

**Interview with Anne Kidd**

**Transfer from VHS (Betacam Tape No. 12) 15 June 2000**

**TF = Trish, AK = Anne, JH = Julie**

**Updated 15/01/10 Timecode refers to tapes 27\_BC\_SP**

**Topics in Bold**

**TF We're interviewing Anne Kidd on the um steps of – this is what? The Community Hall?**

**AK Community Hall.**

**TF The Community Hall in Windorah. It's the 15<sup>th</sup> June 2000. Trish FitzSimons on sound. Julie Hornsey on camera. OK. So are you, yep.**

JH Are you going to be sitting back?

TF I will put these up on my lap ..... OK. OK. So Anne, can you tell me um when and where you were born and your name when you were born?

AK 03:01:06:18 Ah born Cunnamulla. Ah '42. Um Anne Preston.

TF So you're exactly the same age as Dot Gorringer then?

AK Yes. Mmm.

TF And how did you land up – ah because you wouldn't regard – first of all. What – how do you define the Channel Country Anne?

AK Well –

TF What does that term mean?

**AK CC Definition**

03:01:34:02 It just defines an area of land that is inundated by flood water every so often in um - I think - there are different types of channel country and to describe this um Cooper Channel country, it's oh – you can, you can talk to people and they'll say oh, we've got channel country at home, but it's nothing like this type of channel country because it's more – .....it's out from gullies and small streams and, and covers such a huge area. Yeah.

TF And so what's specific to this channel country?

- AK It's a lot bigger. A lot bigger area. Mmm.
- TF So do you then, do you use the term to, to refer to the kind of, the whole area of the Lake Eyre catchment or do you use it to specifically describe certain parts of the land ..... ..
- AK 03:02:33:16 I would only describe it as channel country going from here to um Innamincka. Ah, I suppose through the Corgi Lakes. From there on I don't, I, I don't know enough about it to say whether it'd be – but it wouldn't be the same type of thing I don't imagine.
- TF Would Boulia be Channel Country to you?
- AK Not, not as extensive. No. No, I don't think that um channel country really starts until it gets further down either.
- TF Because it's interesting –
- AK **CC Definition**
- 03:03:06:20 Channel Country to me is where the, the whole – a lot of country is inundated. A lot of land is inundated by slow, slow ah shallow water. It's not a huge flood, you know? It's – oh, it does get deep at times, depending on the type of flood.
- TF And what's the effect of that on the land? Like how would you describe this kind of ecosystem or environment? Not in scientific terms, but as one that lives within it.
- AK 03:03:35:09 Um, well it can make the difference between a good season and a bad season. If you don't get a flood, you've got to – you're going to have a bad time. If you do get a flood, you're home and hosed. But you can get varying degrees of ah floods. You can get a flood that mightn't go far out of the gullies. It mightn't spread over much land. It might just go through the gullies. Um, if you get that, it's nowhere near as good as um it won't last as long as a flood that's covering a lot of the country. A higher flooding – cover more country and grow more food.
- TF And do you experience this environment um that there's a sort of a yearly cycle that you can count on for floods in a certain month, like the monsoon? Or is the cycle longer than that?

AK 03:04:22:16 No. No. They can happen any time. There's no – I don't think there's any hard and fast season out here. I think um we've had floods in November. We've had them in January. Might have them in March, April. And then this year we had about three of them so – all of varying heights, you know, so – and land that – sometimes if you get um if you get a small flood and it just goes through the gullies, and then you get a bigger flood later, it'll cover higher ground that wasn't covered the first time, and then it'll grow more feed again then. But you can definitely tell the difference where the water's been and where it hasn't.

TF So for much of Australia, flood spells disaster. You know, like you hear a flood and –

AK Oh yes, yes.

TF And it's disaster relief. But that's not what you're describing here is it?

AK No. No.

TF Why, why not?

AK 03:05:16:08 Because it's so – because it's so slow flowing, the main stream – it can run very fast, but then it channels out. And then when it channels out, and then when it channels out it channels off again and it, it eventually – it's such low lying country that eventually, it will inundate the um, most of the ground around. If it doesn't, you can see where the, where it hasn't reached because it's still black. There's nothing. Nothing'll grow. Even with rain, it won't grow nearly as much as it will with a flood. That country has to have the flood.

