

**INTERVIEW WITH JULIE GROVES**  
**19 June 2000**  
**Updated 15/01/10. Timecode from tapes 38\_BC\_SP**  
**Topics in Bold**

I = Interviewer    R = Respondent

**I        So this is tape 38 camera, tape 14 DAT. It's 19 June 2000 and we're with Julie Groves at her property Haughton Vale near Jundah, and this is the Channels of History project.**

So Julie, can you tell me where and when you were born and what your name was when you were born?

**R        14:01:37:21    I was born in Longreach, 11 June 1955, and I was Julie Hill.**

**I        And what had taken your family to Longreach?**

**R        **Pioneers****

14:01:51:10    My father's side of the family, they followed the railway line out, um or his mother's side, rather. My grandfather had come up from Victoria as a shearer on a pushbike with his gear with him. On my mother's side, her father had come to Stonehenge. They were early settlers there and he had a mail run that went from Longreach out to Warbrear just west of Stonehenge. My grandmother's family came from here. It was an actual fact her father had taken up Haughton Vale as a block and put it together in the early 1900s. And my grandmother moved to Longreach after they were married.

**I        So what do you know about your grandmother's life out here on Horton Vale? What was her name and just tell me a little bit about that grandmother.**

**R        14:02:42:06    Yeah, her name was Mary May Doyle ummm and when they first come here, her father, they'd followed the rabbit netting fence along, and he put, or put about three blocks together here ummm and Nan ... I didn't realise in those days that the women worked so much. She used to talk about riding – she was a terrific horsewoman – and mustering and I just thought it was for pleasure but it was for work and I'm just sorry that Nan's**

gone now because the questions I'd love to ask her will never be answered. And these days women and the kids work but I just didn't think that they did in those days to sort of set blocks up.

I So what would be the questions you would ask of your grandmother if you could?

R 14:03:32:00 Oh just sort of how much they did actually work. It would have been a lot harder because these days if the kids go mustering, they'll either go on a motorbike or otherwise if they go on horseback you put them, see you put the ponies on a truck ummm because the bottom of the place is sort of fifteen mile or something away from the house and ... but in those days they would have had to ride. Everything would have just taken that much longer, and when they come home you didn't have the comfort of the home, they lived in tents. Ah, they just had hurricane lanterns or candles. Didn't have refrigeration. The old meat house is still up there. Just, you know, sort of what it was like to be, I suppose, a teenager and grow up under those conditions, if they went to ... I know she told us if they went to a dance in Windorah they'd ride there on a horse, the older children, and then the family, oh well Mum and the children, would go in sort of a cart or ... it depended on the number of children. And they'd go for a week, and just what they did to fill in a week in Windorah between sort of race meetings or whatever and gymkhanas. Yeah, all that history's going. But, yeah, I suppose I just want to know about her life here because I've been here and mine's different to hers.

I So where would her ... she would have lived in a tent on this property?

R **Accidents/Fire**

14:04:54:04 Yes, the site of the old homestead is still up there, just the wire netting that made up the basis of the meat house is still intact. Ummm overhead tank is still on its stand, you can ... the homestead was actually burnt down. A kerosene refrigerator started the fire and they lost their photographs and all their history. Luckily there was nobody home. They did have another home in town where her mother had gone to educate the

younger children at the school in there. Nan only went to Year 3. So sort of like the older children, their education was sketchy, whereas the younger ones had the advantage of going through, I suppose, in those days to Year 7.

I So your grandmother, living on this land, her husband ... you probably told me but I didn't quite catch, he was fencing on this land?

R 14:05:48:00 No. I'm not sure, that's another thing, where Nan met her husband but he was a mail contractor, I think, in those days. I'm sort of sketchy on sort of how far back it was but I know that when they were in Longreach he definitely had the mail run, but I think he could have in those days. But he was, I suppose, more or less what we call a local because Stonehenge is only about 40 miles from Jundah so the people would have, even in those days, they still would have mixed in.

I And if your grandmother was actually living here on Horton Vale with her husband, was that what you said?

R 14:06:27:00 No, no. She left when she was married. Ummm, they moved to Longreach and I suppose she still worked, like they didn't have semi-trailers to cart the wool. My grandfather had the first semi-trailer that was sort of used in the district and before that they just carted wool in little body trucks so there'd be, you know, somebody was shearing or down this way they'd be shearing and it'd be just men going continuously. And Nan cooked for them and then they'd sort of have to provide sort of sandwiches or whatever to take with them and keep their tucker boxes well and truly stocked.

I And talking about your grandmother growing up as a child on this property, did you say her father was shearing?

R **Pioneers: Life on Road**

14:07:13:00 No, her father had, he was, used to run the rabbit netting fence and they had a mob of sheep that ... I think it was about 500 sheep and they used to drive along, like as he went along the fence, and his wife and

children would be living out of some sort of a wagon, I'd imagine. I'm sort of sketchy. That's another thing I'd like to know but they followed along behind the sheep and then my grandfather's brother, he actually had a Cobb & Co. bus run from Longreach – oh, mail run from Longreach through to Windorah and I think my grandfather's got a photo of him – great-grandfather rather – he actually drove the coach for a while so I presume that was after he was on the rabbit netting fence, and then he took up a small block where the old original homestead block is for Horton Vale, and then there was another two blocks that were somehow added on to it, and that made a livable area.

