and the Australian soldiers

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weren't welcome in their canteen which caused a bit of a fuss so a fight developed there one night between the Australians and the Yanks... but

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the Americans were very well looked after. The most amazing - the TG building, the army took it over and they had to take the furniture right up to the seventh floor and Ward Transport had the job and they were going to

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manhandle this furniture up the steps and they had the American buck niggers over to help on the occasion and this big nigger just looked, pulled the grille off the front of the lift - took the whole grille down and put the lift up and put the roof level with the floor, loaded the furniture on the roof and took it up. He's scratching his head - never seen that done before. Quite amazing. I'll never forget that.

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So these were black American soldiers? Were there Aborigines around Brisbane at that time?

No., No. They were all out on settlements. But the black Americans, they were big powerful - they were big buck niggers, big fellers.

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Did you go and talk to any of the American soldiers?

Never. American soldiers, yes. They thought money was everything you know. You'd give them a lift in the car and they'd want to pay you. You were insulted with the thought but that was the whole thing was money.

Just going back to the end of the war, you went off to Paris didn't you? Did you go with friends or did you go on your own?

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On my own. Just got the train on me own to Paris and went AWL. I had ten days before I was caught. As I say, it was a second language to me. So I had quite a good time. Folies Bergere. They had a huge tricolour... at the end of the

programme this came down to cover the whole ceiling and they played Le Marseillaise. Everyone got up and sang it, including me, and I was the only Australian soldier there. During the time I took him off the drum and played the drum - the kettle drum. All the froggies there were going 'Viva Australia!?' So I had some good times. When we went back in 1998 they took us out to Folies in the morning. We met the director. He gave us a book on the Folies Bergere. I went up and had a look at the stage. We didn't go to the show there because it was a men's' stripping show. We didn't go to that.

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So it changed a bit from when you were there?

Interviewee: Ted Smout Archive ID 1145 Tape 05

05:00:32:00

I just wanted to go back again to talk about cadets and just wondering if you could give us a picture of the uniform that you would wear as a cadet.

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Yes, we wore shirt, khaki pants and a khaki shirt. I can't recall any particular hat.

And bare feet?

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Yes. Very few children wore shoes except on Sunday in those days and those that wore shoes used to take them off when they got to school and put them back on before they left school so they could be bare footed.

So, in the cadets, what would you do?

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Well we had rifles of 20/25 calibre. There was a shooting gallery in Adelaide Street where Anzac Square is now. The whole of that front area was a galvanised fence and behind was a rifle range. Used to fire into where the shrine is now - the hill there. That was where the target was so that was the range for rifle practise. They were 25/20 calibre cartridges.

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And apart from rifle practise, would you do marching? What would you do on drill?

Oh forming fours and marching. Just the usual drills. Shouldering arms, presenting arms.

Tell us what the usual drill was in those days.

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Well, shoulder arms, present arms, put your rifle for inspection and then the drill was of course marching and forming fours and various formations.

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So did this training help you when you enlisted for World War I as a soldier?

Yes, that training. Of course in those days nearly everyone has some training. It was different the last war. The last war one young feller was a fitter and turner but he enlisted under a false name because he was reserved and they asked for anyone with a military training to step out and he was the only one out of 200 that stepped out so he got two stripes straight away after his training with the VDC [Volunteer Defence Corps]. But in the 14-18 war of course everyone was trained because we had the compulsory training. You just had to go on training. One night a week and a weekend every two or three months and a weeks camp twice a year. Quite substantial training.

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What would you do on the week's camp?

Oh we had a lot of drills and mock battles. All organised you know. You had to capture the headquarters perhaps or something like that - one of the projects.

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And would you actually fire live ammunition?

Not live no. Just blanks. No never any live. Live ammunition stunts came in the Second World War. No live ammunition with us.

And what do you think - why did the government introduce compulsory training at that point for students?

05:05:32:00

There was general demand for it. There were two reasons - one was that it broke up these mobs that were forming around Brisbane, brawling mobs causing trouble - it broke them up and it also invoked a sense of discipline and respect for authority. It was part of a generally - the public supported it.

05:06:01:00

I'm interested to learn of these mobs. I wasn't aware - what were these mobs?

A crowd of about 12 to 16 youngsters used to get together in a mob and they'd go around causing trouble, raiding and fighting. Police were hard to catch up with them because they used to dodge everywhere. You'd have one group in practically every suburb. They'd be fighting amongst themselves.

05:06:37:00

So it was a territorial thing?

That's right.

So what would they use to fight with?

Fists. Nothing else. No weapons, no knives or anything like that. No drugs in those days of course.

05:07:07:00

What about alcohol?

No, that wasn't a problem. Not like today. They just got their excitement normally without any artificial help.

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Did you ever encounter any of these gangs?

Oh yes. Struck them more than once. They generally left us alone if you didn't interfere with them.

05:08:09:00

We're wondering what sort of punishment was used within the cadets. How would they punish you if you disobeyed?

05:08:27:00

I can't recall. I can't recall being punished. Probably were but it couldn't have been very serious because I can't recall it. They couldn't interfere with your schooling so they'd be somewhat restricted.

05:09:06:00

Let's move on now to World War I and your uniform in World War I. How was that different to your uniform as a cadet?

05:09:19:00

Oh well, in World War I we had - long trousers and putties, army boots, and a tunic. A tunic with the Australian badge on each collar, one on each collar and a colour patch on each arm. Our colour patch was like the shape of an egg, chocolate colour. That was the army medical corps colour patch. And the tunic had two breast pockets and two big side pockets and your trousers had pockets so you had plenty of pocket space. We had not only long trousers and putties but we had riding britches and leather leggings. We were a bit flash.

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Why was that?

Oh that was just the uniform for our particular section. There were only 27 in the unit and that was our uniform.

And did you have riding britches because you were expected to ride horses?

Don't know why - we didn't ride horses but that was our uniform. Just to be different I suppose.

05:10:59:00

And what sort of things would you keep in the pockets given that you had so many?

A lot of things. Chewing gum was one main thing. We always had chewing gum. Cigarette tobacco, I used to make my own, roll my own on a rolling machine. That's all I recall now. In the breast pocket we had an identification card with our number on it. My number was 12947. You never forget that.

05:12:17:00

And could you be asked to produce that - the identification at any point?

Yes.

And did you have a girlfriend, Ted, when you enlisted?

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Not ?a.? Had more than one.

I imagine the uniform would have attracted a lot of attention.

Yes. It was - we were very popular actually. I think the uniform helped quite a bit. I had my share of attractive girls to meet up with. No problem there. You'd get a crush on one particular girl for quite a while.

05:13:32:00

What would you do with the girls?

Oh just after school, just talk to them, nothing in particular, just talk to them. No monkeying up much. And of course no drugs. No liquor. They weren't a problem in those days. We used to play tennis with girls, mixed tennis. We used to play before school once a week we used to use the girls school tennis court at Dutton Park, four of us, two boys and two girls and we used to play there before breakfast once a week. And I played tennis on the weekend. Played a bit of cricket but not a great deal. Mostly tennis. No football. At least I didn't play football. You could play football but I didn't. Tennis and cricket but tennis was my main sport. I was a reasonably good player too.

05:15:26:00

So Ted, when you enlisted and you started training, can you just, you were telling us yesterday how you joined the medical service to stay with your friends and you went on to tell us about the ways in which you learned about creating the vaccines for smallpox and flu. Could you just give us a little bit more detail on what you would do there?

05:15:58:00

Yes, well, up on the Gregory Terrace, the Department of Bacteriology - that's where the headquarters were. Two storey brick building and in the grounds they had just an ordinary sized allotment - about 30 perch allotment and they

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had a cow and the whole of its body was infected with smallpox. And they had a table with a galvanised trough running along the side. And they used to just get this cow alongside the table, put straps on him and then tilt the table up. He was belly up and they scraped it off his belly into this channel

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and that would drain down into a bucket and that was then treated, boiled and then broken down into smallpox vaccination. That was the smallpox and then the flu vaccines and other vaccines, they were done in test tubes. It was

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treated by boiling and then broken down to the right strength - so many parts to a pint of water and they became the vaccine for influenza, and that type of

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sickness. We made all of those. And I was trained in water testing. We tested water with litmus paper and treated it with coral or lime, to purify it and that's what I had to do in France. Used to go forward and seal up the

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wells - I think I've told you all this - the wells were polluted so we locked the pump until we could unlock it and treat the water - chlorinate it so it would be fit for drinking. It didn't taste too well. We weren't particularly popular but we didn't lose one man from drinking polluted water which is quite a remarkable record.

And would you administer the vaccines to the soldiers yourself?

05:18:55:00

No. No. No. We weren't allowed to do that. That was done by the medico. Our OC was the doctor, Dr Kelly from New Farm. Only 27 in the unit, mostly specialists and we had our own ambulance. And our main function was to check the health conditions at the health camps and provide them with grease traps and latrine seats and see what was required for health reasons in the camps. We were kind of health inspectors. We had two qualified health inspectors, the unit and we learned from them what was required. We had two - we had our own ambulance so we had two car driver mechanics, two full health inspectors qualified, a couple of carpenters, couple of plumbers and that was how the unit was constituted.

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So would you travel as a unit of 27 from village to village?

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Yes. Yes. The unit was always compact - never broken up because they provided the various services. That's why they stayed together. They could be drawn upon at any time. When there was any important stunt on, we'd link up with the field ambulance and their ambulance would do stretcher bearing.

05:21:01:00

So you would also take on the responsibility of stretcher bearing?

Oh yes. Manning the desk at the field hospital - another responsibility used to be with that. A couple of medicos, we'd be helping them bring the patients in that were ill for treatment. Just initial treatment. They'd be then graded and sent of either to a base hospital or to another field hospital or to Blighty - to England, according to the severity of the wound. But the dressing in the mean time was sufficient to tide them over for a week or so. Stop the bleeding and what have you. There were usually a couple of doctors at the field station treating the wounded.

I would be interested to hear what a field dressing station looked like on the inside. We see photos.

05:22:23:00

They're like a big army hut.

And what was that like? Was it a canvas tent?

Oh no. It was fibro cement generally. Army hut. Just like an army hut today.

And how would it be laid out?

05:22:40:00

It wouldn't. Just the bare floor and a table - operating table in the middle of it and the stretchers all round the place. The Germans were over there and there were British round here just lying on the stretchers waiting to be treated. Brought in by the ambulance. You might have up to a hundred stretchers round the floor of soldiers waiting to be treated. You'd get different coloured labels according to where they had to go. Whether to a base hospital or if they were lucky enough, to England. But the wounds were dressed, bleeding was stopped, sufficient to tide them over for a week or so. Chloroform was given by just putting a pad over the nose and pouring the chloroform on. There was no check with an electrocardiogram or anything like that. They weren't known of in those days. Just use the chloroform to put them out for a half hour.

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What was the noise like in a tent? What did it sound like?

Well the ones who were least wounded made the most noise. Chap'd be having his toe shot off would be yelling blue murder. The ones who were seriously injured were semi-conscious. Never heard from them. But the doctor would learn more about surgery there than they would in a whole year in civilian life. They had to treat serious wounds.

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Were the English soldiers given priority over the Germans? Of if a German soldier was very badly injured would they be looked at too?

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They took their turn which could be a fair while. They'd be over on that side. I well remember our new padre came in and he came up to me and said 'Would you come and look after some of my flock?' and I said 'What do you mean 'my flock'?' He said 'Catholics.' I said 'Well we don't worry if they're Catholics or Protestants.' I said 'We just treat them in priority.' and I said 'They're Germans and they'll be looked after later on when we get the opportunity. They don't get any priority.' I said 'You know if I was you, instead of walking round trying to look after your flock, I'd get

your tunic off and give us a hand as the previous padre did.? He turned out afterwards to be a very fine cove. He had to be taught a lesson.

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Just before we were interrupted by time there, we were talking about the hospital in the field, was there any interaction between the English and the German soldiers? Were they aware of each other?

05:26:56:00

Oh I suppose they would be aware of each other but they didn't contact each other because they were far enough apart that they were separated. The Germans were over there and the British and Australian here, round three walls and the Germans were round one wall there. The operating tables were in the middle. Generally two medicos treating them. Grading them according to the wounds with different coloured tags according to the story of the wound and they went either to a base hospital or to Blighty - to England.

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Now you had some German language, you could actually speak ?

Mostly French. I spoke French fluently. I had learnt German, I knew enough German to understand a few words but I hadn't kept the German up but I was fluent in French.

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We'll talk about how you used your French a little later. Did you ever use your German in the hospitals?

No. No we didn't - we had no time to talk with the Germans. We were very busy looking after our own men. The stretcher bearers kept ... wounded coming in all the time. Ambulances bringing them in. We were about I suppose two kilometres behind the French, behind the line where the field hospital was. They were brought in there by field ambulance.

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And what was the field ambulance?

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Fords. All Fords. They were all black. Black Fords - the car went for about forty years. And you drained the water out of the radiator in the evenings otherwise it would have frozen and broken the radiator. And then in the morning you used to jack one back wheel up, because then you'd start the car in gear. No electric starter. Magneto ignition. So a gang of men would line up and they'd crank until she fired. Once it fired, course the gear box got its oil from the sump in the Fords in

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those days, so you lit a primus stove and put it under the sump to unfreeze the oil and then once that motor started it never stopped all day cause if you stopped it, it'd freeze up again. And then that night you'd drain and the next morning that was repeated. That was the procedure. The car idled all day. Never stopped because it would have frozen again. It was that cold.

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And so was the procedure the ambulance would go out to the battlefield, the stretcher bearers would bring the bodies to the ambulance ...

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Yeah you had your regimental first aid people that would just put a pad on and temporarily stop the bleeding. They'd be brought by the army stretcher bearer to pick up point and then the army medical corps stretcher bearers would pick them up there - mostly on duck boards because of the mud - and bring them to pick up point. They'd be put in an ambulance and taken to the field resting station by the ambulance. About a kilometre behind the line. That was the procedure.

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And would you be at the field dressing station?

We'd either be manning the field dressing station, helping the surgeons or we'd take our turn at stretcher bearing. Do a bit of each. Passchendaele was 72 hours straight. You just drop on the floor and go to sleep on the floor. They'd roll you over their feet, yelling out 'Stretcher bearers!' you'd get up and out you'd go again. That went for three days at Passchendaele. Pretty bad.

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Can you tell us, I mean it's pretty hard particularly for my generation to really get an idea of what that kind of battlefield must have been like. What was it like having to go out in that battlefield to collect the bodies?

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Well it wasn't very pleasant with shelling going on all the time and some of the shells came uncomfortably close. Quite a few of them didn't detonate; the ground was so muddy that it was too soft to detonate some of the shells. But the trouble was you couldn't get off the duck board because you'd go up to your knees in mud. You couldn't move. Had to stay on the duck board and if part of the duck board was shot away you had to wait for the pioneer crowd [engineers] to come up and lay another board - another duck board down before you could move. You had to walk on the duck board and they'd be wounded men, you could see them but you couldn't do anything for them. Couldn't get to them. Left to die which is pretty bad. You couldn't get to them so you had to bring out as many as you could and forget about the others. Carried four men to one stretcher. One to each arm. Four stretcher bearers to a stretcher.

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And you would just put one person per stretcher?

Yes.

And did it ever happen that a stretcher bearer would be hit?

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Oh yes. The shells didn't recognise the Red Cross which you had on your arm. Didn't make any difference to them. Oh yes we had casualties in the medical corps. 99% of casualties were in the infantry of course but there were casualties. And one of our own got the military medal at Passchendaele. He was awarded the military medal for stretcher bearing.

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What would you do if you were carrying a man and one of the bearers was hit by a piece of shrapnel? How would you deal with that?

I can't recall that ever happening to us. We were fortunate but they just had to put the stretcher down and wait until they got a replacement. Cause you couldn't carry a stretcher with less than four men. Have one on each leg. Just have to wait until they send up a replacement. You had to walk out on the duck boards because of the mud.

And would the soldiers be calling out to you as you were moving across the duck boards?

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Yes. You could see them calling out to you but you couldn't do anything for them. You couldn't get off the duck boards. You'd be up over your knees in mud. Just leave them there to die. You couldn't do anything else. Pretty terrible. But you could do nothing about it. You were fully occupied bringing out the men that you could bring out without having to be concerned about the ones that you couldn't.

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Ted, would those men eventually be buried? Is that ... what happened to them, the ones that had to be left there?

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Eventually they'd be buried. Not all of them because there were several thousand with no known graves. Several thousand. I think about 50,000 all told with no name graves. The names were inscribed in the gate - the Menin Gate - on the walls, names all round the walls. Think approximately 50,000. The cemeteries in France, they were beautifully kept by the Graves Commission and really immaculate. At each big ceremony they have a big memorial. Villers Bretonneux was one of the biggest memorials. It's got the tower in the middle and stretching out each side with the names all on the wall.

Did you ever lose any friends?

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Ah yes. A cousin went over with me in the 26th Battalion was killed. And the other chap in the unit, Rick Huntington, he'd only been in France for a week and he was killed at the battle of Messine. They were two and there were other friends too but they were good - you know a cousin and close friend. Two that I missed mostly. Otherwise there were quite a few school mates killed or wounded.

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How would you learn that they'd been killed?

Used to come out reading orders. Reading orders would come out in a list. So and so - the regimental number and name killed in action. Didn't say where.

Interviewee: Ted Smout Archive ID 1145 Tape 06

06:00:36:00

I'd just like to go back a little bit Ted to one of the stories you were talking to us about yesterday and you discussed landing in Cape Town I think it was or Durban in South Africa, talking about seeing the kaffirs loading the coal onto the ship. Had you encountered kanacks in Queensland before you left?

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No. They didn't come into the cities in those days. They were always kept on the settlements - didn't come into the city at all so we never saw them.

That's the aboriginal people. Because there were also kanacks as well who were islanders who were brought across to work on the cane fields.

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Yes. I think they were mostly kept up north and returned there. I can never remember seeing them in Brisbane.

Were you aware of any Aboriginal soldiers?

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Oh yes. I remember one. Oh yes. Oh yes. There was the occasional soldier. There were quite a few actually.

How were they treated by the non-Aboriginal soldiers?

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No distinction. Treated just like anyone else. There was no distinction. You had a common interest. Thrown in together. There's no problem that way.

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Did you ever come into any contact with them personally, yourself?

Yes. The odd one or two. Oh yes. Didn't treat them any differently. I mean - and of course they spoke English.

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When you arrived in France you were billeted out to houses. How did that work?

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Well when we arrived then on November 16 our first billet was in L'ecole Professional which was the technical college and we were billeted there and we were quite comfortable really. We had our own stretcher beds with mattresses. It was quite comfortable and the town of Armentieres was still

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functioning as a town. There was nothing there except old ladies and old men. All the young females were gone to work in factories and the hotels used to be around the town square and they used to come out at 8 o'clock at night. Close down at 8 o'clock at night. The town square was cobble stones.