TF So what's that about? That's the topsoil or?

AK **CC Definition/Ecology**

03:05:53:00 Ah, no. It's very cracky ground. It's um deep cracky ground. You can see the – if you watch the flood water coming down, you can see it going underground. You can see it running through the ground underneath.

TF So the rain might just run off or something where it –

AK No, it's not the rain.

TF Mmm.

AK 03:06:14:08 It's the water coming from up above. From up round Longreach or um, Blackall or Barcaldine. Somewhere up there - if it rains heavily enough or anywhere in the catchment up that area there. And it'll come down into a main stream. It will flood out a little bit in those parts but not to the extent that I would call this channel flooding. Mmm.

TF So do you follow the rainfall higher up the catchment closely to –

AK That's, that's when we find out if we're going to have a good flood or not. Yeah. And then you can get rain in, in the um Longreach area and that'll make a difference. If you get rain in the Barcoola with rain in the Thompson. Yeah. Sometimes if we get rain in both, then you, you're going pretty well.

TF And have you experienced years when, when there's not rain and not flood?

AK **CC Ecology**

03:07:08:18 If you don't have, if you don't have rain – if you don't have flood in the channels, you've got a really bad drought because the um red country just won't carry the stock. And it's – well it's only like carrying its spinifex, mostly spinifex. There's a fair bit of bottle ? growing in it now but ah mostly spinifex mulga country and it just won't carry the stock. Yeah. If you have a flood – if you miss out on a flood, you've got no feed in the channels. You've either got to get rid of your stock or they'll die.

TF So you were born outside this country. Can you describe for me the first time you came to the Channel Country?

AK Ah in the middle of a flood.

TF So paint a picture for us.

AK 03:07:59:10 Well um came out on a DC3 and at that time, the DC3s came Brisbane-Charleville and then because they had a flood up and there was a – um – a record flood at Adavale I think, they, they'd been rescuing people or dropping food to people from there, and the DC3 had to bring food to Quilpie so they made a trip to Quilpie first and we had to wait at the ah airport in Charleville while they did that trip and checked over and then they came back and picked us up to bring us to Windorah. Um – and the floodwater was

rising here. It was in '63. Floodwater was rising pretty well here and it was a pretty big flood. It ended up being a record flood at that time in 1963. And um, it hadn't reached it's peak when I arrived but um I went down to Mayfield and it did eventually come – it comes right up around the old store room at Mayfield, but never into the house.

TF And so what had brought you here?

AK 03:09:14:20 Oh I came to look after Sandy's grandmother, to nurse her. Yeah. She'd ah, um she was quite sick so the ah her daughters wanted someone here to look after her so they could keep her at home. So I came out. Somebody else had been here prior to me, there'd been other girls here, but they'd gone and um I was given the opportunity of a trip out west so I thought, right, I'll take it. Mmm.

TF And do you think in any sense you were hoping to kind of come and live in this country, you know? Maybe –

AK No. No.

TF Marry and settle down?

AK 0:09:56:08 I, I was booked to go to Sydney to do my midwifery and ah I had a career planned and ah do a bit of travelling and so forth, but ah that all, that, that was finished once I came here.

TF How .....?

AK **Romance**

Well, I think women in those days did as they were told more than they do now. No, when I met Sandy, well we decided to get married and then ah that was the end of going anywhere.

TF Just like that?

AK Yeah.

TF You met Sandy and decided to get married.

AK Oh yeah, more or less. Mmm. So that was the finish of all the big plans.

TF And –

JH Trish, I have ? a battery.

TF Do you need – we've got water in the car, would you like water?

AK Yeah, a drink of water.

TF You let me know when you're rolling?

JH I'm rolling.

TF OK, so um there's no doubt just – this is um – **Betacam only. So Tape 12 is finishing at that point on, on Anne Kidd's interview.**

So Anne, I'm – as I said, I'm interested in the whole history of, of women in the Channel Country.

AK Mmm.

TF Arriving in – I think you said it was 1963?

AK '63. Mmm.

TF How old was Sandy's grandmother and –

AK Oh well, she died in um '65 and I think she was 80 – 82 I think. I'm just not certain now.