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One night a plane came over and dropped the bomb on the cobble stone pavement, shrapnel, several wounded. We had to go out and bring them in. But otherwise it was a quiet sector. The trenches there were well maintained over the years by both sides as a kind of a training ground for trench warfare. Known as the 'houplines.' H-O-U-P-L-I-N-E-S. Houplines sector. You'd go round there and do seven to ten days in the trenches, then pulled out to

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a village about five kilometres away where there was a picture theatre. Pictures at night and that was a kind of rest area. And that particular section of the Western front was shared by both sides as a kind of training area for trench warfare.

The Germans and the allies were in the same region?

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Oh yes. With a no man's land between them.

And were they training with live ammunition?

Oh yes. Shells coming over and machine gun fire about every half hour and they'd have raids at night - just the same as happened later on. That was training. Practically every commissioned officer had a Military Cross because he'd be sent on a raid at night and if he came back alive he'd get the Military Cross. So every officer above the rank of lieutenant got the Military Cross because he had led a raid, without exception.

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I'm intrigued to know there is this almost like a pretend war going on and was there communication between, there was just some agreement that this particular area ...

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There wasn't an agreement. It just developed that way. Suited both sides to keep it that way. There was occasional machine gun firing. Germans were very methodical. They used to raid right on the half hour tick. They were all allowed fifty rounds and when they were gone you could just walk across

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quite safely. I think I told you I saw my first casualty there.

Can you tell us that story?

His name was Purdey. He was six foot one tall. He was a fatalist. You know, if I'm going to be killed, I'll be killed and killed he was. Because he wouldn't duck in the trenches because he reckoned you know, he'd be immune otherwise, and he was shot by a sniper right through the head. And that was my first casualty. I had to bring him out. But he was just over six foot tall. He was dead. His name was Purdey. He was a champion chess player in NSW. Didn't do him any good in the trenches.

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What was that like, Ted, the first time you saw a dead man?

Well, it didn't have any great impact. You weren't actually indifferent or callous but it didn't have any serious affect on you. He was dead. Brought back in for burial and that was it. His badge was taken off. Always have a badge around your neck. My number was 12947 on the disc. Everyone had a disc with their number on it. And if anyone was killed it was taken off. They weren't buried with it. They had it for record.

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And whose responsibility was that to take off their badge?

Generally the AMS - Army Medical corps. If there was a death, take it off the corpse and hand it in with a notation as to what it was and let them put it on the official record.

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So would you have to write reports as to how they died?

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No. GSW - gun shot wound. SW - shell wound. No particular section. You'd probably just describe it as GSW - gun shot wound or SW - shell wound. They were the two causes of death.

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You talked about this Houpline being the training ground and the Germans would fire on the half hour, and you'd be guaranteed in between those times you could walk safely across no man's land.

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That's right. Not no man's land. No this was behind the line. They'd have their gun trained on a section behind that line and like the trench would be there and about a hundred yards behind the trench. There'd be the village and there was a section there you'd walk between two buildings. They used to train it on there - same spot all the time. Right on the dot.

They were like that - very methodical. There was a bombing raid every half hour, right on the dot. Starting at 8 o'clock at night, finishing at 3 o'clock in the morning - right on the half hour. The result anti-aircraft was ready and knew when they were coming. So they'd pick them up and have a go at them.

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Tell us a little bit more about the structure of the battlefield. You were describing then that there were your trenches and then there was the area behind the trenches, and then obviously in front of the trenches was no man's land.

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Yeah, between but when you got down to the western front or the Ypres front - apart from Houplines - the training area, the trenches were perhaps a hundred yards apart and you had your front line trench and you had a trench coming back - reserve trench. Reserve trench and then from there you were out in the open walking on duckboards back to be picked up and taken back by ambulance or if you could walk you walked back to the rest care camp.

And the trenches themselves, what were they like?

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Well, unfortunately they were badly infected with lice - body lice - and rats as big as cats. All the trenches, and some of them were six inches of water in the foot of them with duck boards to walk on and the common illness was trench feet. If you got your feet wet, they'd be frozen. Suffer from trench feet and then they'd have to be decapitated. Perhaps toes or sometimes the whole foot.

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And would the soldiers attempt to give the trenches something that personalised it for them?

Oh yes. We were in the reserve trenches there mostly - not the front line trench - and there was generally covering up top - sand bags, and we got a little table and seats, chairs. We used to play cards. We used to light the primus and put it under the table with the hessian around. Keep your feet warm. We used to play cards at night, day time, fill in time. That was in the reserve trenches. I learned to play Bridge there.

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Food was brought up in dixies. Big dixies about that big full of hot food and your own dixie was like a metal dixie about that size with a handle. You'd go along and put that onto that as a ration. That's when you got hot food and it used to come up in these big dixies and it was kept hot. We were pretty well fed. Occasionally on bully beef for a day or two but generally they managed to get the food up at night.

Was it French or English cuisine that they'd bring?

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Australian.

What sort of food would they give you?

Oh just stew. No grills of course because the grill wouldn't fit. Always stew. Fish on a Friday. Generally. Sometimes bully beef and biscuits but

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mostly stewed meat. Hot. Bully beef came up in tins. The brand was Fray Bentos ? F-R-A-Y

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B-E-N-T-O-S. And you used to open that and tip this chunk of corned beef out, about that size. Sometimes they'd make

the corned beef into stew.

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Corned beef stew. And army biscuits. They were really tough. You just nibble a little bit at a time. Very hard. Occasionally we were brought bread ?

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bread rolls. Not too often. Mostly they were biscuits. And tea. Plenty of tea. And an issue of rum. We used to put the rum in our water bottle so we got a half a bottle and then we'd have a party. We didn't drink the SRD - strong rum diluted. SRD. Used to have it in big stone jars. We didn't drink it when it was issued; we used to save it up.

And what would you do at the party? How would you throw a party?

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Oh, just drink the rum and run with the rest. They encouraged you to smoke and drink because it settled your nerves, you know. You were actually encouraged to smoke. You were given a tobacco ration and a rum ration and you were encouraged to use it. One of chaps went away to the war as a teetotaler. He was an ex churchman. He survived without breaking his pledge. But generally speaking we used to share the rum.

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You talked about playing cards in the reserve trench, tell us what things you'd do in times of rest, when you weren't actually in action? What did you do to pass the time?

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Well if there was a village close by you'd go down to the village til 8 o'clock at night til the establishment closed. French beer was two shillings a glass which was a penny. And you could drink the French beer - it wasn't particularly strong but it was something to drink and then at 8 o'clock at night they'd close down and you'd go back to the camp and the billet and get back into bad and repeat the performance the next day until you went back into the trenches again.

And would you write letters?

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Oh yes. And we got mail. Very good mail service. Post Office quite efficient. Quite amazing able to follow you and end up wherever you were. Sometimes be quite a while to get to you but we got the letters. And all your replies were censored so you took care not to say where you were because if you did it was just blotted out. You got to know what they'd allow through and generally speaking the censors didn't have a great lot of censorship to deal with. Every letter was opened and read and censored before it was posted.

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And what would you write about? What would you send back home?

You wouldn't tell them where you were but you could describe life in the trenches, like the meals we were getting and just things like that. And describe the shelling - that it was severe. Generally didn't give a great deal of information about the shelling - just we were well and how we filled in our time.

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Did you ever have any romance with any of the French women that you'd meet at the establishments?

No. No. First of all most of the young women - they weren't in the village. Village mainly consist of elderly old people - old men and old women and youngsters. That's what general population there was if any in the village so we didn't have any opportunity of meeting up with any of the girls. I could have because I spoke French fluently. Like a

second language to me but we had no opportunity for that.

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You told us a story yesterday about the Folies Bergere - at the Armistice when you went back into Paris.

Yeah, I went to Paris the day after the Armistice. I jumped the train and went through by train to Paris. And booked into the Hotel Calais in the Rue de Calais which is only a few hundred yards away from the Folies and then spent the evening at the Folies Bergere. I was the only Australian in the audience. Used to have quite a night there because I had plenty of French money and the girls were quite accommodating so generally speaking you could really enjoy yourself. You didn't always finish up back in the hotel either.

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Where would you finish up?

With one of the girls. They'd have a flat or something. Spend the night with them. I was young and active. And I think I told you about the big tri-colour they had coming down. It was well organised - you know within 24 hours of the Armistice. Amazing.

Did you ever keep in contact with any of those girls?

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No. No. You just knew them and that was the end of it.

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Was there a great sense of joy and - freedom as a result of the Armistice?

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Oh yes. We arrived the day after the Armistice but the ones that arrived there that day they got off the train in Paris and the French girls just formed a ring around them. They had to kiss every girl to get out of the ring. This went on practically day and night. They had a great time. We got there the next day. They'd settled down a bit by then. But we were still treated right royally by the French people, the Parisiennes. As I said, I was fluent in French so I was quite well able to get around the city of Paris which I enjoyed for ten days before I was caught - picked up by a Tommy MP. Sent back to the unit. 14 days pay fine for going AWL.

Was there any precautions taken by the army with the soldiers in terms of sexually transmitted diseases?

06:28:02:00

Oh yes. You were given a kit. Treatment kit and instructed how to use it. Everyone carried it and then of course VD [Venereal Disease] was common. There was a big VD hospital in England and they were sent there for treatment. Gonorrhoea was fairly rampant and syphilis was more serious. Gonorrhoea was treated just casually you know. Brushed off but it was just accepted as part of the normal living.

And would you have to treat these diseases in your hospitals?

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No. No they weren't taken to field dressing stations. They were sent straight off from the regimental stations to Base Hospital or if it was syphilis they'd go to England. Otherwise they'd be treated in France for gonorrhoea and returned to their unit.

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What were the details of the kit? Obviously there would have been condoms. What sort of other things did they distribute?

Condoms. And there was a kit a kind of - it was like Vaseline that sort of thing. An ointment. That was all. To put on the penis. It was kind of a protective barrier. Condoms weren't particularly popular so they weren't used a great deal. They should have been but they weren't. So gonorrhoea was fairly common. Syphilis not so common. But that was serious of course. They were sent to England with that.

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You spoke about the training ground at Houplines - I sense World War One as being a war in which both sides were very respectful of each other. There was a certain etiquette.

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That's right.

Do you think that's an honest representation of what warfare was like in World War One?

In what way?

Were the opposing sides respectful of each other but was there a brutality there?

I think brutality more than anything. I don't think there was any particular respect. Mostly at night time mostly raids, of course you had the barbed wire and you had to go ahead and cut the barbed wire so the troops could get

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through it. They'd have a track marked out with tape at night so you could follow that tape to where the barbed wire had been cut and they could get through under the German tanks or observation posts and perhaps capture a German soldier. To find one was important, if you get one bring him back to find out what Germans are there. Be important information as to

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what German was at that front. They were night raids and every commissioned officer would make a raid. If he came back alive he got the Military Cross. Every commissioned officer had a Military Cross without exception. If he survived he got a Military Cross.

And what sort of information were they wanting to extract from the Germans if they caught them?

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What unit it was so they could find out where the Germans were moving in troops. Name of the unit, regimental number and from that from a huge map where the Germans were. Their strong points and weak points. That was the reason they were after that information at night. And generally speaking they had a listening post a bit ahead of the trenches to detect any raid coming like that. As warning - both sides.

So this listening post - there would be soldiers there who were specifically trying to hear what the Germans were saying to each other. Is that right?

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No. They weren't that close. They were called listening posts but they were there to detect any attempted raid by the enemy. With a telegraph line. The telegraph section laid a wire back and they'd ring through and warn the main body that this crowd were coming. That was their function. There was a telegraph section in the army and their job would be to lay the wires through to the listening post from the battalion headquarters.

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The most decorated soldier in the army, he was a signaller and he used to lay these wires and he had a Military Cross and bar and French Croix du Guerre and a couple of bars and he was highly decorated and he was just the type of cove apparently that nothing frightened him. And he just went up in all sorts of conditions laying the wires and got these

medals awarded. Highly decorated.

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And would - what do you think it was that distinguished a soldier such as this feller in terms of bravery?

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Well, the more intelligent type they can imagine and they actually know what was going on but what I call the bovine type - they were undisturbed. They said unless the shell landed right practically on top of them it didn't worry them at all. They were very lucky and Letso went over here and got the Military Medal because he was that type. Nothing disturbed him. Wasn't that he was particularly brave but he was that type of character that's more or less immune to any sense of shock. So he was awarded the military medal at Passchendaele. One of my mates.

This was one of your mates who you enlisted with?

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Yes. Norm Troswell. One of three of us. But what happened there. The unit was given one Military Medal to be awarded to somebody and the OC of the unit decided which soldier was to get it. Norm Troswell was awarded the Military Medal. It could have been any one of us but he was awarded it. He did more stretcher bearing than the others. I don't think he was every manning the field resting station. I think he was entirely stretcher bearing at Passchendaele.

Do people feel that was fair that only one medal should be ?

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No. We were only one unit of 27 men. So one medal of 27 was pretty good because otherwise with a battalion there would be so many to allocate. And there would be reports from the company commanders and section commanders of any particular act of bravery which warranted recognition. They'd be sorted out and then the medal would be awarded. That was the procedure. He might be Mentioned in Dispatches. That was the next rank below a medal. M.I.D - mentioned in dispatches for a particular act that didn't warrant a medal.

Interviewee: Ted Smout Archive ID 1145 Tape 07

07:00:24:00

Ted I was interested that you said you were the only sanitation unit?

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Yeah, well we were the last division to be formed under General Monash - the 3rd Division and we were the only one with what was called a sanitary section. It's called the hygiene section now. It was a small unit of 27 men and there were two health inspectors, qualified, a couple of car drivers because we had our own ambulance, a couple of plumbers, couple of carpenters and the others were general knowledge soldiers and my job, particular job, was water testing. The wells were polluted and I used to test them and chlorinate the water and make it fit to drink. We didn't lose one soldier from drinking water which was remarkable.

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Did they decide to have a sanitation unit because of the conditions in the trenches?

Yes. None of them had one so this was a new development they discovered to try it out so they formed this sanitary section. As I say it's called the hygiene section now. But the same function. 27 men in the unit with a medico in charge at the rank of captain.

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And this was because there were lots of diseases because of lack of hygiene?

Yes. The rest camps were pretty crude and they had to have quite a lot done to make them healthy. Dig latrines and put in grease traps and what have you.

Can you tell me about this camp that you got to in France?

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At Le Havre. We went across from England to Le Havre and this was an overnight established camp for the troops to stay overnight and move onto the unit but we got stuck in the wrong tent and one of the units had mumps.

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I'd had mumps but despite that we were isolated for three weeks and kept in this camp for three weeks. Well the Irish sergeant major - permanent British Army sergeant major - who was in charge of the camp. The captain in charge, we never saw him. He was flogging rations to French people and we were getting no French rations. The bell tents had sides that were torn. We

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had no palliasses on the ground, we were lying on ground sheets. The blankets were damp and stiff just like a board - frozen stiff and we went down to the YMCA one morning as a fatigue party. Frank Beaurepaire, who later became Sir Frank Beaurepaire, was the secretary, to scrub the floors and

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he provided some morning tea. He brought some bread rolls. He went back to get some butter and when he came back the bread rolls had gone. We just knocked them off and when we told him it was the first bread we'd seen for a week and we told him the conditions, he said he'd arrange for the captain to turn up the next day and for us to appoint a spokesman and I was appointed

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the spokesman. So we put our blankets up against the fence like a board - they were frozen stiff - and I told the captain the sad story. We couldn't get any pay - it was a British camp and we had no palliasses on the ground, no abrasives. The sides of the tents were broken so I told him about the food.

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We were getting bully beef and biscuits, nothing else for a week so he lined up another sergeant and put the other sergeant major under arrest. Marched him off. We learned later that he got six months gaol and a dishonourable discharge. He'd been flogging the rations and getting away with it because the troops were only there for one night and moved on so no complaint but he still flogged the rations for a whole week and we weren't getting any fresh food so he just over did it and landed himself in trouble. And after that conditions improved. We couldn't draw any pay because it was a British camp but we had three weeks there before we moved on to our unit. And we eventually joined the unit up at the front and that was it.

So you couldn't draw any pay. What were you supposed to do in those weeks without any money?

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Just couldn't do anything. We had no money to spend. Couldn't get any money. So we just had to rely on the rations. Eventually we got a tobacco ration after we made our complaint and a rum ration and cooked food so conditions were alright after that. And we got new tents, palliasses, ground sheets, charcoal abrasives, everything was provided, tobacco ration.

And why had you not been able to make a complaint before. What was the procedure for making complaints?

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We asked to be paraded - the captain in charge - but this sergeant major wouldn't parade us which of course is wrong. If you ask to be paraded he's supposed to take you to the officer but he wouldn't do it. So by and large he was doing everything wrong. Thought he'd get away with it but he did because for one night it was alright but he kept on flogging the rations. That's where he landed himself in trouble.

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And tell me a bit about discipline, Ted. Who administered discipline? Was it up to the British officers to punish the soldiers?

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We had our own officers of course and for instance, our medico - the captain in charge - he could put you up on charges and the sergeant appointed is the prosecuting officer and they had another one for the defence - like a court. And you went in there and questions were asked and answered. The penalty was imposed if he was guilty. For instance I was fined fourteen days pay for going off to Paris. And that was the only time I was ever up before the big. So discipline was given by your own officers.

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And when you were put up before the officer, what was your defence? What did you say?

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Well, the first time was when we broke ship at Cape Town and Lieutenant Ash was the prosecuting officer and we were manning the hospital. There were two or three serious cases in the hospital and if you were fined you can't be made to do your normal duty. You can do fatigue duties so we just indicated that if we were fined we wouldn't be manning the hospital. Well that posed

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a problem so the prosecuting officer met us and said, he said 'I order you to answer just 'yes'. Do nothing but say yes to anything.' So the question was directed to us 'Do you remember such and such a date?' - Yes - 'Were you standing near the gangway?' - Yes - 'And you were swept off your feet by

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the crowd leaving the ship?' - Yes 'You found yourself ashore and decided you might as well stay?' - yes. So the army medical corps wasn't fined. When we got back the ship was out in the middle of the harbour so we were taken aboard and lined up. Our names were taken as we went up and when we came up for prosecution that's what happened. And of course the army

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medical corps people weren't fined because we had to man the hospital. We got off - we weren't fined. That was my first experience and the other time was after the Armistice when I went off to Paris, when I got back from Paris. I was up before a big for that and fined fourteen days pay for going AWL.

And what did you say to him?

I thought it was a bit tough. The war was over. Every one was taking off to Paris. It cost me 14 days pay. It was worth it, I had such a great time.

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And what other sort of offences did people get punished for? What sort of things did people do?

Sometimes an untidy uniform in rest camp. AWL - taking off, absent without leave. You get a leave pass that was alright or if you got - you were due back with the leave pass at 8 o'clock at night and you got back late, that was a minor offence. There were various to be charged with.

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And what other punishments were there apart from docking your pay?

They were all minor offences. Any serious ones like deserting your post; well you'd be put in gaol for that. Had you not been an Australian you'd have been shot but they couldn't kill an Australian soldier. The Australian government laid that down. The British commands couldn't impose the death penalty on an Australian soldier. They did it on their own. They couldn't do it on an Australian.

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Did you know anybody who deserted?

No. No. You'd hear about them but I didn't know any personally.

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Were there very many?

No. No. I think once they lowered the voting age of 21 (we were allowed to vote because we were soldiers) - lads would be 18 upwards, so on conscription issue we had a vote and a huge majority voted against conscription. If they don't come voluntary we don't want any conscripts with us. We didn't want them, which surprised the government.

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So all the soldiers who were there really wanted to be there.

That's right. They were all volunteers and we didn't want any conscripts so we voted against conscription for that reason.

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And tell me about when Monash took over command. How did your daily life change? Was there an instant change?

He was in charge of our unit right from the start. It was as late as April 1918 when he was put in charge of all the Australian divisions and an army corps. And that's when they were really doing something under his command. Because when they were under British command although Australian generals would put up a proposal, they were always knocked back. The British command did their own work. We reckon they were fighting the battle on the Crimean War textbook. Putting men against impossible positions. Just, human life wasn't worth anything to them - just being slaughtered. Quite unnecessary casualties. Fighting people around them didn't matter in any case. Very heavy casualties.

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What did the British think of Monash taking command? Did they like that?

No. They probably didn't like it but they couldn't do anything about it. It wasn't until April 1918 that that happened. Up til then we were kept under British command. British Generals. Our generals made a report they'd be ignored.

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So did you notice a difference - you said you had British officers commanding you - did you notice a difference in what happened with them after Monash?

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Yes. First of all we never saw them. They never came up the front. Whereas Australians used to come up to the front. You'd see them actually come right up the trenches but never the British officers and the caste system was very strong in Britain. Anyone that attended what they call a public school, which is a private school, like Oxford or Cambridge or Eaton, they

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got a commission automatically. Doesn't matter what qualification they had. So they all got a commission and the ordinary Tommy was just an ordinary Tommy. His training was to do as he was told, not to think for himself. And the difference between the Tommy and the Scots soldier - the Scots soldier was a totally different type. More like the Australians. If an officer is killed in the Australian and Scots Army, the sergeant would take over. If he was killed there'd be the corporal - there was always some body would fill the bridge and take over as the leader. But in the British Army if an officer was killed they were stymied. Tommy didn't know what to do. Their

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training was do as your told. Don't do any thinking for yourself, you know. Don't show any individuality. That was their training. Totally different outlook to the Scots and the Australian.

Tell me what it was like - you say the Australian generals came to the front. Tell me how morale was with the troops at that time.

Morale improved. Being under British generals you knew that and it wasn't good for morale at all. Casualties were so heavy and obviously unnaturally, you know. Just putting men up against impregnable positions for a piece of ground that didn't matter to us in any case. So they had no confidence, the British generals, at all. And as I say, you never saw them. They'd never go up the front. Always the Australian generals liked to go right up and were always there. You could see them.

It must have been hard for the Australian officers.

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Oh it was. Australian generals would put up proposals and they'd just be knocked down cold. Ignored. They weren't happy about that at all. They couldn't do anything about it because they were under the control of the British army. They were part of the British Army.

Did that make you feel, because Australians saw themselves as part of the empire?

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That's right. We didn't have much respect from the British officers.

Okay, you talked before about there being a catholic padre in the camp. Were there services? Did you go to services on Sunday?

Yeah, we had church services. You nominated your religion, except for becoming a Catholic I would be Church of England or whatever was the handiest service. That's the religion I had for that time. And we had church parades, regular church parade on a Sunday. You went and had a church service. There was always a padre attached to each battalion, a chaplain, army chaplain. He conducted the service and that was always done. Not in the trenches of course but in the rest camps.

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I'll tell you the story when one Catholic chaplain came along to the dressing station and asked me treat the Germans and I said 'They'll have to take their turn.' Which meant a long time because we treat our own men first. But he said he wanted me to go and look at one of his flock - his flock there and I said 'What do you mean?' And he said 'Catholics.' I said 'There's no religion here. We don't have Catholics or Protestants. Skip it. If you want to get on here, take that chaplain's jacket off and get in and do something - give us a hand.' He turned out to be quite a good cove really, when he was put into gear. Good worker.

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Would men go and talk to the chaplain or the padre about ...

Yes, the padre used to get around. Find out they were their own religion, give them a blessing and move on to the next one. Taught them. If they wanted to contact their family he'd write a letter for them. That's what they used to do.

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And Ted, you said you had quite a lot of religion when you were younger ...

Too much. My father was a primitive Methodist religion and Sunday was a day of worship. I mean they drew the blinds in the house and first of all primitive Methodists wouldn't allow you to go to the theatre, no dancing, no cars. Sunday was a day of complete religion. The story is told of one youngster was going along and he was whistling and he was told 'Don't whistle. People will think you're happy.' That's supposed to be true. So we had a lot of religion. Church service on Sunday morning, Sunday school in the afternoon, church Sunday night. Monday night was Band of Oak meeting - that was a temperance league thing, and Tuesday was Christian Div. That was a lot of religion. So by the time I was 15 the family went away, I went boarding and I gave religion away. Stopped going to church. I'd had enough for a while. It was some years later before I started going to church.

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Was that after the war that you started going to church?

Yes.

Did you have - did you believe in God?

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Oh very much. You never lost your faith but you didn't do any worshipping except the church parades. They were compulsory. You had to go on church parade when you were in the rest area. But they weren't fussy about which church you went to.

Was that difficult to believe in God when there was all this death?

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No. No because the Germans believe in God too, which is odd. You didn't ponder on it much. Didn't give it much thought.

You said before that sometimes it was possible to have burials, can you tell me a bit about that? Did they have burial services?

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Oh yes. If anyone died you couldn't take them - if one of them died in the battle there was no service for them but if one died in the rest camp they'd have a burial service for them with a chaplain who read the burial service and bury him, commit him to the grave at the cemetery. There are cemeteries dotted right through France. While we were there at the battle front there'd be a ceremony adjacent. The biggest one is Villers Bretonneux. It'd be about 1600 tombstones

there.

Do you want to tell us about the German bombers, when the German bombers came over? That happened a few times didn't it?

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The German bombers that came over and bombed, you never heard a raise of shell fire in the rest camp while bombing. So even if it got away from the front you were still subjected to shell fire and more bombing, you were never completely free of this. It was an incessant pressure you know. It never stopped. There was never any respite. Although you were away from the trench you were still subject to shell fire or bombing and one time we went right back about twelve miles behind the line to a fairly big town called

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Poperinge and the Germans came over and they started bombing at 8 o'clock when the hotels or establishments around the town square were closing down and the soldiers all coming out, they came and dropped bombs on town square. Casualties were quite heavy. We were called out to bring them in and then they came over right on top, every half hour til three o'clock in the morning. Right on the dot of half hour. So of course eventually our searchlighters knew they were coming so the searchlights would pick them up. Anti aircraft gun would start firing at them. And they dropped their bombs.

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We were in a brick house next to a big building which was the overnight billet for British officers going on leave to England and this was their target and we heard this huge bomb drop ... almost on top of us, and it didn't detonate, didn't explode. And we went over the next morning and it had come through the tile roof of this building - there was no ceiling - and that couldn't detonate it. It landed on the big French bed - those high beds. A British officer was staying there overnight, broke both his legs and fell off onto the floor beside him and didn't explode. We went out in the morning

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and here was this 200 pound shell with fins put on it as a tail piece and used as a bomb. The artillery people came and took it away and detonated it. So he was a bit unlucky. He got the fright of his life - instead of going on leave he had his legs broken. The next day they apparently got word back that they'd missed out and a later plane came over with the same target and he either misjudged it or was forced to drop his bombs by the anti-aircraft cause he dropped the whole stick of bombs right alongside our building - brick - one storey - and it collapsed. So I'm lying half buried in bricks. Out of 40 men, only one killed. That's how lucky we were but you had a lot of scratches and bruises. It was just lucky it hadn't hit the building or we'd all be killed.

So you were inside the building?

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Yes. I was lying in the hallway and I worked it out in the hallway - no windows - you couldn't get hit by shrapnel. It was just the building more or less collapsed. Bombs falling on either side - you were half buried in bricks. I only got bruises and scratches. But there was only one killed but he'd gone out through the front door to watch the bombers and then he collected shrapnel from these bombs. Cause there were no fatalities in the building.

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How close, how low did the bombers come? What could you see when they flew over?

About 3,000 feet. Down to 2,000 - not much lower than that but they were pretty accurate and after this big building and only just around the corner away from it. They weren't far off. But we were just in between unfortunately.

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And what did you do after that? How did you get out and what did you do?

We found another billet. The houses were empty of course so we just found another house. But the first bomber was 8 o'clock in the town square, the square was cobbled stone. They dropped anti-personnel bombs which shatter and spread nails and everything, pieces of steel. A lot of casualties and we pulled out those.

So you had to go and get stretchers and pick up the casualties?

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With the ambulance. Picking them up and bringing them to the rest station. And none of us were in the rest area, you know.

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So could you ever relax like were you able to sleep with constant bomb threats? How did you get some rest?

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You snatched sleep spasmodically but you'd get enough sleep although at Passchendaele I went 72 hours with very little sleep but they sent me back to a base camp for clerical work, allegedly to do short hand but I know that our OC knew I was about that and they wanted a cleric to do shorthand work so he sent me back, knowing I couldn't do short hand. I got back and they found I couldn't do short hand so I thought I'd just stay overnight and we'll send you back. So I went to bed and I slept for 16 hours. 16 hours. They came and woke me up. I'd had no sleep for three days practically and slept 16 hours before they woke me up and sent me back. So that break was quite a good break. Sleeping between sheets on a proper bed. Food for a day or so. It was quite good. That was our OC's way of getting a bit of a spell.

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Can you tell me a bit more about the trenches at the front? How far away were the Germans?

It varied. It varied. Could be 100 yards in some cases, some cases further but the nearest would be a 100 yards and we never occupied the front line trench, we occupied the reserve trench. From the front line there was a trench coming back up to the reserve trench. And there'd be spots where the roof was protected and it'd be open but we'd be in one of these areas. Little to do actually because the regimental stretcher bearers brought them back to point and our ambulance was functioning and their ambulance was bringing them back to the dressings table. And that's where we were on duty at the dressings table or in the reserve trenches. We had a little table with a primus stove, hessian round and used to light the primus stove to keep warm all our feet. Played cards or whatever. Filled in the time doing nothing.

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So it was boring sometimes?

Oh yes, yes. Unless you were called out it was quite boring. I learned to play bridge there with a cove from Sydney. Taught us how to play auction bridge.

Was there ever a chance to get out there on no man's land and pick up wounded and dead?

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No. That was done by the regimental army medical corps. Each battalion had about half a dozen AMC men attached to their battalion and that was their function - they carried field dressings, put on a field dressing, stopped the flow of blood and get them out from there to the section where they could be picked up by the ambulance and taken to the dressings station. And we were in that - taking them from there to the dressings station. That was our function. Working in the dressings station and we were stretcher bearing from the regimental post back.

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Did you have any medical training?

No. My training was - oh we had first aid training. My training was in the water testing. I was the trained water tester. The only one in the army.

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You said there was a lot of surgery, did you ever have to help?

Yes. Yes we'd hold the gauze over the face - the chloroform. There was no electrocardiogram then you just put a pad over their face and poured the chloroform on it, put them out. So that's one you do and then you generally if the doctor wanted anything you'd get it for him.

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And Ted you said when you were training, when you were a cadet you were a good shot. Did you ever get to use a weapon?

No. No. In the army medical corps you couldn't use a weapon. We had the Red Cross on our arms so we were non combatants. But unfortunately shells didn't recognise that.

Did you ever feel you would have liked to be in the infantry and ?

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No. No I was quite happy doing the AMC work. Never had any particular desire to fight. That was our attitude. I mean we had a function and we performed it and that was it. It was an important function and that was our contribution to the war effort. No less important than that of an infantryman's. That's how we looked at it.

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And then Ted you turned 18 when you were out there. What did you do for your birthday?

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The 18th birthday didn't get any special mention but the 21st birthday - I had quite a party. I got an older officer friend to get a case of whisky and the whisky they got was Irish whisky - Glenn Spray. Irish Glenn Spray whisky - I'll never forget it. It's a straight whisky - Irish Whisky, not Scotch. Not blended and we had a right royal party. Went on all night.

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Where were you then?

We were at a place called Pont Nieppe. We were in a brick house, built it there - two storeyed place and a very narrow stair case came up to the upper floor and they managed to get me up the steps and I fell down the rest of the steps and finished up asleep in the kitchen under the stove. Woke up the next morning. And the OC came around to inspect the troops and we looked sorry coves. ?What the devil happened to you lot last night?? So we told him what had happened to us. We'd knocked off this Glenn Spray whisky. So that was the 21st. I was 20 actually but in the army I was 21.

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Did any girls come to the party?

There were no girls there. No girls. There wouldn't be a girl in any of those villages. They'd all gone off to work in the factories. The only civilians if any left in any village were old people.

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So did you have another 21st when you got back?

Not a 21st because I was ? I was 21 when I got back. I had a birthday party when I got back. Can't recall a great deal about it but I had one. But I went teetotal when I got back for twelve months. Deliberately to break off any association with any - you see most of them got back before me because I was in London for six months so when I got back everyone I knew was back here and the first thing was ?Come and have a drink.? I'm not drinking. I did that as a matter of principle for a year so I could cut adrift from most of these coves. A few of them were alright in army life but they were on different sides in civilian life so I wanted to make a complete break. I went teetotal for a year, which was a good thing.

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End of tape

Interviewee: Ted Smout Archive ID 1145 Tape 08

08:00:24:00

Actually Ted, just to pick up, you were just saying that you gave up drink so that you wouldn't associate with the other soldiers. Why was it you didn't want to associate with them?

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First of all most of them still had the hobby drinking so to keep in touch you'd have to drink which I didn't want to do. And the other thing was that you might have a lot in common with them when you're in the army but nothing in common with them in civilian life, except one or two. A few particular friends but apart from those I wanted to cut adrift from anything connected with the war. It was a kind of revulsion. A reaction and I wanted

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to get back into civilian life without any attachments to any ex-army groups at all. So I didn't join the RSL [Returned and Services League], I didn't join any group of men who met annually at functions. I kept completely away from it for many years. Many years later I joined the league. That was a deliberate policy. It's my way of getting back into civilian life. Of course quite a few, probably the majority, took to liquor and it wasn't a good environment to be mixed up in. I

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remember one time I left the old office and I was secretary of a public company - probably the youngest secretary of a public company in Australia I think, but I had my own private secretary and one of my old mates, he hit the grog. He used to finish up sleeping in parks. He used to come up regularly and I'd give him some money. And this lass said why would you bother with him? And I said ?But for the grace of God that would be me.? Fortunately I didn't go that way but just easily I might have done. No half measures. I think so, I think so.

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So what was the attitude of Australians towards the returning soldiers? How did people respond to you?

In the first war, the Department of Repatriation, now called the Veterans' Affairs, there wouldn't be one returned soldier on the staff.

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And what about ordinary people though? Civilians, people you knew?

You were treated quite well with them. The Veterans Affairs' Department, then called the Department of Repatriation, They were quite callous. I mean they do nothing for you. Their whole attitude was ?How can we get rid of this cove

without doing anything for him?? Different today. They're wonderful the way they treat you today. Post 14-18 war, first of all there wasn't a returned soldier on the staff and that was their attitude because when we got back we went over to Sharp's House at Kangaroo Point and they put on a meal that night and the mayor of Brisbane got up and made a

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speech of welcome and then we went down to get details before we got our discharge papers and I was asked if I wanted to apply for a pension and I said well I had been gassed and they said ?If you want to apply you'll have to go to the General Hospital and spend the night there.? My mother and family were waiting for me. To hell with the army so I signed the form that I had

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no disability. Another form agreeing to be put on Army Reserve, because I was still eligible for compulsory training. Being under 21, so I got exempt from that by signing this agreement to join the Reserve. And I signed the form that I had no disability but when the shell shock caught up with me I went to Repat to try and get some treatment and they just produced this form and told me to go and jump in the lake. Apart from which doctors knew nothing about shell shock. You had to find your own solution to that.

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Did you go to the doctors?

There was no free medical treatment. Doctors were expensive. You only went once to find they knew nothing about shell shock. Couldn't do anything for you. I just gave it away and just set out my own programme of

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rehabilitation over a period of six months. Singing and dancing. I learned singing and dancing. Until I could do that comfortably and eventually I joined the Apollo Club under the lessons of Francis and eventually stopped it when I got on top of it. When I could sing and dance without any nervousness. It served its purpose but it taught me much for later in life because I never had a too hard basket in business. Cause this six months had taught me to tackle the hard job first.

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And do you think the people you worked for recognised you had brought back some skills from being in the army?

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No they didn't. There wasn't any other returned men in our office and they were completely unforgiving if you absented yourself. Settling back in an office after war service is very difficult. Sometimes I'd just throw the pen at the wall and have to go out and walk around town and I'd be put on the mat for this. And I was quite unhappy in the office. Pay was lousy because we were professional officers - we had no union. So the ordinary clerks had outstripped us salary wise so the salary was pretty poor and they hadn't reserved my seniority. They hadn't done it. There were four men ahead of me. There should have been none because the one ahead of me was killed. So I got out and got a job as an accountant with a new insurance company that was being formed at a decent salary - 50% more than I was getting in the Auditor's office and I did quite well there.

And what sort of skills did you bring to your work?

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Well I had to become a qualified accountant. I sat for the examination for the Federal Institute of Accountants - now the CPA - practising Accountants. CPA. Certified Practising Accountants - It was then the Federal Institute of Accountants and I sat for that exam over a period of two years - an intermediate and a final and passed those and then the secretarial

exam followed. I paid for the Bell and Johnson course but didn't bother to use it. I read it through and I was doing it every day so I sat for the exam and passed it no trouble at all without studying because it was my job. So I became a qualified secretary as well as a qualified accountant.

Did you feel you had to work harder to catch up because you'd been away at the war?

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Yes. It wasn't a matter of working harder it was a matter of studying. This two years of studying, I found that I couldn't study spasmodically so I arrived at the stage where I decided that the five week nights - Monday to Friday to study and the weekend to be free. It worked. The weekend I didn't even look at a textbook. But through the week you get into a kind of programme and you couldn't do anything else. Monday night I was ready to study - five nights. The weekend I could play. Do whatever I wanted to and I did no study at all. I used to go to the Cremorne Theatre - a group of reserved men on a Saturday night. We had permanent reserved seats and that was one of our Saturday nights and we'd go from there to the Albert Street, Albert Hotel which is where the Town Hall is now in King George Square. Sophie Ball had a bar in that hotel - she was a friend and we used to stay then til about one o'clock in the morning. Eleven o'clock closing but after eleven o'clock we'd just go behind the bar and ring up our own drinks. She knew us pretty well and about one o'clock we'd go home. That was the weekend. But Saturday night was always Cremorne Theatre. Group of about 8 to 10 men - good friends.