TF But so this was a woman that, that went back to the fairly early days –

AK **Pioneers**

She was the first white child born here on the Cooper.

TF So this was Francis Hammond was –

AK Yes. Yeah.

TF And when, like I read that in the newspaper article and I wondered what does that mean? Does that mean the first child actually born out here rather than the mother going away for midwifery or?

AK 03:12:08:04 No. None of them went away back them. They, they were born on the track or they were born when they arrived at wherever they were going and um apparently she was born after they arrived here. Um – there were other children then born to ah Ned and his wife, because Ned Hammond was the father. Yeah. And ah one of them died – is buried over at Hammond

Downs. Um – and then of course Ned was killed off a horse and he's buried over there too.

TF So what kind of – could you describe her as a character?

AK Oh yeah. Yeah. She was a character. She was very bright. She was um the matriarch of the family you might say. She was the boss. Mmm. And um – ah – she was, she loved to keep everything under her control. Yeah.

TF Like what? What would, what were the things that –

AK **Kidds**

03:13:23:13 Well, they all lived there in the one house. There was the mother, the three daughters and a cousin, and they all lived there in the one house together, and um she liked to know what the girls were doing all the time. She just, she still treated them like young children more or less. Yeah. Or why they – they used to have their little arguments but they'd always get around Mum some way. They'd, they'd keep her happy but they'd go their own way, but she'd usually wake up and then get really cranky with them, but they'd soon settle that down too. Yes, she was very bright but um – ah very much a family person. Yeah.

TF And was Sandy's grandfather still alive when he –

AK 03:14:14:10 Oh no. He died back in ah, I think '25. Yeah. He died of – he was a lot older than she was and he'd come out from Scotland back in 18 – oh, late '80s. And um came up from Melbourne – ah through Melbourne and then on up this way and got a job ah running a place out near Bedourie called the ah Baird's who owned land out there. And their offspring is still around. Their descendants are still around ah Dubbo. And ah he, he was managing a place out there and then he was there for 10 years and we've got um photocopies of some of the letters he wrote back and recorded reporting on the place and then he moved in here and he was managing Galway Downs. It was called Galway Downs then but it was most – Galway Downs back then was just about all the country west of the Cooper, for a big area, and ah he managed that for the Scottish Bank I think, or one of the banks. It must've been taken over. I think it had belonged to the Hammond's and, and I don't

know whether they walked off or what and he took it over there. And then um he gradually took up land, you know, and ended up with what's now Mayfield.

TF So if he'd died back in 1925, who had managed the land after that?

AK 03:15:59:04 The sons. Um – after he died, yes. The um, the boys looked after it. Jim and Tom. And ah, then Tom went to the war in 40 ah whatever year. I'm not too sure what year he went, and he went to the war, Jim came back here. He had gone away for a while. Ah and ah, he came back.

TF So that Sandy's Dad?

AK Mmm.

TF So in terms of you said that this Frances Hammond who then became Frances Kidd, you said something like she was in control. She was the boss or whatever. What was her arena? Like how would she have defined her role?

AK **Kidds**

03:16:50:10 I think after her husband died, after ah James Kidd died, she must have um – she was still the one who, who organised things I think. Although she didn't, she didn't do the bookwork. Kitty did – the eldest daughter, Kitty, she did the bookwork. Um – I think she was still though the head of the household. They still looked up to her as the head of the household and, and treated her with that respect. Even though she wasn't actually out doing things on the land so much. The others, Bub and um Meg and Kitty – they were all out doing a bit of mustering and all that sort of thing, but they always had um men, men there. Tom and ah Jim, and the girls and their mother were more or less, they were women's libbers. They, they thought they could do things better than the men anyway.

TF Tell me a statement they might have made about, about the world that would make you think that and was it how they acted rather than what they said?

AK Well it was just the fact none of them ever married. They all lived there quite happily together. There was very little friction. You don't see too many people living like that now. And ah – and they, they just didn't – they thought that they could do things better.