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When did you meet your wife and get married Ted?

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I was married in 1923. I met my wife a year or so before. She was the youngest daughter of the Stevens family who owned Seaspray - which was a very fashionable guest house in those days. It's a hotel now. And there are three sisters. Two of them worked in the establishment. My wife was the youngest and she used to wait at the tables and I courted her for nearly 18 months. I think it was our diamond wedding anniversary out here and I overheard her telling a couple of my grandchildren or great grandchildren, ?I saw this handsome young man coming off - it was the tennis court on the corner where the hotel is now - off the court and I said to myself That's the man I'm going to marry.? I said ?I wasted 18 months courting you.? You never know do you. She made up her mind that's the guy I'm going to marry and she didn't even know me. So it was love at first sight with her. 69 years that marriage lasted. Wonderful marriage. Wonderful. She was a great asset. The best thing I ever did was marry her.

Did you ever talk to her about your experiences in the war?

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No. No. You never did. You never talked to any civilian about it. They wouldn't understand. Impossible to grasp.

And she never asked you any questions?

No, cause they knew I wouldn't talk. She just brushed it aside. There's nothing in common with them. They couldn't possibly understand and there's no way in the world you could ever convey it to them. The horror of it.

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When you wrote your letters home Ted, from the front, how much did you tell people back home?

Well first of all they were censored. Every letter was opened and read by an officer and censored so if you made any reference to where you were that was censored right out. So we were told what we couldn't put in so generally speaking my letters weren't censored much. They were censored but never anything deleted because I didn't put anything in I shouldn't have. That was the first thing you had to do otherwise your letter's just a mass of cancellations. You couldn't say where you were, or the unit you were with - were attached to. Couldn't put anything about the war at all at the front about the operation or where you were or what you were doing.

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So you weren't allowed to talk about casualties at all?

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No. We got mail regularly. The Australian Post Office was quite efficient. Amazing how those letters used to follow us right down to the field. You get the mail delivery. We got parcels regularly - comfort parcels. So the mail service was quite good. Receiving mail.

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What was in the parcels?

One time I got army biscuits in one parcel. I thought that was rich. Comforts parcel. No, most of them were private people. You'd get the letter from whoever it was and you'd generally write to the people. If they put their name on it you'd write to them and thank them. One parcel came for comforts with army biscuits in it. I thought it was quite amusing. Cause the army biscuits, you couldn't ... they were really tough. But you know, the parcel would have dates, or what are those black things? Prunes. Seasoned prunes. Sweets, chocolate, pack of cards perhaps which was always useful. You more or less lived with playing cards. Play euchre, 500, later on Bridge, pontoon, 21, pontoon its called. Poker, 500, the lot.

What about music Ted? Music and singing? Did that happen?

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No, not particularly. We had no choir, we had no singing group. They had an army concert group. That was their full time occupation. They were quite expert. They used to give you know put on shows in rest camp, put on a concert. But outside of that there were no organised choirs.

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What sort of shows did they put on?

Like a vaudeville show. Stand up comedian, comedies and dancing girls, got dressed up as girls you know. Like a vaudeville show. And they were permanent. They were an army concert troop. That was their job, their function. They'd have a soprano who could sing soloist. Group singing. Just like a vaudeville show. And they used to come and build an open air stage when we were in rest camp and put on a concert.

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Actually Ted, you talking about men dressing up as women, were there gay men amongst the soldiers?

Well we never heard about gays in those days. You never heard of it. If there were 'poofers' we used to call them, and we didn't talk about it much but so they weren't naturally poofers but they might have been but they didn't have to be naturally. They'd just dance just like women - put on a show.

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And did you have concerts at Christmas time?

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Yes. The first Christmas was in December 1916. We were billeted in this professional college in Armentieres which was quite a good building so Christmas dinner there was quite a spread inside. Dressed the table and the drill was the army officers had to wait on the privates. So we had a captain medico waiting on us and they got special food for Christmas - Christmas food. Plenty of it. And it was a good big meal and a bag of sweets whatever you'd get for Christmas and waited on by your own captain. So that was - being the first Christmas was quite noteworthy and quite

enjoyable.

There was never any fighting on Christmas day?

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No. No. They didn't serve any beer or strong drink with Christmas dinner. So the teetotallers weren't offended. We could buy plenty of beer for two shillings a bottle. A pint glass - two shillings being a penny. Penny a glass. It wasn't strong beer, so you could drink that til 8 o'clock then they close down.

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Ted, coming back to after the war and you're back at home, when World War II broke out, where were you then?

I was in Brisbane and I actually enlisted. See World War II - at Credential we had a young male staff. The nearest branch so the 8 young males, we had 9 - one was unfit. 8 enlisted. One was in the infantry was killed at Milne Bay and the others were all air force. Fatality rate was pretty heavy. We lost more from the Queensland branch than the whole of Australia put

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together because it was a young staff and so the branch was bare and we finished up with a complete female staff and this one medically unfit male for the war and I enlisted for the Royal Air Force to go to Singapore on the

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administrative staff but the Governor, Sir Lesley Wilson, told me that I'd made a big mistake. It was just cipher duties. There were eighteen going and you'd be right over their heads, way over their heads and you're only wasting your time but I said, 'I've already enlisted?' and he said, 'What I want

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you to do is go down to Melbourne and see the chairman of the Air Board, tell him you've gone down on my request and tell him what you're doing with Red Cross work appeal.' and he said, 'You'll find that they'll release you.' which they did straight away. They scrapped the enlistment. You'd be

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manpowered, you can't enlist again. Go back and do what you're doing. That'll be your work. I came back and then of course I used to go to the office. There were no tape recorders - there were dictaphones. I used to go to the office about half past seven, have about an hour on the dictaphone setting out instructions for the staff - what my secretary had to do for the rest

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of the day then I'd go out and spend the rest of the day on Red Cross work. We used to fly this feller 500 pounds each to start a cafe in Newspaper House next to the Post Office in the basement. It was the City Mutual building at the time. We ran a cafe there. We had about 200 voluntary lady

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helpers and we made about 15,000 pound a year - big money - and it was a social centre because the governor used to come in unannounced occasionally and people used to come in hoping he'd turn up. Have his morning tea. Ask you if you wanted him to talk to anyone. I'd tell him, one

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old lady used to bring in eggs so I said, 'Yes, she brings eggs in. Not much of a contribution but that's her effort.' He went over and sat down - made her day. Talked to her and thanked her and whatever. He was very good. Great public relations man and so I finished up Red Cross was a full time job. We

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had to organise the cafe and then we used to run a concert in the city hall every Tuesday - lunch hour concert. Donation for entry - free kind donation. We used to have a sheet with the Union Jack on it and we walked down the hall with that - four of us holding it - and they'd throw money into it. So we

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collected quite a lot of money for Red Cross and we established a prisoner of war appeal which was a second appeal. So we had the Red Cross Appeal and the Prisoner of War Appeal. And I used to organise all the leaflets - printing of them, drawing them up, getting them printed. I established a newspaper

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called Freedom and got that out throughout Queensland through the unions - anti-communist. So I was very busy. Not on Credential work because you couldn't go to get an account without a permit and you couldn't sell insurance because all the fit males had gone to the war. So all you could do was just keep the pot boiling on the current business. So about half past eight in the morning I was completely free. 100% on Red Cross.

And how did you feel about that seeing you'd put so much work into your career? Were you annoyed that there was another war?

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Second World War. I wasn't annoyed because as I said it was a fact of life but I became active with the defence corps and I finished up in charge of an anti aircraft Bofors gun at Euston Park. Underground right on the point of a river. And I formed a group there and we relieved the army gun crew one night a week, released them and we used to go down and man this gun.

Did you ever have to use it?

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No, but we had a fitter and turner who was a crack shot. When they got back from the Middle East we had a competition and he shot them to pieces. He was brilliant. He eventually joined up under a false name because he was a reserved occupation. Got two stripes straight away and finished up in New Guinea but ... I had several experiences. It was lucky I didn't go and enlist because I'd have been caught up in Singapore. They became prisoners and I would have died. Couldn't have put up with that at my age - 35. You had to be young. I would have died so I was fortunate but when they were coming back we used to meet them at New Farm at the wharf and with their wives if they were married or their sweetheart girls and women weren't allowed on

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the cars to travel through Brisbane. They had to make their own way over to Greenslopes [Hospital] where they finished up and I broke the rule. One of my staff married, his wife met him. The officer in charge of the outfit said 'You can't get in the car, you'll have to get out.' He wouldn't allow it. And I said 'Let her in the car and I promise to let her off at that first corner.' He said - put her off and I said 'Put her off, put her off, put her off.' So we got to this corner and I put her out and she burst into tears and I said 'Don't worry. I only promised to put you out, I didn't say I wouldn't put you back in again. Get back in.' and she was the only lady in a car at that time that went through Brisbane

with the returned men and it established a rule. It caused such a commotion from the public that the RACQ [Royal Automobile Club of Queensland] when they were organising the route had to allow the wives and sweethearts in the car with the men.

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Why don't they allow it?

Just stupidity. Any rate they had to allow them finally. And the staff had a big banner. We were in the National Bank building in Queen Street and they used to come down and swing the banner all these girls, waving.

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You said you had women working in your offices Ted, did you notice a big change for women starting to work at that time?

Yes. Yes. They did quite well because mind you we had no new business coming in. It was only routine stuff but we occupied the top floor of the National Bank building in Queen Street and we had it organised with the bank that we put the girl in the lift with the money and they'd take her straight down to the floor where the bank counters were. So there was

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perfect safety. We were able to do the banking without any risk of being stolen. The ... how I came to get the office, the Australian Army had occupied it and there was an army department with a real estate agent at the rank of captain and it was his job to ... and they were kicked out and sent

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over to the Buyers Building in South Brisbane because the rent was too high. Well we - I heard they were moving out and he said ?Righto you can have the floor.? It was the top floor. So I went to the manager of the bank and I said ?We want to take a lease of the top floor.? and they had a hallway you know, with little individual offices, ?But what I want you to do is take out all

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the walls.? He said ?I've been wanting to do this for years? So they removed all the walls and here was the whole floor for the office. So I went down and put in a couple of partitions and that was it and occupied it so when the war came the first experience was a Yankee officer came in without by your

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leave. The staff came to me and said ?We've got an American officer.? and I said ?What are you after?? He said ?We were thinking of taking over this office.? ?Look, I'm the manager here; don't you think you should have considered me first? Now you get out. If you don't get out I'll call the military police and get you kicked out. You've got no right to be here at all.? Because I'd been told by Bob the building officer, there was no way in the world they'd allow the Americans to occupy it if the rent was too dear for Australians it was going to be too dear for them so I knew I was safe. So I saw him to the lift and said ?Don't you ever come back here again.? And from then on we had no trouble so we were returned the premises.

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But before we moved there we were in the Courier building on the corner of Herbert Street where the bank is now. They resumed our offices - the army - and I wouldn't move until they could get this place fixed up into one room

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and I organised the move over the weekend. I had a plan drawn. We worked Saturday mornings in those days. A plan drawn and a tray for each member of staff with their name on it and they put in anything remaining to start on Monday. They moved over the

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weekend, I had a plan of the floor where everything had to go. Monday we opened and it looked as if we'd been there for years. Each desk in place, with their name on the desk, so Monday morning we just resumed and carried on. Very well organised. But the Americans, when they get down to

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base at the front there's no red tape but the higher you get the more red tape. By the time I got up - see I claimed for the shift against the Yanks. They wanted seven copies of the claim. There were no photocopying machines in those days. They had to be typed. so this file - seven copies of about twelve

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page claims setting out the hours worked, cost of cartage and what have you. Made the claim on them for about seven or eight hundred pounds, which was paid without question - but seven copies. So we resumed on the Monday just

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as if we'd been there for years. The girls - you couldn't get silk stockings, you know, hard to come by and the girls used to - I discovered they were putting ledgers on the floor to put their feet on ledgers because there was a stone floor. It was too cold. So I had to chase round then and find where I

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could buy some mats for them for their feet to save wear and tear on the ledgers. We managed quite well, the staff. We eventually trained them. I remember the cashier as a lass and she was quite young - about 17 or 18 - and I got a letter in the office- you can't have her as a male cashier. I've

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never had anything but a male cashier. I replied and said 'I've got one male staff. That's my chief clerk; I'm not going to make him a cashier. So if you provide me with a male cashier, okay.?' But they couldn't of course so I finished up with this lass as cashier and she was a very good cashier too. She eventually married a doctor and retired. These girls after the war they used to meet and have a lunch together once a year or twice a year and meet and send me a letter thanking me for how they were treated during the war. I looked after them pretty well.

Did any of them stay on?

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Oh yes, yes. Until they married. The drill was we never appointed a married woman so when they married they were out. That was the rule at that time. Later on that was abandoned but at that particular time we couldn't employ a married woman.

When you say that was a rule Ted, was that a law?

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No, no. Company. Company ruling.

Why was that?

I don't know. Just stupid. English attitude. Later amended of course. It was an English company. Company obeyed English rules. That was one of them - no married women. They came too eventually because most competent women

were married. You can't have anyone not married and untrained. When you get a married woman she's had some training in clerical work so it was an absurdity and it was eventually dropped so we could employ married women. So when that happened I re-appointed quite a few married women - they came back as married women.

Interviewee: Ted Smout Archive ID 1145 Tape 09

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Ted I was interested to you hear you talking about Monash coming to power or taking power - authority of the Australian army and you said that it instantly boosted the morale of the soldiers.

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That's right.

Do you think that as a result of World War I there was a shift of Australia's consciousness in terms of its sense of itself in relation to Britain.

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Very much. Very much. I think post WW1 whereas up to that stage it was the mother country and Britain was important part of Australia. Most people were of British parentage. There was no big Italian population or Greek population. Few Germans but not many so essentially British population and very much a British community attached to Great Britain and that gradually

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changed. Of course now that's changed completely. I think apart from the fact that I'm a Republican. I became one in London for various reasons, which wasn't the credit of the British government and apart from that there's been a big swing of the population here. The population of Australia is now no longer 90% British so for those reasons there's a swing away from Great Britain plus the fact that Great Britain is completely tied up in the European block and see the Great Prudential sold out in Australia. It was only one percent of its total profit and they can handle the population of 100 million

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right at their back door instead of our small population. Much more effectively so they sold out here and in New Zealand. Legal and General also have withdrawn from Australia. There's no connection at all and I think the attitude of most of the Australians now is republican. I was a complete monarchist before that but I don't know if I told you about the experience in London. When we went back in '98 - the four of us - on a mission to France on the anniversary of the Armistice, we went back via London and coming back through Heathrow Airport - we'd been awarded a Legion of Honour in Paris in Villers Bretonneux. We came straight across to London. The next

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day we were at Heathrow Airport and I had my war medals on which included two of the British medals of WW1 and we were searched from head to toe, despite the protests of our officials, and I really went to town about it. Eventually I got a letter, not of apology but of explanation, which, number one my name was spelt wrongly. Spelt S-M-O-U-N-T, number two: it said regulations require all wheelchairs to be searched. The wheel chairs weren't searched. We were - not the wheel chairs. So I wasn't impressed with that explanation either. At that particular time I was so disgusted because as I say two of the medals were British war medals but I became - ceased to be a monarchist and became a republican. When I got back I took an active part in the Republican movement and of course they seized on me. I had a ring from [Bruce] Ruxton at the RSL [president] who said sorry I was being used by the League and I said 'Nobody uses me, Mister. What I'm doing is of my own volition.' I said 'You can wipe me off as being part of the British Empire. There's no British Empire today. They've sold out everywhere. Gone out of Canada, South Africa and now Australia.'

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How do you think that change was felt during WW2 with the arrival of the Americans?

I think WW1 brought the Australian Army into operation as an army, eventually under the control of the Australian general Sir John Monash, April 1918. The whole army came under his control and it was a great boost of morale for the Australians because we didn't have much respect for the British Generals. We never saw them at the front. We reckoned they were fighting the war on the Crimean textbook. Putting men up against impossible positions to be machine gunned down. Heavy casualties over a

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piece of land that wasn't worth two bob. You know the old Crimean War - you formed a square and sat there and just kept shooting. So that was about their attitude. As I say we never saw them at the front. But on April 19, the Australian Army put on one command finally, Monash, and the Battle of Hamel was a copybook battle where they use the tanks alongside the infantry - not ahead of them. It became a copybook for all future battles and the ability of the Australian general was recognised. And as I say the Australian Monash was in complete command. It was a great boost to the morale of the Australian soldiers.

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Do you think that the ability of the Australians was recognised during WW II by the Americans?

Oh yes. Very definitely. We only fought once beside the Americans. They arrived in France with polished tan shoes with a toe cap you know. Lace up shoes, quite useless of course. They made a big heap of those. I snavelled a pair and put them aside to wear on Blighty leave later and they had these beautiful flannel shirts, surge shirts, khaki shirts with two breast pockets, shoulder epaulettes and the drill was you went in the public baths on Tuesday

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and you handed in your clothing and they were put through the steam laundry to kill the lice, but it didn't kill the eggs. I used to light a cigar or cigarette and under the arm pit and bust up all the eggs. And then put them back on but your clothes went in on Tuesday and came out on Thursday. Well the Yanks went in on Tuesday and put in these beautiful khaki shirts with two breast pockets, epaulettes and we went back on Thursday and of course we got their shirts. When they went back on Tuesday they got our flannels underwear. So I finished up with this beautiful khaki shirt which I put away. So when I went on Blighty leave later on I had these beautiful shoes with a khaki shirt with a tie. Swish.

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How were the Americans as soldiers?

Quite good. They weren't well read. Their officers weren't particularly well read. But they were good soldiers and they were very conscious of the value of man. I mean they used a hundred reels of ammunition to protect a soldier whereas we'd use one. Their supply of food was incredible. Refrigerators and the works. Amazing.

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What sort of things? Refrigerators and what else?

Oh they had everything. We'd been approached by the American Red Cross who catered - they're like a combination of our Red Cross and the Compass Fund. Restricted to non combatants and so we were approached by The American Compass Fund to take their officers when they were down on leave - take them game fishing. Norm Gow and I. The Liberty ships used to come out to the mouth of the river and unload there onto barges and the

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barges would turn up the river with all this gear on and the Kingsford Smith Drive was known as the Burma Road

because both sides of the road were loaded with stores and so the Lord Mayor's yacht that was up here for the war - and that was the admiral's barge. That was used to take the officers down. Norm Gow and I used to go aboard with our game fishing gear to the mouth of the river where these ships were unloading and of course the sharks were all around the ships because they were throwing over food. We were sure of catching sharks so we had these officers with their gear catching sharks. They would never be able to do that in America, they'd need to be millionaires. So we were quite popular but it suited us because we would go aboard this

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admiral's barge - Admiral Crick's boat from Sydney - and they'd bring the food aboard. You name it - they had everything. Butter cartons of fried egg - fried chicken and tins of prunes ... oh everything and of course we'd walk off with all the surplus food. It was terrific so Norm and I were never short of those things and we were never short of butter because the Peters Ice Cream used to run the butter back to cream to make their ice cream. So I used to send over fish to Peters and they'd just dip them in the water and deep freeze them straight away. So, Chris the manager, was never short of

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fish to eat and nor was I because we always caught plenty of fish. We were never without fish and in return we ended up with the butter. And for meat rations you only needed to drive down to Cleveland outside the Brisbane area and the meat coupons so the food rationing didn't affect us.

Can you remember when Darwin was bombed?

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Yes. Townsville particularly was the first. Townsville was bombed first. They were after the Shell Depot. They only missed it by a couple of hundred yards. And then of course Darwin was badly bombed. But Australia knew nothing about it. It was never reported. And when it was disclosed after the war, the damage that was done, it was terrific. One of my staff was posted up there with the air force administrative staff outside of Darwin and he sent me down the list of all the bombings outside of Darwin too. Quite incredible. About 200 of them bombed by the Japs. Never disclosed in the paper. So there was quite a lot of bombing.

09:14:17:00

So did you think at that time the Japanese invasion was possible?

Oh yes. The Battle of the Coral Sea saved Australia. The invading fleet was on the way down but the American fleet intercepted them and shut them and that was the end of it but prior to that we ... they were going to invade Australia. No doubt about that. They would have occupied Australia too. Because we had no army to defend them. That fleet battle with the American fleet destroyed the Jap convoy. They were coming down to invade Australia.

09:15:08:00

That action by the Americans set in practise a relationship with America where Australia has gone on to fight side by side with America often on America's invitation. They fought side by side in Korea but that was a United Nations force but then in Vietnam that was very much at America's invitation that we went. What do you think about us being so loyal to the Americans in that regard?

09:15:47:00

Well at that time in the 14-18 war or rather the Second World War, it wasn't a question of loyalty it was a question of appreciation of the value of their supplies. The British Army lost everything in the German advance in 1918 - even rifles. There wasn't a field piece between the Germans and Paris. They could have gone through in lorries. We arrived down and turned them back at Villers Bretonneux. By raiding their trenches every night they thought we were stronger than we were so they stopped after 70 miles advance they

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stopped so we were able to build up a supply of logistics that was incredible - thanks to the Americans. I mean on August 8th when the British campaign started - indescribable at Villers Bretonneux. The field pieces were practically wheel to wheel. Planes, you name it - everything. From 18 pounders right back 8 inches. 8 inch houses. Planes. Logistics was incredible thanks to America and while they weren't particularly good on providing soldiers and fighting providing the supplies was the thing that turned the scale of the war for Australia, for Britain and Australia. On the 8th August, we were at Sal le Sec the third division, and the equipment was fantastic. Absolutely unbelievable.

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So our advance was just as rapid and successful as the German had been but we turned them back at Villers Bretonneux. We finished up at Amiens. We were billeted in the public hospital there and I think I told you - the hospital courtyard was given over to this growth of strawberries. Great big strawberries and a bottle of champagne under every plant so we used to go out and knock off a bottle of champagne which could be just picked up anywhere there.

09:18:27:00

Ted, talking about Villers Bretonneux and the battle there and you mentioned returning to Villers Bretonneux in 1998 to be awarded the Legion of Honour - the highest award that the French people can give. Can you talk to us about that and what it was like to travel back.

09:18:53:00

Well we'd been back in '93. 14 diggers and 6 war widows, two Legacy wards and the big staff. We filled the big bus - 45 seater bus. Used to take 20 minutes to load and 20 minutes to unload. That was twice a day. That was an hour and twenty minutes given to loading and unloading. The 1998 one there were only 4 of us with the smaller group of staff so we had the mini bus so five minutes we were loaded. It was much easier and we knew what to expect cause the ceremonies were the same so we were much more comfortable on the second visit in 1998 and of course at Villers Bretonneux

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we were awarded, personally decorated with the Legion of Honour medal by the equivalent of our Minister of Veterans' Affairs - the French equivalent. French minister. He personally decorated us - the picture's there and that was quite an event. We were the first. The Legion of Honour medal was going to be awarded to every surviving soldier of the forces - whether Australian, British or American, who fought on the western front and was still surviving and we were the first in the world to be personally awarded the Legion of Honour. Us four - we were the first.

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What was it like to be with those four other Anzacs at Villers Bretonneux after all that time? What sort of memories did it bring back?

09:20:41:00

Well first of all I knew one of them well because he'd been back in '93 and the others were two new ones but you had so much in common with them. There was no trouble striking up a friendship with them we had so much in common and two of them have died since. Eric Abraham and I are surviving. But Prince from Sydney died and the other one from Queensland died but Eric Abraham and I are still surviving and we led the Anzac Day march. He's in one lorry and I'm in the other.

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You told us about not attending the Anzac Day march when you first returned but eventually you came to participate in the march and now it is a revered day in Australia and increasing every year.

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For many years I attended the local one in Sandgate. I was the saluting officer - receiving the salute but eventually they wanted me to go up to the city so I finished going up to the city for the big march. Eric Abraham - the WW1 digger surviving and so we had the duty of leading the march. He's in one lorry and I'm in the other and we lead the march. That's been done for two years now. It'll be done again this year. And the crowd attending is increasing every year. Particularly the children. Thousands of children all lined together. Quite surprising.

Do you talk to your grand children and great grandchildren about your experiences in the war?

09:22:57:00

Not a great deal. We go to the schools before Anzac Day and talk to the classes and answer questions and answers. What is noticeable today is the school children are being taught Australian history. When I went to school we were taught about all the British wars - nothing about Australia but the school children today are being taught Australian and these children have got a surprising knowledge about the war. The questions they ask about the war are quite intelligent. It's interesting. So that's one of our jobs before Anzac Day we go to the local schools. The whole school assembled, generally under the school and we talk to them and then ask for questions. That's part of our job. The Veterans' Affairs department want us to do it.

What sort of questions do they ask?

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Well one question I remember well is 'What is no man's land?' So I explained to them what no man's land was. You get various questions. That one I remember so well - what is no man's land?. Another one was 'Were you ever frightened?' which of course was 'Yes' obviously. We were scared stiff. On more than one occasion. A lot of questions. 'What was fighting like?' First of all I didn't fight because I was in the medical corps. I wasn't a fighting soldier which is a distinction. Then I explained about the colour patches, what they meant. General discussion.

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Do you think young people today would enlist in the army if Australia entered another big war as readily as your generation?

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I don't think so. I think the younger generation today are brought up on the impression more or less that the world owes them a living. Plus the fact whereas we left school at 13 or 14 they're mostly staying at school to 16 or 17. There's that difference. I mean they're not mature. By the time I was 16 or 17 I'd been working for 2 or 3 years. I was really quite mature for that age. Equivalent of about 20 or 21. And that was kind of the accepted principle. Today they're not. I went down to Sydney to talk to one of the big schools there. I talked to class 12 and there's a group of scholars 16 to 17 and I mean they were immature. They were just youngsters. Whereas in the 14-18 war they'd have been

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more or less like adults. I mean when I was 17 or 18 I was like somebody of 21. And that was the difference. And we weren't - there was no drug problem. No alcohol problem. We'd been doing compulsory training so we more or less trained. We could do drill and form fours. We could fire and use a rifle, whereas the Second World War, I had reserve occupation coves coming along and they didn't know how to form fours. They didn't know anything. There were no

army drills of any kind because there was no compulsory training.

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Do you think they should reintroduce compulsory training?

It would teach a sense of discipline and respect for authority. It's a good thing. And particularly today with the drug scene. It would kill the drug scene more than anything. Give them an interest and something to do, to respect authority. I think there should be compulsory training. Not to provide for war but it instils a lot of other principles in the young people that they can't get other wise.

Do you still dream about the war Ted?

09:28:00:00

Occasionally. Wake up at night and realise, oh I'm in bed. Just occasionally but not much now. I think there's a subconscious way of putting it in the background. And you never talk about it cause there's nobody to talk to about it. All the diggers are dead and anyone else wouldn't understand. I mean there's no way you could convey to the ordinary civilians the horrors that happened in the war. No way. Indescribable. So when we go to Anzac Day parades or meetings you don't do it to glorify war.

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So Ted we were just talking about the value of, or the difficulty perhaps for you in talking about the war experiences because no one can ever fully comprehend what it was like to be there and at the same time our crew turns up to talk to you about it and you've been telling us about your going and talking to children. Obviously the society is interested in talking to you about your experiences.

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And the Veterans' Affairs Department want us to go to schools to talk to children.

Why do you think that is?

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They want to keep the children interested in the war history. I think that's part of their process of the returned men surviving and actually having been there to tell them about it. As I say the children are being taught Australian history whereas we weren't. Because I rang the department and said, 'This is a bit of a chore.' and he said, 'Oh Ted we want you to do it. Please do it.' So it's become a yearly thing now. Local schools. We go to Boondall, South Sandgate High, Strathpine and they have the whole school assembled and we talk to them. We generally tell them that you can't glorify war. War is horrible and every war is a terrible thing. It does nothing but maim men and generally it's supposed to end world war but no war ever ends world war. There's always another one somewhere. Somewhere in the world there's a war. We explain all this to them. That war doesn't solve any problems.

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Do you think there will ever come a time when that will cease?

No. Human nature being what it is, seems to always be a reason for someone to be fighting each other. Middle East for example. Goes on and on - there's no ending to it. But you'll never have another world war because today the war is taking the drawing through the TV and the public would revolt as they did on the last war. The war was closed earlier than it should have been because the American public revolted. I remember sitting here with my wife when they went on for about half an hour about 14 men being killed. They

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went on and on. I thought - all this fuss about 14 men. I saw 200 men killed in a day. So that was going into everyone's

lounge. So the public would stop it and revolt. So I don't think you'd ever get any public support for continuing war unless it was for the defence of the country. I think defending Australia would be different. But to go overseas and fight - no. I don't think there'd be any support at all. There's a complete change of attitude with the young people anyway. Young people aren't mature til later and they're being brought up with the feeling that the world owes them a living. Whereas they owe the whole world a living. The other way around. Something they mostly have to learn.

INTERVIEW ENDS

Interviewee: Ted Smout Archive ID 1145 Tape 10

10:00:18:00

This tape contains photos and other memorabilia with no transcript.

10:00:30:00

(Memorabilia)

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TAPE ENDS

Interviewee: Ted Smout Archive ID 1145 Tape 11

11:00:18:00

This tape contains photos and other memorabilia with no transcript.

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TAPE ENDS

NB. This transcript is of an interview filmed for the television series, Australians at War in 1999-2000. It was incorporated into the Archive in 2008.

Interviewee: Edward Smout Archive ID 1145 Tape 312

312:00:50:00

So can you just tell us your name, rank and serial number??

My name is Edward David Smout. My serial number was 12947.

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I was born the 5th January 1898 which makes me one hundred and two recently. The unit I served with in World War I was known as the 3rd Sanitary Section, Australian Army Medical Corps. It was a unit of only twenty seven, a specialist unit, we had our own field ambulance which was a Ford, black of course, Ford ambulance.

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Ok the first thing we might get you to talk about was before the war, can you remember, we just wanted to go back and try and just get you to talk about anything you might be able to remember before the war?

Well I should have been born in Cunnamulla but there were no medical facilities there, no hospital, no doctor.

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The railway line finished halfway between Charleville and Cunnamulla, at Wyandra, so my mother came down to Brisbane for the birth so I was born in Brisbane, but I went back to Cunnamulla about three months later. And I was

there until I was just nearly seven years old so I don't have a great deal of memory of Cunnamulla except I remember the canes they carried at school. And I used to wear a broad brimmed soft

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straw hat with a wide brim, with a mosquito net coming down and tied under my chin because it was sheep country, the flies, blowflies were really bad and they damaged your eyes if you went out without a net.

Do you remember if at the school, whether when you were young did you, did they raise the flag and did you sing anthems or anything like that?

No I don't think so; I can't recall ever doing that at Cunnamulla.

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No.

Do you have any recollection of how people thought about the Empire and Australia being part of the British Empire when you were young?

Oh yes, very definitely. Ah, first of all my father was English, he came out to Australia at about twenty-five years old but my mother was born in Australia, but of English parents. And so every family, there were no migrants, there were only British, either the Scots,

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Irish or English migrants. So Australia essentially looked on Britain as the mother country and they, they talked of Britain as home even though they had never been there. And there was a strong British feeling, we felt very much part of the British Empire, as it was then known before it became the Commonwealth of Nations when they more or less, after the war broke the Empire up.

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You mentioned when we were out at your place the other day that your father believed in the divine rule of kings and I thought that was quite an interesting thing, tell us about that?

Yes, well he was very English. You know the British in those days, the king was supreme and you know this strong class system, the upper and the lower class. But everyone was very loyal to the king

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and his throne and my father actually, he believed there is a divine, the king had divine right, he believed in the divine right of kings. And I remember when I was at school, we had a school magazine had a picture of Princess Alexandria and I put a moustache on her and I got a flogging with a razor strap as a result of that, that was my punishment for being disloyal. So he was very, very English. My mother of course, wasn't quite so

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English as that, she was born in Australia but she was still, still referred to England as the mother country.

But in Australia at the time though you mentioned I remember out at the house the other day, you'd

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referred to that in Australia, 'Jack was as good as his master'. So was there a difference between, I suppose that comes after the war that perception though. Was that same kind of class system happening in Australia at the time?

No, no there was there was no class system. You know I went to a state school, there were other secondary schools but I went to a

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state school. But we mingled with the other school people, there was no class distinction but there were mostly large families. And for instance, very few, ninety-five percent of children going to school went barefooted, they only wore shoes on Sunday. The school, at the schoolyard

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are a couple of big tanks with about twelve taps around the trough and you had to go in there and wash your feet before you went in the classroom. And the five percent of kids that wore shoes used to take them off and put them on before they went home, And as you grew up, again you went onto grammar school or college. There was no

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class distinction between the grammar school which was a socially the top one and the technical college which wasn't. One was as good as the other.

Were you ever in the cadets, did they have??

Yes, they had school cadets when I was at the primary school; we had Frankot rifles, twenty two, twenty five calibre. And we trained, we, you know, formed fours and did marching

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and we had a? there was a miniature rifle range in Brisbane where Anzac Square is now. The whole of that frontage was a galvanised iron fence about six foot high, and we used to go there and the cliff before this road was built of course this formed a natural barrier for [UNCLEAR] Rifle Range. We used to go there shooting and then later on of course we finished off going out to Enoggera

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and the compulsory training after school with the .303s [rifles]. So we had school cadets, school cadets were everywhere.

When was that? What age were you when you were in??

I'd have been twelve to fourteen and at the school. And then I went to college at fourteen and we didn't have school cadets there, it was at the state school we had school cadets.

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And then later on by the time I was sixteen the compulsory training came in and that involved one night a week and the occasional weekend.

When you were doing the cadet compulsory training, was that, do you know when that began and why

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and was everybody involved in that?

Oh yes it was Australia wide, it was a Federal law and you had to, you were compelled to go do this training. There's no exemptions and that it was one night a week and the occasional weekend.

Do you know when that was?

That would have been...

Why it happened?

1913. I don't know why it happened I think the government decided it was a good thing to do and it was before the war.

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I don't think it was prompted by the, it might have been prompted by the threat of war but I doubt it. I think it was just

sort of seen as it should be done for the defence of Australia and the, it was universal, right throughout Australia.

And how did you feel about that? What did most of the boys feel about that?

We weren't opposed to it very much. We just took it, we had to do it, you accepted it.

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Did you wear boots; did you wear boots then at the cadet camps?

No, no we were, we were didn't have any uniforms, just wore our ordinary clothes, and the ordinary shoes. Yeah, I wore boots then. I was at the stage of having left school, state school, and wearing boots to go to college. That would have been probably 1913 I would think, but it was universal.

And what did your father

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do?

I think it was a good thing. Yeah well it kept the youngsters off the streets, gave you some sense of discipline, respect for authority. Basically I think it was good.

The values of people in those days were quite different to now, is that true? I mean how were,

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did people value family and responsibility and women and all those kind of things. Do you think there was a difference?

Oh, yes I don't know about women but the family, the family was the basis of society, it was a very strong core, the family. It was the essence of the whole social program. They were generally big families; four or five was not considered a large

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family, eight or ten was quite common. And we had five in our family, four boys and a girl, only one girl. She was the eldest, but that was about the average but six, seven, eight, or nine, ten were not uncommon. But the whole, very much the social centre, there was no TV and no movies so you

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had to find your enjoyment, entertainment in the home. And so you might visit other people in the home and have a social evening with somebody playing the piano and singing around the piano. Like I said there were no movies and no distraction much. And being a primitive Methodist family there were no, as far as I was

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concerned, theatres around, card playing was out, dominoes were out. Well not some much dominoes but card playing.
They were all evils were they?

Playing cards were evil and, cause there was subject of gambling and theatres were out, the vaudeville, they were a bit too rude. Ah, very strict primitive Methodist, Presbyterians were even stronger.

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The story is told one youngster is going along and with his parents whistling, the father said, 'Don't whistle, people will think you're happy.' It was Sunday. Sunday was the day you put shoes on and went to church. My Sunday was church in the morning, Sunday school in the afternoon, church in the evening, Band of Hope on Monday night, that was a temperance thing.

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Tuesday was Christ.... Tuesday night was Christian Endeavour. So the time I was fourteen or fifteen when I left home, when my parents went to Rockhampton and I went boarding, I'd had religion so I didn't go to church for many years after that, many, many years.

That's a good story thanks.

Well my father was a lay preacher.

OK so you had a very stern upbringing?

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Oh yes, very, very stern.

Do you remember when the war broke out, what you were doing and do you remember that at all?