TF So if you read somebody like Judith Wright's –



AK 03:18:31:16 Well Bub Kidd could ride a horse really well. She was a terrific horsewoman and she had a terrific determination and aggression that really went well with the type of work they did, yeah. Um – Meg was more a lady. She, she didn't ah – she did some of the work but she wasn't really keen on it. Um Kitty was ah – oh she hurt her, her kidney. She .... back so they – they relegated her to the bookwork.

TF She was the delicate one?

AK Well not delicate but yeah. She just did the bookwork anyway but Bub was definitely the stockwoman. She loved doing the stock work but their father'd never allow them to be um in the yard when the cattle were being castrated or the lambs being castrated. Anything like that, which was really surprising and they still sort of believed in that a bit too. But ah –

TF Do you –

AK But Bub knew how to do it.

TF Do you think that their father having died when they were relatively young, had lead to them having less traditional views of the female role?

AK 03:19:44:16 Oh, not really. See, I think they would have been around ah they would have been in their, probably in their 20s – late teens, early 20s. And ah I think he must've had very – very definite ideas about what women should do and shouldn't do, yes. But he did expect them all to ah help their mother when he died, yeah. He died from cancer so he was sick for quite a while I think before he died and ah – and he more or less told the boys they had to look after their mother and I think that was one of the things why they all stuck with her. Mmm.

TF So the mother then was living there. The mother, her three unmarried daughters.

AK And a cousin.

TF And the cousin was also an, an unmarried woman?

AK Mmm.

TF Right. And Sandy? He must – he was living in a – with his parents on a prop – on a house on the same property, was he?

AK 03:20:46:12 Um – after they got married, Sandy’s Mum and Dad – they were working at Hammond Downs for a while for George Hammond who was Fanny’s brother and George Hammond was also Frances, Francies’ father. And Francie was the cousin who was living with them. Mmm.

TF Oh, that’s Francie Hamano who’s still alive in Brisbane?

AK **Francie Hammond/Childbirth**

Yes. In Brisbane. Yes. And her mother – her mother died ah - in childbirth. She made medical history because ah Francie was conceived and born and went through the whole term in the fallopian tube and was – killed her mother but Francie survived and ah she was born in Quilpie. Hospital of course. There was nothing back then to really help anyone with that problem.

TF So Anne, this must have been – how, how old were you when you came here?

AK 21.

TF So this must have been a fairly formidable bunch of um women to –

AK 03:21:48:18 Oh, they were easy to get on with though. They were all very ah – they all did their work and all had their different jobs and, and they stuck to them. They had a very rou – very good routine though. They – you know, everything was done at a time and they’d go for a drive every so often so – but I was with Grandma most of the – I was with her, all day, all the time. So I just had to entertain or talk to her and just keep an eye on her.

TF When – do you know June Jackson who runs the Boulia Post Office?

AK No.

TF Anyway, she was describing meeting her husband and I said what attracted you to your husband and one answer she said was I loved his mother. I saw his Mum. I saw his sisters.

AK Mmm.

TF I saw that there could be, you know, a family that worked well. Do you think in any way that was part of what, what turned your kind of plans upside down in short order?

AK 03:22:51:20 No. No I – no, it was purely – purely a personal attraction. Mmm. And ah – yeah, just – it wasn't anything like that. The family wasn't any – in any way involved. In fact the family was – they were a little bit daunting in a way. They were um – yeah, in a way, I found them a bit daunting. I got on with Grandma very well. Ah, but the others – I was always a little bit nervous of them. Not terribly sure of how to take them, you know?

TF Were they –

AK They were easy enough to get on with and very good to me and there was no problem but – yeah, I always had that little bit of a feeling that – yeah. Not so comfortable as it was with Grandma.

TF Was there a sense that they were the kind of, the women of the pioneer family?

AK **Kidds/Mayfield Ladies**

03:23:52:24 They, they were the bosses. They were the – yes. Yes. They were the bosses. They were the – they were really the bosses and they let Grandma think she was the boss. Put it that way. And um whatever they agreed on, the three of them, no man had any chance of changing them. Even Jim and Tom. They would influence them to that stage, yeah.

TF Now to be unmarried women here early last century, would have been quite an achievement in a way, because there was many more men than women, wasn't there?