Oh yes quite clearly? my hobby was sailing and we used to go down the bay on the weekend and when the war broke out they put a boom across the mouth of the river and we were given a number. And when we went out we used to call in and give our number and when we

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came back we had to come in and repeat the number, so as to check us in. And so I remember that as one thing when the war started. The other one was the posters all round the town ? 'Your Country Needs You' - pictures of [English general] Kitchener and very much propaganda for enlisting you know ? 'Enlist Today, Your Country Needs You', And so every able-bodied young man

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felt it was his duty to enlist. And I would say it would have been harder not to enlist than to enlist. And so I was a bit big for my age so I was a year advanced at school, at college, most of my mates had gone a year ahead of me. And so when I was seventeen I decided that I'd enlist. I went to the enlisting office in Queen Street, which is where Westpac Bank is now, it was then Kodak

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House, and unfortunately struck the sergeant major of the compulsory cadets there, he was this permanent army soldier, British Army. He said, 'You can't enlist, you're not eighteen.' I thought I would strike, you know, this other officer around Adelaide Street, so that was the rifle range was now an enlistment office. So I went around there and of course had no trouble. Having enlisted I had to get my parents' consent, I had no trouble with my father at all, he

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was quite happy but it was a bit different with my mother, but finally she signed the agreement and so I went in the army. That was in August 1915, by that time Gallipoli of course was well on the way and the war had been going what, since twenty months, nineteen, twenty months.

So what had you heard of Gallipoli? Did you know anything about Gallipoli?

Oh yes, we, we got reports all the time of course.

What did

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they say?

There were no movies then about it.

How did you hear and what. How did you hear about it?

News, newspaper, newspaper. Yeah there was no radio, no radio in those days; you got to buy a newspaper. And that also increased the pressure for enlistment and it wasn't more a, if you didn't go the girls used to hand you a white, they'd hand you a

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white feather [sign of cowardice]. I'd never been handed one luckily, God I don't know what I would have done if they gave me one but that used to happen.

Why do you think they did that, women?

To urge people to enlist. You know you were a cold foot if didn't enlist so you got the white feather meant you were a coward so they were pushing the enlistment as well you see. And as I say it was easier to enlist than to not to but

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any rate I finally decided to enlist, which I did. And I found then that, two of my schoolmates had also enlisted and we finished up at Royal Exhibition Grounds camping there, and together. And some English general rode out because the Australian Army was the Australian Imperial Force,

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not the Australian Defence Force - very much the Imperial Army and this instruction came out that mateship was bad, so mates had to be separated. So they just lined us up and put us in different units and we decided there and then we wanted to stay together and the only way we could do that was to transfer out of the infantry. Well we tried the artillery and there was no vacancies but there were vacancies in the Army Medical Corps and that's how we joined the Army Medical Corps, the only reason.

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And the three of us joined the Army Medical Corps finished up in the same unit, we went through the war together, one of them got the Military Medal at Passchendaele, and we all got back. So that mateship was the best thing that ever happened for discipline you hope it helps you to cope.

Yes because the British, there's a lot of stories about mateship in the Australian Army but obviously it existed before then, you guys were pretty strong friends were you?

That's right yes. It was a fair, quite strong

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and whereas in Great Britain you had this class system, the upper and the lower class. If you went to what they knew as a public school, what we know as a private school, Eton or Cambridge or what have you, you automatically got a commission. It didn't matter if you had no capacity at all, you got a commission. So all the British officers were ex-public school. The non-commissioned officers and privates

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though they were Tommies [regular British soldiers], they were from public school, from private school not private schools, the state schools as we know them. And this class system was absolutely existing very strongly so the Tommy was so accustomed to being subservient, recognising the upper classes as superior to him, accepted these officers without any problem at all. Whereas in Australia, our officers were

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all, they'd come from the ranks and they were hoi polloi [of the people] every one of them, there were no particular class system, it was a different story. But in the British Army this class system was carried right through. So the difference between the two armies was that if an Australian officer was killed well the NCO [non commissioned officer] would hop in and take over and if he was killed, well, then a private would turn up. There was always somebody with initiative

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to take charge. Whereas in the British Army if the officer was killed the Pommies [British] didn't know what to do they were just, you know, and ah now, the Scots were totally different to the English. They were more like the Australians, they had the initiative and they were individuals, good soldiers and they had that mateship strongly developed as we have in Australia. We got on well with the Scots, we have a lot in common with them but not with the British Army, we had nothing in common with them at all.

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So there was a difference between the way the soldiers operated in the field?

Oh yeah, yeah very, very definitely.

Why did the British you think believe that mateship was so bad, do you have any idea why they thought they'd want to break that?

Well first of all

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it didn't exist in England to the extent it did in Australia and so it was, and yet they couldn't use them and I think they just got the thought that it gave too strong a cohesion between the lower ranks and therefore would have been anti-discipline. Whatever caused them to think of it I don't know. They were wrong in any case because it was the opposite, mateship was the greatest thing that kept you going I mean,

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and it was the characteristic of the Australian Army. And of the Australian it was very strongly developed and as I say, but for mateship I wouldn't have survived, I would have packed it up long before and so would everyone. That support helps you, it was the reverse, they were so wrong.

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I've read a lot of stuff in books about the Australian Army and their so called lack of discipline, they didn't salute and they didn't want to parade. Did you notice any of those stories about the difference between the Aussies and Tommies and that sort of thing?

That was very strong. The Tommies saluted because it was natural to do it; we did it more or less because we had to but also out of

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respect for the officer. If we respected the officer we saluted happily, if we didn't we did it by compunction. But, so quite often we'd walk past day we weren't thinking but we weren't pulled up and disciplined, but if you were in the British Army you'd have be fined for that you see, that was the difference. We didn't consider it an important part of distinction.

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In fact at Christmas Day the officers had to, they turned around and waited on us for Christmas dinner that was the tradition in the Australian Army. I don't think it was in the British Army but in the Australian Army it was tradition that the privates sat down and the officers waited on them for Christmas dinner. That would be typical of the feeling that occurred. In many cases, well most cases,

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Christian names, except on parade there was, well I couldn't imagine a Tommy calling an officer by his Christian

name, he'd be hung, drawn and quartered for it. That was the difference, very different in principle and in the whole basis of the army I mean.

Did the thing of going to the war kind of help the Australians develop

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a keen sense of who they were. I know it's a big question but I mean you've kind of helped to answer that in a way but I'm just wondering, did the Australians have a sense of pride about who they were, did that develop do you think during the war?

Oh it very much developed during the war. I think it developed during the war. I don't think there was, before the war you felt particularly proud about anything you know, you didn't have any strong views about anything.

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And the question of being proud to be an Australian you never thought otherwise, you didn't, weren't proud of it, you weren't actually conscious of it just you were born that way and that was it. And, but whether you are a British or Scots, or Irish parents didn't make a great deal of difference, but there was a strong religious antagonism to Catholics, very strong,

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Protestant versus Catholic, was a very strong thing in the Australian community. That's not so today but it was then. But despite that you'd be good friends but the Protestant population was probably seventy or eighty percent to Irish extraction Catholic fifteen to twenty so that but there was line of demarcation.

Did

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that affect enlistments at all? Were the Catholics more not inclined to enlist or what was there view on the Irish question at the time too?

That's right, well they, they weren't so much, they didn't rush to enlist so much. You know, they were in the police force and government service and sheltered occupations, waterside workers, plenty of that type of thing,

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in a higher percentage and I think there wasn't the same rush to enlist.

Did that increase the antagonism do you think between the two groups because of the people that did go to war and those that?

No I don't think so, I just think it was a religious antagonism that didn't need any feeding I think it existed. But when we, we went in the army of course it ceased to exist I mean those that were there, as a matter of fact

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for our church parade we used to go to whichever church had the earliest parade so that we were free for the rest of the day, whether it was Anglican or Catholic or Protestant it didn't interest us.

Well that's interesting, that shows those things did break down.

Yes, yes, yes that all helped to break them down..

So in some respects the war did change things a bit

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you know the way we, you were just going to talk about how the war did change a bit of how we thought about who we were and how we expressed that.

I'll give you some idea, in our unit of twenty-seven, our unit of twenty-seven, there were only two Catholics, two

Catholics out of twenty-seven. That'll give you some idea, that'd be about the right percentage.

Interviewee: Edward Smout Archive ID 1145 Tape 313

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So you lived in ?the good old days'?

Well they say the good old days but they didn't exist. I forget what the basic wage was but it was very small. My father had a good public service job but the family of five, you know we couldn't have butter and jam together on bread, we had one or the other. And my toys were

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an iron hoop which I used to trundle along with a broomstick and a slingshot made out of two rubber bands and a piece of leather, with a fork of a tree which I made myself. And a trolley, two-wheeled trolley made out of a kerosene case, they were my toys and that would be the average. And whereas today my great grandchildren, incredible

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they've got everything, cricket sets, bats, footballs, soccer balls, computers, TV, their own TV, everything, and they expect it too

You've seen quite a few changes in your time?

Oh yes, yes, and all for the better I think - children are better clothed, they all wear boots for a start,

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they don't have to walk to school. I mean I walked to school in the middle of a school year, we moved from Kangaroo Point to Dutton Park and I wanted to finish the school at Kangaroo Point because I was pretty sure that I would win the Dux Medal, which I did, and I walked from Dutton Park to Kangaroo Point and that would be four miles barefooted over macadam roads for six months of the year, and thought nothing of it.

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Today they are driven to school, probably for safety reasons because a) you could walk the streets in absolutely safety in those days, you can't today unfortunately which is the reason I think that most parents take their children to school. But that is the difference?and of course they're all well dressed, school uniforms, we didn't have school uniforms.

So what do you think of Australia now, compared to what it was then

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as a country?

Oh, much better, much more developed. I mean, those days the whole of Australia's economy was based on primary produce, we more or less lived on the sheep's back and farm produce. Today where you know with the technical know how and manufacturing - it's a different country and of course a differ... a huge population. Different

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nationalities, as I said earlier it was essentially a British population, today it's a mixed population. And that's why I think a republic is inevitable with the change of population plus the fact that Great Britain, they decimated the Empire, they gave it away - Australia means nothing to Britain, they're tied up in Europe and we're tied up in the Asian? And

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so that there's not that strong attachment.

Just wondering with Australia's involvement in [East] Timor, do you see any similarities between that and when you went to the first war?

No, none whatever. I think they are purely on a peacekeeping mission. They're armed but they are not assaulting anyone. They're not actually fighting ?

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it's a totally different proposition. Vietnam was unfortunately a tragedy for Australia but oh no, Timor I think we couldn't avoid going to Timor. I think we had to help them because we'd, we'd let them down pretty badly in my opinion. I think this goes right back to the [Prime Minister Paul] Keating day,

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I think that was the start of the problem, so we had to help. It's unfortunate but it had to be done.

And having been through the Great War as it was called, do you ever see the likelihood of another, I mean they said that at the end of the First World War that nothing would come?

Yeah it was to end all wars but we seem to, human nature seems

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to be engaged in fighting somewhere, there's always a war somewhere. But I don't think there'll ever be a war like that again. Not with TV. You see the Gulf War I think it was stopped premature, I wish they'd have gone a bit further but they didn't. That was done as a result of TV, TV it was taken in every home in Europe, in America, they've got pictures of it. And I think the public revolted so

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the American Government had to seek, had to stop the war and that would happen if a war occurred again. Cause I can remember watching TV one night and, with my wife, and they went on and on about fourteen soldiers killed that day in the Gulf War and I said, ?Well, I saw two hundred men killed in a day. What's all this fuss about?? But you can imagine the effect in America you know, they are in their own homes so that would happen

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so I don't think we'd ever have a war like that again.

In terms of the difference between television now and the information that you got you know like when Gallipoli was coming out were you really getting a clear picture do you think of what was happening back home then?

No, we're only getting the picture that was given to us by the censors. It wasn't a clear picture at all. They'd really get a picture of the landing and how horrible it was and all of that

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but we didn't get a picture of it was the wrong place and they bombarded the Turks before they landed to let them know we were coming which was another huge mistake and they were, you never heard about that of course. That came out long after the war, one of the true stories written, that we were the great mistake.

What did you hear about, I've

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read stuff about when the announcement of Gallipoli was made there a lot of celebration in Australia, a lot of people were, there was quite an excitement about the fact that the troops had..?

That's right because they felt that those enlisted they were going to, this is what they went for, quite happy the thought that at last they were actually taking part in it - a sense of pride really and well the casualties about it, they were relatively small you know, eight thousand.

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And that wasn't a big number, whereas France was forty six thousand, a different story. But I think there's a kind of some pride that Australia had showed up pretty well and given good publicity of course. And the Australian soldier was promoted as a real hero you know and it gave a sense of pride, I think that was

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the effect of it really, but then again it, it also gave a spur to the enlistment.

So did that help you, you think to enlist that all that publicity and promotion?

I think the background probably, the basic help was there, it took a year for it but I think yes, I think that helped. And then it,

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you reached a stage where you felt if you didn't enlist and get there the war would be over before you had a chance and you wanted to be in it. And that was true, I mean we used to feel we were at war, we were on mission, you know this was an adventure - how silly can we be, yeah.

It didn't turn out to be quite the adventure?

No certainly didn't, no, not quite.

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So before you enlisted the first conscription referendum came up I believe...I think the first one came up in August they started to promote it and they had it in about November 1916, the first one?

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That's right, we were in France.

Were you in France then?

We had to vote because see in those days you never vote until you're twenty-one. But the soldier had to vote so we voted on conscription when I was in France and there was almost one hundred percent in the army again conscription - our attitude was if the so-and-so's don't want to come well let them stay home, we don't want them. That was the feeling. It was a strong 'No' vote in the army

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strangely enough. But that was the feeling you know, we don't want them, if they don't want to come we don't want them.

There was a lot of publicity I believe put forward because I think [Prime Minister Billy] Hughes was certainly keen to get more people to go into the army because of the numbers of men that had been obviously been killed off. And do you remember that there was obviously a lot of pressure on people to support that, so how come, it's very difficult to see how many people voted

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against it under such quite strong pressure - what do you think that was?

I think they just felt that conscription was wrong in principle; it's the freedom of the individual. I think there was general feeling that enlistment was an individual's choice and the government had no rights to take it away. That

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was the general feeling. And so that we weren't surprised that the 'No' vote won but in the army it was a very strong 'No' vote which seems strange but it was true.

It wasn't anything to do with the war itself progressing along do you think. I mean the numbers of dead and all, cause there was quite a huge casualty rate by that time?

Yes, yes, yes, huge casualty rate. I always say that

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every, every family had a father, a son or a brother, an uncle or a relative in the army and a lot of them casualties so practically every family was affected. Well every family was affected because some relative was in the army, either a brother or a husband or a uncle or a father - not one family exempt.

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But despite that they didn't want conscription which seems odd but I can understand it because that's how we felt at, in the army, we thought well if the so-and-so's don't want to come we don't want them.

So was there any strong feeling against the people that didn't volunteer, the ones that could have that didn't go do you think, I mean..?

There

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was amongst the women, the girls. I can't say about the others. We had a very strong feeling, a feeling of contempt that was all; we just had a feeling of contempt. But fortunately the, the enlistment was sufficient to keep the reinforcements going so at no time

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were we ever short of manpower which is good. Had there been then I think there would have been stronger feeling.

OK we'll just stop there, because I want...

Yeah the feeling was stronger...

How, how did that happen to you?

Well, when you got back these people that hadn't gone to the war they'd been advanced you know, and for instance when I got back, the audit

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office was supposed to preserve by seniority. Well between me and the man next senior to me there were four. So I had contempt. Here were four men who didn't go to the war, were promoted in the service ahead of me and this was the general feeling. So you had rather a feeling of contempt for them, they were cold-footed bastards. And we absolutely felt

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that about them too.

And they'd obviously gained some advantages had they by being at home then?

Oh of course, very definitely. As I say the for instance in the Auditor General's Office the important thing was to be appointed a full audit inspector. Well between me and the time for roll over, I had four men that shouldn't have been there that had priority on length of service.

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So that was one of the reasons why I decided to get out of the public service cause that's one of the reasons. So you used to have a feeling of contempt for them but also annoyance - a very strong feeling.

And how did they think about people who had been to the war?

I don't know how they thought but in the in the Repatriation Department, as they were then known, not the Veterans' Affairs Department, there

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wasn't a returned soldier when we got back, they were all cold-footers, there wasn't one returned, there was none. So you can, and they were administering the actual repatriation so the other chair of the department then, was how can we get rid of this fellow? How can we stop doing anything for him, not to how can we do something for him. And for instance when I got back we had to, we were still subject to compulsory training, so I signed

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the form agreeing to join the Army Reserve so that I'd be exempt from compulsory training at night when we got back. And the next thing was if I wanted to claim a pension, they told me I had to go to the general hospital and stay overnight. Well I had my mother and brothers and sisters waiting outside for me - I had no intention of going out there for the night so as to hell with it, I'm not going there so I'll sign this form. So I signed the form and I had nothing wrong. It was signed under strong duress in my opinion, it wasn't

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a legal document. But when this shell shock caught up with me a year after I got back and I had a complete breakdown, I went into the department and they just produced this form, that was it, that was it. It's a different department today - they're almost human - it's quite incredible today, they have a penny, they bend over backwards, they do things for you, quite remarkable. But not, not and when -- I was always afraid of TB [tuberculosis] because I'd been gassed

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and my mate who was gassed with me and he died of TB about, after he'd been back a few years. The second one died and I was underweight, married with kids and scared of TB and Billy Hughes brought an act of parliament then that war service would be deemed to be due to war service to remove any doubt about it, took it out of the hands of the department and I felt quite relieved about that, never had occasion to use it but I felt relieved, subconsciously I was always afraid that I would be caught up with TB.

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When you said you had a breakdown, what happened to you then you know when the shell shock?

Oh, I was a nervous wreck. I lost weight. If people said... you know just pulled me up in the street instead of looking at them I'd burst into tears - I was a complete nervous wreck so I went out on a station property, out west out from Cunnamulla for three months. And the week after I was there, I had

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two jackaroos [general farming hands] chasing foxes in the timber country. So I started to help out and finished up working seven days a week, twelve hours of the day - for free - I did everything, a bit of a jackaroo then, droving, crutching, shearing, riding board range, did the lot. So I finished up physically fit. I got back physically all right but still had this

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mental problem. I had a feeling that anyone that could sing a ballad socially deserved a VC [Victoria Cross] and anyone who'd get up and ask a strange girl at a ball for dance would also just as brave. So I went to Leonard Frances who had the Apollo Choir, he used to be the leader; he taught singing, to learn singing and went to learn dancing. And after six months,

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having got on top of those two things, I went to tell him I was stopping and, and he said, ?Your voice has developed I

want you to give us?? ?I didn't really come to learn singing.? he said, ?Why did you come?? I said, ?You wouldn't understand if I told you.? But by this time I was on top of it, but the funny thing was that it stood for me the rest of my life because when I went into insurance and became an executive, my hard work basket was always empty because I'd tackle hard

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jobs first. That was a lesson I learnt and it stood me in good stead like that?But it wasn't easy, by the way.

But you cured yourself sort of did you, so what were you doing...?

The docs knew nothing?

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When we were talking to you on Sunday you mentioned about a lot of the soldiers didn't recover as well as you. I wonder if you could tell me a bit about what happened with some of the other guys and why?

Well first of all as I say there were no medical benefits then. Doctors were expensive plus the fact they knew nothing about shell shock, plus the attitude of the department - they were all factors. And

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some took, went for grog [alcohol] as a way out, fortunately I didn't. And then the attitude of the department too, with the pensions, give you a case in point, I was sharing a private boarding house, a guest house with an ex-soldier. He was English but he was an Australian soldier, and he was a bootmaker but he was on a hundred percent pension,

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but it was subject for review every six months, and for five months of the year he'd be OK but as his year, time was approaching for his review, he'd start and he'd finish up with his eye in a sling [drunk] and a complete wreck. He was an innocent malingerer and then when he went up and his pension was reviewed and he was still all right, he recovered and he was alright again - it was mental.

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And I finally saw the Deputy Commissioner, whom I knew and told him this story and I said, ?Put him on?? and he? but they finally did and they gave him one hundred percent pension, TPI [totally and permanently incapacitated pension] it was called - he had no problem. So it was a mental condition with many and so I say some went for the grog well one of my ex- ex, one of my friends before the war he was a public accountant,

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very successful, and he hit the grog and he finished up sleeping in parks, you know, a deadbeat. And this would have been 1923 or 24, because by this time I had left the public service and I had an executive job in an insurance company. And I had a secretary and he used to come in, and she said to me one day, ?I wonder why you bother with him?? I used to give him some money. See I said, ?But for the Grace of God that would be me.? And this unfortunately was so in many

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cases, the grog became an outlet. It was a trying time for many and unless you overcome it yourself as an individual I think you had no, you had no chance at all.

So the repercussions of the war went on long after?

Many, many years, many years. As I say these two friends who died of TB that was some years after the war. It would have been as far as probably ten years

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after the war. I think one of them died and the other one eleven years when TB caught up with them. And then you, the effect of shell shock for instance. There was a case in Tasmania which is quite unique where this chap, he'd been blown up, and they'd dug him out, blown up with a shell and they dug him out and he was a cot case. And some layman suggested, they said, 'Look, take him and bury him in sand up to his neck

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and let him dig himself out.' And they tried it and he was cured, see extraordinary, that story's written up in The Lancet. It wasn't a doctor who thought of it, some ex-soldier thought it was a good idea and they tried it and it worked.

So you cured yourself too?

Oh yes, yes you had to. I don't think there was any way out, cause nobody understood shell shock - nobody I think understood what...

Did the memories of the war

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linger on afterwards, did you dream about it and?

Oh yeah, I couldn't go, I couldn't go to the theatres. If a picture came on showing war, any picture, I had to get out and clear out otherwise I'd be sick. And now the noise of a shell is a scream, of a shell arriving close, but the noise of a bomb arriving close is like the steam exhaust of a train, very loud and this was a bomb, the sticker bomb

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as it devised then that really caused the trouble and that was the direct hit. And I was out at the Exhibition with my wife and I had a baby by this time so it would have been 1924. We used to go to the Exhibition and watch the speed races, the bike races and after the races one night they put on a display of fireworks and they let off these skyrockets all at once. Fortunately I wasn't holding the baby and the noise of those skyrockets going off it

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just repeated the steam exhaust noise. I fell to the ground and vomited and that was 1924. That was the reaction straightaway. And another time it would have been much later than that, I was interviewing a client in my office and the City Mutual building was struck by lightning and the noise, I finished up under the table, crawled out from under and that guy thought I was nutty but that that was the reaction. And even

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1940, it would have been 1942 or '43 I remember going to, I was now a volunteer in the defence corps and was doing an army training corps, officers training corps. And after a week of it they were doing a live ammunition show and the colonel, I had a '48 war digger colonel, explained he said, 'Now this is live ammo so keep within the confines of there. If you don't you'll be in trouble because there'll be a Vickers gun operating on each side. You know I'll let you

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hear a blast from the Vickers gun so you'll know what it sounds like.' And when he let it go he roared laughing. He said, 'There are three or four World War diggers here.' because we all did this... cause the others didn't know anything about it, automatic even what twenty, twenty eight years after the war the reaction was automatic.

Built in, built in to you. Okay good we might go back....

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Did you ever talk about the war to anybody?

No, no unless you struck another digger - you never talked about it in the home. They just couldn't understand it for a start and there was nothing in common so you didn't talk about it.

What about to wives and girlfriends and things?

No, no never discussed it. I well remember I was over in Blighty [England] leave in London staying with some

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second cousins, they were English. And the brother arrived home on leave, he was a Tommy and you see here we were straight away talking about the war with language, and when we stopped the girls shrieked they said, 'We've never heard anything like that.' So that, you never talked about it, not even to your wife.

Interviewee: Edward Smout Archive ID 1145 Tape 314

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They formed this 3rd Division under General Monash, it was a new division and they formed this sanitary section, they were called the Hygiene Section. This was only division in the Australian Army that had this section, it was quite new and it was formed up so we did our training. Archie MacDonald and I did our training

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in the Department of Bacteriology. We learned to make smallpox vaccine and flu vaccines with cultures and also learnt water testing and treating of water, which was my specialty and Archie's. So the only two of us in the whole of the Australian Army that had been trained as water testing specialists and that was my main function in France.

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As the troops were in the rest camps we had the health inspectors, plumbers, carpenters and they'd go round the camps and inspect them and tell what is required, grease traps. They made, the carpenters would make the seats for the latrines, the plumbers would make the grease traps. And we were all lance corporals, even the privates; we had one stripe so we didn't have to do any fatigue work.

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We could go into a rest camp and tell the colonel what had to be done. We'd make a written report and then we'd go back and check to see that it was done, see to the health conditions. Otherwise you had people stooling all round the grounds you know if there were not enough latrines. And so that was the, at rest, that was then and then when there was an heavy stunt on we had our own ambulance because our OC [officer commanding] was a doctor, we were then called in

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to totally cover the field ambulance and do the stretcher bearing in field at the dressing station, field dressing station. And that didn't happen at all fortunately but when it did it was pretty stressful. At Passchendaele for instance we had a very long time; it was seventy two hours there non-stop. You used to drop down on the floor and then they'd roll you over their feet, you only had stretcher bearers and you had to be up again and you had to be young.

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We had one chap in there, he was thirty-five, he packed it in, he couldn't do it, we said, 'This old so and so shouldn't be here.' But when you are young you can take it generally but it is, Passchendaele was a horror, an absolute horror. **So what was it like when you were involved in that sort of scene with all the casualties coming back, can you remember any of that?**

Oh very clearly oh my word, very clearly. I remember the field dressing station at Passchendaele,

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we had three doctors, they were brought back from the front line for treatment, emergency treatment to be taken to the base hospital or sent to bloody. And they were, the wounds were just terrible, shocking, and everything was slogged with iodine. There was a bucket of iodine in every tent and they would slobber all the wounds. Badly wounded were alright because

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they were kind of semiconscious. The ones that weren't badly wounded they were the ones, they were in big trouble you know, they felt the pain. And the chloroform, you just put a pad over their nose, some pour it on, chloroform a drop, a drop more, put them unconscious. There was no question of checking hearts and, no, there was nothing done like that, you didn't have, no anaesthetists, they weren't known. But the wounds were terrible, shocking, and

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the stretchers were brought in and lined on the floor and then racks. The Germans were put over there, then the slightly wounded left, you leave that last, treat the, but it wasn't good and the doctors learnt more of surgery there in the week than they would have in twelve months.

So were there men coming in with all arms missing, and what sort of??

Legs, arms,

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bullet wounds. One guy had bullet wounds through the side there, cut the strap, he died. I think it was shock probably. But the British artillery set up a heavy gun about one hundred yards away from the dressing station, against our protest. The Germans spare flight planes picked them up, directed the artillery, the first shell landed one hundred yards towards the

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front from our dressing station and they got a direction and the next shell actually landed right on top of the gun emplacement. We were pulled out to bring the wounded in, and here was the major in charge that we remonstrated had both his legs blown off. We brought him in but he died from loss of blood. But some of the, you know when high explosive shells and you get a piece like that of shell rolling around, I mean

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it'd take an arm off no trouble at all. And then the other shrapnel shells that exploded you know and nails being shrapnel they caused nasty wounds. And very heavy casualties as Passchendaele for no point at all. Going for a piece of ground that was useless in any case, it was a mud heap, the water table's about that high you know from the surface, whole area is flooded,

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shell holes full of water, a lot of the shells didn't detonate, the ground was too soft to detonate them. You had to stay on duckboards, you couldn't get off the duckboards, if you did you were up to here in mud and you were immobilised. So we were bringing wounded out on the duckboard. If the duckboard was blown up you had to wait for the pioneers to come up and replace them before you could move. Diggers in shell holes fifty yards away calling out you couldn't do a thing for them,

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you couldn't get to them, they just had to leave them, it was terrible, terrible nothings as bad as Passchendaele. Down

the Somme, I didn't get to the Somme until March 18 when the Germans broke through. We had good weather right through to August so there was no problem with the weather with the mud but Passchendaele was just a mud heap, October, September October '17, terrible.

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And how does that affect the Australians' view of the command system, because I was thinking a bit about how the British, the way the war was being run with the British throwing Australian troops into??

Yeah we had, we had nothing but disregard and contempt for the British generals. See our own generals were subject to their direction, they were fighting the war on the Crimean textbook

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putting men up against impossible positions and heavy casualties trying to take a piece of ground which didn't matter in any case. They never got to the front. We never saw a British general at the front, saw them when you got back to the rest camp, they were probably having their wine and cigars you know. And this very distinct class system as I say, the Tommy was just there to be

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used for cannon fodder. And it wasn't until after April 18 when we went down to the Somme that the whole of the Australian Army Corps was put under General Monash. He was taken in charge of the whole Army Corps so we had an Australian general in charge of the Army Corps with Australian generals taking instructions from an Australian. And the Battle of Hamel was the copybook

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battle which Monash, had the tanks going with the infantry, not ahead of them or behind them. It was a copybook exercise, very successful battle, it became a copybook exercise. So whereas before that the Australian generals would have protested the British Generals but they just over rid them and, up till, up till April 1918 that was the position, April

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1918 yeah.

You talked a bit about the difference between the Aussies and the way the British treated? what was that story about? I think you told us a bit of the story about you going to the chateau, the British officer had his family and there's the butler and

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maid - you told us the comparison I think you were talking a bit about??

Talking about upstairs, downstairs being true, I was saying how true it was. I went over on Blighty leave in January 1918 and I got the toe of the, of the maid, British lass, there was a maid for the Earl of Curzon. Now the Earl of Curzon was away in France on war work and his wife was on France in war work

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so they lived in Park Lane, two storey, three storey, two storey or three storey house and my entry was through the basement. And here you had the butler with the housekeeper, the gardener, the gardener cum chauffeur and the, oh the lady's maid then the maid and here's the butler sitting at the table being waited on with his cigar

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and his port after him, aping the landlord. And there wouldn't have been a Labor voter amongst any of them. They had to vote the same as the boss. So they had this distinction you know and it absolutely unbelievable, they just, they were

there to serve the upper class and that was their, that was their life's ambition. I think she was getting seven or six a week and she was tied up for four or five,

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four or five years and very happy to have that job. And this was the class system operating so that picture 'Upstairs, Downstairs' is so true to life.

And that operated also on the front too, to some extent didn't it?

Yeah cause every officer came from a public school.

I'm just wondering that when the Australian Army was put under the control for the first time to become its own force, the first??

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Under Monash...

Yeah, what was the feeling amongst the people, do you remember, how did you feel about that?

Oh, oh it felt so much better. Felt a feeling of relief and confidence. We, first of all we we'd been with Monash in the 3rd Division from the start so we knew something about him. But even the others, after Hamel realised that here was a man that knew what he was doing, and but we knew of course before that, because we'd seen the battle of the[UNCLEAR]

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in June 17, which was a great success. So there was a feeling of confidence in the, in the strategy that didn't exist before.

Was there also a sense of a stronger unity within the army itself?

Oh well down the Somme when the Germans broke through and they were stopped there was a bit,

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there was a feeling of disquiet then because the British Army had lost the whole of their equipment. There was nothing between us and Paris except [UNCLEAR] and had the Germans kept going they could have driven through and through in trucks, nothing could have stopped them. But fortunately they were stopping to probably consolidate and then we were doing raids every night, which they thought we were stronger than we were, and that gave time for the Americans to pour in

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their equipment and by August, whereas when they weren't there, wouldn't be one plane, not one gun except the eighteen pounders, by August the logistics were incredible. There was planes practically wingtip to wingtip, tanks, guns, howitzers, you name it, it was fantastic. So seeing this build up it was a feeling of confidence you know the way they were going and when the

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advance started everyone felt, 'Well this is real, we're really going to do something.' And it happened, I mean they went victory after victory right through to St Quentin which was the final battle with a crack general army at Mont St Quentin with heavy Australian casualty. But they took it and that's when Germany decided they had to capitulate. So that the Australians had a very strong, they were a strong

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force in the termination of the war and some of the French people recognised that. The French people have a great regard for Australians and on the Somme today Anzac Day is honoured more than it is in Australia. To give you some

idea, I went back in '93 with the fourteen diggers for the 75th anniversary and we were at the

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monument at Pozieres and the whole of the town had turned up, probably about three hundred population were all there. And after we laid our wreath these schoolchildren came and put flowers and they came back and sang Advance Australia Fair and I said to one elderly lady, I could speak French fluently still, I said to her, 'It's very nice to see these children laying flowers on the?? she said, 'They do that every week

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from school, if they didn't we'd be ashamed.' Now you imagine what, 1993, it was a weekly process from the school still, if they didn't it was really sad, unbelievable. So down in the Somme the Australians were just as much worshipped as they were then after all these years, by the French people.

And how did you

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feel about going back there, what did it bring back to you?

Yeah the first one, '93 was highly emotional. The second time last year wasn't so bad, well you knew what to expect, we went through the same procedures, but it was a lot easier because we knew what to expect. We weren't such a big party, we had a mini bus which take five minutes to load and unload whereas the other one, fourteen diggers, six war widows, it'd usually take twenty minutes to half an hour to load and unload twice a day,

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it was a major operation. Took more out of us, and the first ceremony at, in Paris, the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at the Arc d'Triomphe I was crying you know, tears were pouring down my face. Highly emotional, then you gradually got used to it and it was alright whereas this last time we were over you knew what to expect, it was a lot easier.

So

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what's your feeling about Anzac Day, did you go when you first came back?

No, no.

So what happened?

No, not for many years. First of all I was very busy carving out a career, married, young family, a lot of ties. I didn't feel I had any great thing in common with them because our unit

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we were formed from men all over Australia, there weren't many from Brisbane, there were about half a dozen but I had lost contact with them. Even my two mates I'd lost contact with, because as I say, I was busy developing my career. So I had no, I had joined the League, I pulled out of the League [RSL- Returned and Services League] because they wouldn't go political, I felt they should be political to push

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things and I rejoined the League many years later and became active in the sub branch, but for many years I didn't go to the march.

Why is that, do you think people just wanted to forget the war, they didn't want to make heroes out of people, what do you think about making heroes?

I personally didn't want to have any connection with it. I felt, I just wanted to wipe it. That was my feeling. There were Anzac Day marches, but I didn't go, I didn't march.

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So what do you think of that sort of hero aspect of the war, the myth of Gallipoli and those kind of things, do you think those things are important or do we make too much of it?

No I think it's important. See, when I went to school we were taught all about the British wars, nothing of Australia. Today our children are being taught the history of Australia which I think is important. Because it's their heritage, a sacrifice made then, they've got their freedom today as a result of it

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and so I think it's important and they are learning too, they are being taught I mean. I go to the school now before Anzac Day and talk to them, it's part of our Veterans' Affairs plan to do and they're surprising, like Sandgate High has got a school, a part of the school named the Monash School you see so they, and they surprise you how much they do know about the war which is good, I think it's

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important. Very important that they should know.

Do the kids ask you questions and how does it feel to you being amongst young people and, do you feel some??

Oh I enjoy, we enjoy talking to young people. And they gather in ten or twelve you know and ask intelligent questions about the war, about you know, what did you do

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and what do you feel, it was quite surprising.

Do they find it difficult to understand the First War, why people would have gone away in so many numbers?

I don't know, I don't think so. The First War they know it was voluntary, they know something of the stories of the war, they've learnt that and it's a ritual. I mean

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they always have the school band and the Australian anthem.

So are you going to keep going to Anzac Day?

I do but I don't go to the city march, it's a big day, a heavy day. I do the local one at Sandgate and last Anzac Day they did the honour of, I accepted the salute, I was

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the saluting officer. So instead of marching I thought that was a great compliment, I took the salute from the march yes. That was quite unusual, I think that's the first time that's happened, a digger you know, not a commissioned officer, taking a salute. But they did they asked me to do it and well otherwise I may go to the city later, next year

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perhaps if they push me to do it but otherwise I go, I feel it's important to give the support to the local Sandgate branch.

I'm just going to go back to the Armistice. Do you remember where you were, you talked about the final battle and?

We were out in a rest camp in a little French village called Fouquohert Nesle, F-o-u-q-u-o--h-e-r-t,

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h-e-r-s meaning near, N-e-s-l-e was the name of the river, the stream near Fouquohert near, we were there and we knew the Armistice was coming and it obvious that the war was going to end so we weren't surprised when the final news came through. And of course when it happened we probably made for the local estaminet [café], there was one there,

and the bar was thrown open,

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kept that way right through the night, and a good night. The next day after sobering up, I decided a good day now to go off to Paris. So I just went to Amiens which wasn't far away, got the train to Paris, the railroads were functioning, and went AWOL [absent without leave]. I had a

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fair supply of French francs, and I spoke French as a Frenchman, as a Parisienne, I also spoke dialects, so I was well equipped and I had a really great time in Paris. I was extremely fortunate because after a couple of days there I was going across the Plaza D'Concorde and there was an elderly lady there with a young lady and I heard her say to this young lady,

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?That's a handsome Australian soldier.? I turned round and said in French, ?Thank you very much for the compliment.? and they were a bit surprised. Anyway it transpired that this lass was a New Zealand girl who was a governess for her children so she invited me into their home that day for lunch, her husband was home on leave, a French officer and she gave this lass the afternoon off to give me a quick run around Paris. So we did a quick tour of the

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highlights and later on I was then able to follow it up and see them all at my leisure. But I was very, extremely fortunate and then of course I went to, I was in a hotel only a few hundred yards from the Folies-Bergère, I went there the second night and had a wonderful night there. I was the only Australian there and as I say I could speak French, there were no shortage of attractive girls and I had a good night.

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I didn't go back to the hotel as a matter of fact, quite a good night! And they, they very quickly become organised, they had this huge tricolour covering the whole of the ceiling, it was on wire ropes and a restrainer and for a finale this tricolour gradually came down slowly until it covered the whole ceiling while the band struck up the Marseillaise, everyone up on their feet singing, including me,

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singing the Marseillaise. It was quite a finale, very thrilling and of course adjoining the theatre is this place where you can sit and eat and drink before the show and after so you carried on in there, eating and drinking and it was a good night.