AK 03:24:28:20 I don't think they thought men were good enough for them. In fact Kitty was supposed to have said that at one time that ah fancy sharing, sharing everything with a man, so – and ah, no, I don't think – they just didn't like that kind – I think they liked the way they were living and that was it. They'd grown used to it. They had their routine. They didn't want to change it. Yeah.

TF So tell me then how your life proceeded. Um –

AK After that?

TF Yes.

AK 03:25:05:00 Oh well, we got married and ah moved to the other house, where Sandy's Mother and Father lived. And we moved in with them for a start and then um we had the first child and we were still living with them but they'd started to build us a house by then. A cottage just over from the other house so – and I remember there was a little bit of um arguing about whether they should build us a place or whether we should keep living – and Sandy's Mother and, and ah Francie Hammond were the ones who more or less said oh no, they've got to have their own house. Mmm. So they, we moved into it then in ah sixty – the end of '64 it must have been. I think it was about November '64.

TF And who else at that time when you moved to the station, who else made up the, the kind of the station community if you like?

AK Oh well, they had ah there was an old fellow called Joe, Joe Kelly. He was there. He was just an old pensioner and ah he lived there and he just fed the chooks and did a few odd jobs. And they had another man working there. Jack Raymond. And Sandy.

TF And any Aboriginal people working on the property?

AK No.

TF Going back, how long – do you know any of that history? How long before – how long one would have to go back –

AK **Race Relations/Aboriginal History**

03:26:45:18 They – at Helen Downs they had them and they were also at Mayfield when the family were there, after Sandy's Father took it up. Grandfather rather, took it up. They were around there then because ah there's a photo at home of the ah, the children with two of the Aboriginals. A man and a woman who were – must have kept an eye on them every now and again. And apparently Sandy's father and ah all of – well all those kids used to go down there and the old blacks used to show them around and do a bit of tracking with them, and all that sort of thing. But um, I, I don't think – I think

they were all moved out. There used to be a lot of them at Hammond Downs too, way back. But they were all moved out by the Government. They were taken out of ah the place. But I don't think there were a terrible lot of them around here. Not from what I can understand.

TF As, I mean I don't have a detailed knowledge, I think um I understand quite a number of the people from round here in the 19<sup>th</sup> century when, when things were quite hostile between black and white, I think some of them had moved further down south round um maybe Durham. But down that kind of bottom country, yeah. But so as you arrived in the, in the mid-60s there were no –

AK 03:28:08:04 No. No, there were none here then. There were um only the ones who were in town and I think the only one of them who was in any way original, was um – you know, original from the area, was old Tim. Um but I'm not certain now. There were – there was another man around but I'm not sure whether was actually from those tribes that had been here.

TF And how would you have described kind of race relations when you, when you moved here?

AK When I moved here? Um – I just got on with them. I just ah – I don't think there was any problem.

TF I mean that's certainly the picture that – we've interviewed Alice Gorringe in Mt Isa.

AK Mmm.

TF And that's certainly um yeah – she found it much easier being somewhere like here than say if she went to Bourke or whatever, where it was ah –

AK Yeah.

TF Much .....

AK 03:29:07:10 Yeah. No, I, I don't – there was never any problem that way at all. In fact um – they all worked together. Black and white – on the properties and ah the drovers. Um – old Bill Gorringe, he was a drover and ah, there were quite a few of them living around here then.

TF And then –

AK Kids all went to school. The same school, and a lot of them have kept friends. You know, have become – well they've always been friends, whenever they run into each still. All those people who were around then.

TF Mmm.

AK There was never any problem 'til the Government stepped in.

TF We might get, get back to the later. So thinking back to yourself then Anne, the – you know, just after 20, come here and met Sandy. What do you think were your kind of your vision of the kind of life you wanted to lead?

AK 03:30:00:16 And I hadn't even thought about that. Everything changed. Everything happened so quickly that I didn't have time to think. I just did whatever came into my head so we just got married. We ended up having kids and of course, once you do that, you're tied down. Especially in this country because there's nothing you can do. We didn't have a vehicle at all, Sandy and I, at the time. In fact we didn't have a car for a few years and ah, and it – to come to town or anything, it was when had to get a lift or get Sandy's mother and father's car and – that's all. In fact I couldn't even drive when I came out there. Back then you didn't – a lot of people didn't have cars. I'd come from the city but um a few girls had cars, but not too many. And ah a lot of us couldn't drive.