Sounds pretty good.

So eventually I was arrested by a Tommy MP [military policeman], went back

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there I had to get my kit from the hotel, put me on the train. When I got back the, the OC, was a Sydney doctor, our own doctor had been transferred, became a major, that lot was the captain, so he was transferred to a field ambulance and we had a Sydney doctor and he asked me if I had been caught, because, ?You know, I'll have to charge you otherwise I'll be in trouble, oh yes.? So he put me on up a charge and fined me

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fourteen days' pay, which was the minimum which I thought was a bit tough and that was it. So he did his job and it was worth it. It was the highlight of my tour in France thanks, I'll never forget the ten days there, it's a beautiful city

and I had a great time.

So was there much fraternising between the Aussie troops and the French girls during the

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war, was there a lot of romances and stuff going on?

Oh yeah, the villagers, see the villagers either had elderly French women with young girls, sixteen or seventeen, all the older girls had gone you see and oh yes you were even in 1916, I didn't get the opportunity to carry it of course Mum used to sit there all the time, but I had the job of teaching this lass French,

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teaching her English rather but mum used to sit there. She was an attractive girl but I didn't get in the act, getting her beyond that. But there was some cases, I didn't develop any strong relationship, here and there occasionally but nothing permanent because you moved on too quickly but it used to happen, the French girls were willing

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Sorry?

They were willing and able.

I suppose that's the nature of the war though, it changes the way relationships happen, I mean things would have been quite strict before then was that??

Yeah also you, the feeling was that you were liable to be killed tomorrow so why not you know enjoy life to the full today, that was the general, your general outlook was, you know there was nothing sinful about this, it's quite, let's have a go

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because you might be killed tomorrow that was subconsciously the thought. There were other fair sized townships; there were a lot of girls about then.

That's when you came off the front line you mean?

Yeah you'd go back to a rest area, twenty miles behind the line, like [UNCLEAR] behind Passchendaele

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was Poprairie[?] it's quite a big town and there were a lot of people there, a lot of young girls as I say I spoke French as a native so I had the advantage.

Everyone wanted to be your friend I suppose. So they were quite party towns were they in a way when the boys would come back from the front there'd be?

In the estaminet and town square all round, beer was only two cents, a penny a glass, not strong beer but you know you drank enough of it was good enough,

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two cents a glass. And the estaminet closes at eight o'clock at night and you got back to your... But what are known as rest areas, that wasn't rest camp because we were billeted in brick houses you see. But usually the rest camps were closer within shelling distance and they were actually, they were rest camps,

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huts, huts and pill boxes and huts.

Interviewee: Edward Smout Archive ID 1145 Tape 315

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I just wanted you then to just tell us that story about the ?Leaping Fanny or whatever they called her! Can you tell us the story of that?

Yes well down in the Amiens sector, Albre - Albert was a town, a German, a French town not, just a few miles, a few miles from Amiens, a few kilometres from Amiens, and the Germans occupied it and the church spire there has a statue of the virgin at the

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top which had been damaged and the statue was lying horizontally. It'd been wired up to stop it going any further they couldn't bring it back up and the legend was that if that was shot down it would be the end of the war - that was the legend. Well it became an observation post which gave Germans more or less control or observation of the whole of that Albre sector and it had to be destroyed

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and I actually saw the eight inch howitzer, British howitzer fire the first shell that hit it spot on and destroyed it. A week later The Daily Mirror, which was a pictorial weekly in England that came out it had this headline 'German Kultor', K-u-l-t-o-r and it told the story of the legend of the statue and it said the Germans had shelled it down and that was German culture!

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So that's what the censors can do.

So was it difficult to get, did you find it humorous sometimes at the way the war, you were fighting the war and the way that the British press were reporting it?

Yes there was quite a good comedian, I can't remember his name at the moment but he was famous. He used to do sketches of the front and they were published in the British papers and like a shell there, who made that ... ?There's a shell here,

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did the rat make that hole?' you know it was a kind of humour, quite funny. I can think of his name, Bairnsfather, I can't think of his name in a minute but he was clever artist. And we got this British, weekly paper as a rule, other than that we didn't get the papers much or read much.

Was there any, there was much ah censorship on the letters that you wrote home or was there??

Oh yeah,

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they were they were censored but you knew they were going to be censored. For instance you avoided mentioning the name of anywhere you were. You could describe it in general terms but you couldn't say, so but if you did it'd be blacked out, but my letters got through uncensored because I didn't, I particularly avoided the invitation sense of them. There was strong censorship but we

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got, we got our letters from home quite regularly. The army post office worked quite well and parcels you used to get the parcels regularly, the Red Cross parcels.

Now, what was the name of that statue?

We called it Sleeping Fanny after a, I think she was a famous

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Australian swimmer at the time, I can't think of her surname, just Sleeping Fanny was our nickname for the virgin.
Because the war went on for so long, did you ever, people ever get to the time when they would despair that the thing was never going to end

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or was it just doing your job?

Yes well we felt that way, we felt that way at Passchendaele for instance because we knew it was a useless piece of fighting and when the Germans broke through in the Somme we got down in the wars, nearly over, nearly lost the war. We realised then that there had to be an ending to it and when

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the advance started in August, we were at? the 3rd Division, we felt then that this was the start of the finish, that we were on the way. A great feeling of jubilation almost that we had the upper hand.

Did it ever test people's faith though, like belief in God and country and all those things to be put through that sort of experience?

No, I can't remember much about that.

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I don't think we had any strong religious feelings at the time going through the war. I more or less, when you went you were frightened it would over before you got there, when you got there, when you got there hoping it'd be over before you knew you were happening so that if the...the Somme advance in August, was mobile, no trench warfare, it was a mobile,

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different war.

That's when it all changed?

Yeah no trench warfare.

I don't know if you ever came across it but we have read about that there were some people who after the earlier battles in 16 and probably some of them from Passchendaele later, a lot of people had had enough that being bombed and shelled and some of them just packed it in and left. Do you have any stories about

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people who left the front, who deserted, went AWL?

No, that happened, there were deserters but they couldn't be shot for it, in the British Army the death penalty was automatic but the government stopped that. They couldn't shoot Australians for that reason you know but it did happen and there's no doubt about that and there were reports of mutiny. I'm not aware that it happened but it was reported but the Australian soldiers

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mutinied. I wouldn't blame them either for instance seeing that useless slaughter going on and the Pommy generals but I think it happened more to the French than to the Australians, they did mutiny and French had to alter the whole outlook as a result of it. But there were deserters. I have no personal knowledge of any but it did happen.

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And what was the general feeling about people, soldiers, against people who'd packed it in? Was there any animosity towards them?

Yeah, we felt they had done the wrong thing. We felt they were letting their mates down, cowards and we didn't think... well if we thought about it at all we thought they were rotters.

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I think the British wanted to change the laws didn't they and make the Aussies??

Yeah the Australian Government refused and in one case there it was reported in one of the books that I read after the war that this sergeant suffered... a British soldier suffered from shell shock and he cleared out and he was on charge and the prosecutor

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planned on sympathy because he was non-compos you know, from shell shock, and [General] Haig's written comments are as repeated in his own handwriting... 'This cannot be allowed, if this happened, everyone would be wanting to desert, sentence is confirmed'. And that was in his handwriting alongside you know - absolutely callous. That's reported in one of these historians, I forget which one, it might have been [Australian historian Charles] Bean but anyway it was reported

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with a photostat of the entry. So the British generals thought the Tommies were just cannon fodder I think that was their attitude. That was their function.

And the Australians were part of that too I suppose?

Yeah well we were under their control thrown to useless slaughter.

So what do you think that war achieved, the First War.?

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What do you think it set out to achieve?

No, no, we had formed the League of Nations which was a toothless tiger but it didn't end wars because the Second World War came didn't it? I don't think it achieved much at all except perhaps it did stop the Germans

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taking over Europe at that time but they did later on in the Second World War, they still went ahead and took their control of Europe. I don't think it achieved anything, I don't think wars ever will. The Second World War we won it, but the Japs won the peace didn't they? And the Germans won the peace in Europe; I mean I was over in Europe after the war in

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Berlin, Western Berlin I mean they had everything - over in England you still had to get permit to buy a washing machine you know. In Germany, so the Second World War was the same story, the Germans won the peace - things were booming over there

It makes you wonder what they did it for in the first place I suppose?

That's right, that's right.

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And for you personally what did the war do to you, how did it change you do you think?

Well first of all it matured me very, very much. At twenty-one I was very much, very mature you know my experiences had been such that I was probably equivalent of age of thirty ? thirty-five. And it taught me the lesson that you had

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to stand on your own two feet to get anywhere - the main lesson and the futility of war was another thing too that you realised.

But even so your son went off to the Second War - what did you think about that, when he did that?

Well I couldn't stop him. I mean he wanted to enlist I wouldn't stop him. I stupidly thought that

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if I got in the army it would stop him doing it so they were appealing for enlistments for the Royal Australian, not the Royal ,the Royal Air Force. At this time I was chairman of publicity for Queensland for Red Cross and the Governor of Queensland, Sir Lesley Wilson, was chairman of the appealing committee. I mean he knew me personally and so I enlisted went up and examined

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and promptly accepted and so here I am in the RAF - much to the remonstrance of the Governor, he said, ?This is bad.? he said, ?They're just doing clerical work.? he said, ?You know you're wasting your time, you shouldn't do it.? And he hammered this so much that I finally went to Melbourne and saw the chairman of the Air Board and told him what I'd

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done under the Governor's pressure and he said, ?Let's put it down to overzealous enlistment.? he said ?I'm cancelling your enlistment.? He said, ?You go back and continue with the Red Cross work.? So as a result of that I was Manpowered number one firstly, but it didn't have any effect because my son enlisted and joined the air force.

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Yes, I was lucky because the crowd that I enlisted with they went to Singapore, they were caught, became prisoners of war, I'd have died because I was you know I was old, too old to stand it, I'd have died. So I was lucky. Well I joined the VDC [volunteer defence corps] then, armed defence and...

Your son was lucky,

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he was in the, can you tell us what he was in during the war?.

He was a bomber, Wellington bombers and they were coming back to the [aero] drome in London in heavy fog, there were a crew of four in the Wellington Bombers and they had, he went up to stand beside the pilot, he was the observer, realised they were in trouble and the pilot was a chap, an only child of Les Stirling in Toowoomba, an only child and Wesley went up and

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stood beside him and as they were coming and they hit the, they hit the, the plane hit the bomb bay and he went out through the, the pilot was killed, he went out through the windscreen backside first fractured his pelvis and his jaw and then the logs came down from the bomb bay and broke his ankle. So he was a bit of a mess but he survived, he had nine months in the hospital. But the

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pilot was killed, the machine gunner was killed, wireless operator only had a dislocated thumb but he went back and was eventually killed. And so my son was lucky in a way because when the nine months had finished V-Day had

occurred the Germans...and the British thought the war was over then, then Japan didn't mean a thing to them but by the time he got back to Australia then the war

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was over with Japan so he didn't get back into it. So he then went back to university and carried on for medicine instead of engineering.

When the war was

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over you went back to England didn't you, as part of that when everyone was being decommissioned and sent back to Australia... having been away for so long, can you just explain what it was like yourself even coming back and seeing Australia for the first time. I don't know whether you were on the ship when you first saw land and how that was?

First of all

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I went over to England on leave, to London on leave in January 1919. At the end of the fourteen days I decided I wouldn't go back to France so I applied for a job at the Pay Corps then I was given a job at the Army Pay Corps at Horseberry Road and I stayed in London for six months and with the Army Pay Corps. But eventually decided I wanted to get back to Australia and so I came back on a troopship

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called the Erita which was only and eight thousand tonner, they came down the southern end, the earth being flatter there and apparently shorter, but the weather was terrible and to come into Sydney Heads was quite exciting, I mean really exciting you know, feeling of great excitement and great relief that we'd made the trip and we were home at last

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and that was quite a feeling of joy so it...

Was there anyone there to meet you?

No not in Sydney. We then got the train to Brisbane and of course I was met there.

So what happened when you got off, you just, how did you disembark, you just??

Disembarked and then we went straight on to a train, put straight on a train for Brisbane. We didn't stop over in Sydney so there was no hold up there. We were quite happy about that

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and of course when we got back to Brisbane there was quite a parade through Brisbane where I fainted because it was quite a... that night we got up in the evening we had to go out to Shafton House at Kangaroo Point and the Mayor of Brisbane, his name was McMaster, the Flying Beard, he apparently had a set speech to welcome all these returned men because

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the orderly at the door was repeating his speech word for word before he was thinking about it. And we felt a bit of a damned nuisance really having to stand listening to him when having a bit of a meal while my mother and brothers and sisters were waiting outside for me. So we were breaking our necks you know to get out. That was a bit of a chore but he started off, 'Hearts of Oak', we were the Hearts of Oak, that was his opening and the soldiers were repeating it,

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it was quite funny. There was no greater Brisbane then, Brisbane was every suburb had its own area so Brisbane was just the city but he was the Mayor of Brisbane, not Lord Mayor, just Mayor...

I heard he had quite a few of these and people were??

Apparently.

So what was it like when you met your mum, how was the family?

Oh they were delighted of course, delighted, quite excited, you know my mother particularly she

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broke down because we had separated, my parents had separated by this time and so I'd supported her with my army pay during the whole of the war. So there was a fairly close attachment to my mother, cause I was the eldest child and felt, or had been responsible financially for them through my army pay and

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continued to do this after I got back.

So did the war have an impact on her then, on people back home like your families? What sort of, how did she deal with all of that?

Oh I think they suffered from the fear of you know, fear of casualties, fear that I think there was latent fear at the time which I think they affected the whole of the families - not my brothers and sisters, they were too young to worry about it probably.

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But I think my mother carried that weight of worry. You couldn't avoid that...

And was it difficult in terms of getting things to, basic needs, back in Australia during the war or in those terms you know?

I can't, I don't think there was food rationing or anything like that, I don't think so. In fact I'm sure there wasn't.

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So what impact did the war have on your generation do you think? Young boys that you went to school with, how did it change all of you?

Well first of all

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there was no unemployment as we know it today. There was no trouble getting a job, in fact you had a selection of jobs. As you can imagine with so many young fellows killed, the cream of the youth of Australia it must have had a serious effect on the economy. But it also meant there were plenty of opportunities for work. You didn't have the competition with jobs that you have today

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so I had no problem when I decided to leave the Auditors' Office although I wasn't by that time qualified, I was half qualified, in choosing what kind of job I wanted. And I had no problem being selected for this job as an accountant to this new insurance company with my, despite my lack of qualifications because of my background in auditing. And

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so that was one thing that you didn't have problems, you had no fear of unemployment, you were secure in your job, pay was good and.

Did you ever imagine that there'd be another war after that?

No, no you couldn't conceive another war at that time. You thought it would be impossible.

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Later on of course by '38 it was obvious, I mean everyone knew there was going to be a war, even a fool would know that. The signs were there you know, it was inevitable so it was no surprise, I was on the Canambla going to Sydney to a Rotary Conference in Sydney when the war broke out, and [Prime Minister] Menzies made the announcement. It was,

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I knew beforehand because I had seen the telegram but they deferred making it out until late at night, you know about ten or eleven at night and they repeated Menzies' announcement that Britain was at war so Australia was at war - that came over although the general manager, Pradesh was with me, he and his wife they were English. Of course they were they were in tears, you know a disaster for them.

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And they were already stripping the Canambla simply it was built with a gun emplacement, she became a hospital escort, escort for troopships and they were already stripping it before we got into Sydney Harbour, already stripping the pictures down from the dining room and saloon, stripping it

Billy Hughes during the war?

Oh yes, we had a great regard for Billy Hughes. First of

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all he came over to France, came right up the front well you know we saw him there and we knew he, he was fighting the British for Australia I mean he used to go over there and you know for instance that capital punishment he wouldn't relent on that, he wouldn't give way on that and oh no we had a high regard for Billy Hughes

He was an Englishman though wasn't he, or a Welshman?

Welshman...

Do you think he was more Welsh than Australian

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or not, do you think he was quite?

I think, I think he became Australian but he, he was a apparently a fiery little cow, he used to go over there and apparently tell the cabinet where they got off in London, they took notice of him too you know. We respect him as a great Prime Minister of Australia, fighting for Australia. He had the, we had a high opinion of him. And as I say

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when he tied the Repatriation Department down by bringing that special act of Parliament with War Service, TB redeemed acceptable, then you know with TB, the Department could fight it so he just overruled them with a special act of Parliament. So we, we felt always that he, he was on the side of the diggers right through, during the war and after.

And were you ever aware of Bean too, during the war

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He was an Australian journalist who reported??

Bean, Bean yeah.

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I thought that was a good description of the way the Australians saw themselves as opposed to the way that the Pommies saw themselves. Finally, talking about the Australian soldier as being different from the other soldiers,

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could you use those terms to describe how independent the Australian soldier was?

Well first of all, right from school days I mean the social structure of Australia was such that you went to a state school, there were private schools but you didn't feel that they were superior in any way. There was no class system because they went to a private school.

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So right through the social system was that that you were as good as anybody else, Jack was as good as his master and that carried through into the army. And although we had to salute our officers we only respected them if they were good officers. We'd salute them willingly but otherwise we'd do it by compulsion. But we didn't feel that they had any great superiority over us, they just had a higher rank that was all, but

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they were no better as individuals, that was our feeling and I think there was a general feeling right throughout the army. It was a characteristic of the Australian at the time, as compared with the Tommy who was brought up under a class system, who was brought up and bred to accept the higher, the aristocracy, that they were superior people - he was inferior, it was just

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part of their social caste - we had nothing like that in Australia, fortunately. And so this, this attitude carried into the army. There was no insubordination or disloyal, no anti- no failure to carry out an officer's command but our respect was for the individual rather than for the office.

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[Sings]

Happy friend of mine and la la lah... I forget the words,

Tell me I'm so fortunate and that they smile with you...

this goes on.

So when the band, so when the so and so ?

I forget the words ?

...and the last trumps shall call oh ?

words have gone, words have gone

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I'll remember it once,

If I might only come to you with all my sins confessed,

If I could only lay my head upon your loving breast,

I wonder would you pity me or bid my soul have rest,

If I might only come to you then would my life be blessed.

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This was one of the verses you know, there were four of them in that tone but that was the type of thing you sang. Love songs you know.

And you used to, when you were on roller blades, can you tell us that. When you did that waltzing?

Yeah well you can dance on skates you see. Yeah you can do your two step and waltz and I found it easier to waltz on skates

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than waltzing on my feet, skates did it almost for you, they just - I was a pretty good skater, and your Foxtrot, the waltz on skates. It only cost two shillings for the night's entertainment and they used to have a fancy dress dancing and so I became a fairly good skater.

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Once you bought your skates there's no cost you know, two bob a week. I used to go nearly every week.

INTERVIEW ENDS