TF Were you a competent horsewoman?

AK Never, never. Had nothing to do with country. Nah.

TF So although you –

AK 03:31:09:00 I was scared of cows. I was scared of horses. They were all too big for me. Yeah. No. The only things I liked were dogs and cats.

TF So although you'd been born in Cunnamulla, you then –

AK Oh, we were in a pub so we never had any contact with the real rural side of it. Apart from camping to go out fishing and that was all. Mmm. No, I had nothing to do with animals.

TF So was actual life out here then a shock to your system?

AK **Physical Hardships/Electricity**

03:31:42:10 Um, no, no, because um there was no shock to the system because it was – there were a lot of places like it. I mean a lot of towns back then didn't have power. Windorah didn't have power, but that was ah, we were in another town as I was growing up. We were in a town, in Alpha, and they had no electricity there. We had to have our own generators and I mean we were in a pub there, so you had to run your own generator in the pub there. And um you know, you just got used to that sort of thing. I mean, it was, it was common. That was nothing unusual to be in a place without power. It was a noth – it was nothing unusual to have bad roads. Um – we used to drive down from Childers, later on in life, back to – down to Brisbane, and the roads back then down through there weren't all that hot, you know? There was a lot of bitumen then but there was dirt too.

TF And the heat of summer?

AK 03:32:52:16 The heat of summer. Um – yep. I really felt it. Um, I think because No. 1 I was pregnant that first summer and Sandy and I were camped out. He was pumping at – back then they had these ah when they had the pump jacks on the bores, they'd have to stay and watch them because they had a flat belt, and if the belt came off, well they could, you know, um – so we used to camp for a couple of nights at a time and then swap over with Jack and he'd camp a couple of nights and ah, I really felt the heat then. We just had a bough shed and swag and we could jump up and get in the turkey's nest and have a swim but it was – I, I did feel the heat then because I wasn't feeling well either so – I think that was one of the reasons why I didn't. Later on, in our – you know, later on in other years, I found it didn't worry me in the least. The winter affected me more than the summer then. As long as I could keep busy in the summer it was ah you didn't notice it as much.

TF And what was busy for you? Like what was the, the texture of your life?

AK **Women/Work/Children**

03:34:06:00 Oh, looking after the kids um I mean back then, when we first started off, I didn't even have a – we just had a copper, and ah and hand washing for a while and then later on when we got the ah washing machines, the old agitator – you know, the first lot of agitator one. 32 volt. Well, the old

ringers – you had to, you had to be there doing it all the time, so washing'd take a fair bit of time and I was never one for ironing. I hated it. And then folding. Well half the time the things weren't – they'd be – we ended up with five kids so I mean that was – the first few years of my life were spent having kids because we have five in six years and then there was just so much to do, you know, looking after kids. Washing, keeping the place, feeding them. So that – my early years were just spent doing that.

TF And one –

AK It was a full-time job.

TF I'm absolutely certain of it.

AK Mmm.

TF I've got two kids and –

AK Yeah.

TF When I – yeah. I'm absolutely certain of it. You describe going out camping with Sandy when you were pregnant.

AK Mmm.

TF Once your first child was born, did that kind of part of your life end? Like was it more like –

AK Yes. Yeah.

TF You were in the house?

AK 03:35:24:22 I was in the house then. Yeah. So that tied me down to the house right up until oh, right up until they sort of got off our hands a bit. Um - and then – and Sandy's father was sick. I used to go out and help them then, in the yards and that type of thing. Um – I'd go out with Sandy. I had no idea how to do anything but I learnt the hard way. Through getting revved right out of the – getting in the wrong place at the wrong time and all that sort of thing, but gradually I learnt what to do a bit. Used to go out and help them there. And ah, because as the kids got older too, they um, they used to help a bit. They'd have to go out riding because they were all horse people so they all rode horses and um and Sandy'd take them to gymkhanas and all that sort



of thing. We'd go to those and we'd camp out then at the, at the gymkhanas  
and things like that, or stay at someone's place (tape goes blank and returns  
with high pitched tone over dialogue) 03:36:31:10