I And what sense did you get from your grandmother of her life here, because it couldn't have been easy, could it? Summer heat in a tent. How did she talk about her life?

R **Women/Land**

14:08:29:01 Nan, she engendered a great love of the land ummm in me, even though I grew up in town. We'd be going for picnics and we'd be looking at flowers and grasses and soils but as far as Nan's life here, she never really told us ummm sort of the hardships, but then that still comes across today because the women don't talk about it, like if you haven't say got power, everybody, or most of us, are in the same boat and there just seems to be this sense of you shouldn't whinge about it, you should just tolerate it and I think because everybody was in the same boat, it was all those generations ago, that you just seemed to be conditioned to it and anybody new that come in, you just had to accept it, I suppose.

I Is there a sense that if you started to whinge you mightn't stop?

R 14:09:25:00 Yeah, I would think so. Like, you have to take life as you find it ummm and if you concentrate on all the hardships, you'd go round the twist out here, I think. But if you just look on the good side, like the hardships will never go away but making a big issue of it isn't going to make it easier to live, so I think sort of there's a tolerance of that and you make the best of what you've got and enjoy that. It's very hard sometimes.

I So growing up in Longreach then, you would hear stories of this area?

R 14:10:04:10 Yeah, because Nan come from a big family, some of her ummm family was still down here. Her brother, youngest brother, was running this place. Nan still had, all the family shared in it but there was still some aunts in Jundah and it was just an extended family. I came down here a lot with Nan ummm you'd just come down for a weekend or that when I was really young, sort of probably up until about six or seven years old, so I suppose it was all familiar to me. Like, when I come down here, it was a wrench leaving home. I'd come down after I was married. I'd never left home before ummm and I was the oldest of six children so we were a close-knit family. But to come down here it was familiar ummm ... I went to ... Windorah was our local town and I knew one person. Everybody knew who I was but I was made to feel very welcome even though I'd never been to Windorah before, whereas Jundah I always felt comfortable in it. I suppose my grandmother had grown up there and relatives, just make it easier for people.

I And so how had your grandfather gone ... he'd been doing the rabbit fencing here on Horton Vale and then you said he bought another property. How has your family come to own this property?

R 14:11:34:12 No. No, great-grandfather ... there was ummm, well rabbit fences around much like the dingo ... have you heard of the dingo barrier fence? Well they had sort of in the early 1900s, I don't know how long they were there, but he would have been there in the early 1900s and followed ... I don't even know what his beat was, but they more or less would have had a beat and they had to go along those fences and check for rabbit holes, etc. and that's sort of what he was doing before he came to Horton Vale. Like, he had his 500 sheep so that gave him a start ummm stockwise. I presume that they would have had to have purchased more but ummm and as far as buying it, I don't know. I think he sort of, whether he purchased it or actually took it up, yeah, there's sort of just a lot of things, questions, that are coming up that I would love to find the answers to.

I So growing up in Longreach, who were the characters, who were the people that you would hear about out here? Was there much talk about pioneers or who were the names that you grew up hearing, or was it more just like a sense of family history?

R **Braided Channels**

14:12:54:00 It was, yeah, a family history, and everybody in those days, like I'm only finding out now, people that you called 'Uncle' and 'Aunt' were never actually related to but because, I suppose in those days as a courtesy you couldn't actually call an adult by, or like a child, couldn't by their first name, so ... and you were close to them so you couldn't call them 'Mr' or 'Mrs' so that 'Aunt' and 'Uncle', well that's just how I can explain it. The Aunt and Uncle came into being. You could still use their first name but it sort of had something in front of it so you weren't being, to me, disrespectful for those people. But, yes, so I'm not sure where the family part began and ended but those people, to me, yeah they were just all an extended family so you just ... I think I was lucky I experienced that extended family situation.

I So it was almost like all the families out here were interconnected and you were part of them from the beginning?

R **Braided Channels**

Yes. Ummm sort of, like to try and track down, I suppose you didn't have the transport so the people stayed here and then the families inter-married and, yeah, you were just related to that many people in the districts and somebody new that came in and settled and that made it sort of bring fresh blood in sort of thing, but yeah, it'd be a sense of family to me.

I And did you grow up ... people like the Duracks and the Costellos, the very first settlers out here, did you grow up hearing of that history?

R 14:14:35:20 No. I suppose it was when I first come down here and I read ummm Mary Durack's book *Kings in Grass Castles*. If I had have read that

before I come here, I don't think I would have got as involved but because my husband's family, like their property joined, oh I think part of it joined Thylungra, but I was familiar with the properties and the places they were talking about and if I didn't know, I could sort of ask, and I really enjoyed that section of the book and there was still a Costello family. Descendants are still here. And, yeah, it just made history come alive but once they got up into the Kimberleys where I haven't been and like I know I got a map out and looked at where the places were but it wasn't as meaningful as the stuff that I actually knew about it.

I How about Alice Duncan Kemp's work? Did you ever read it or have you ever read her books?

R 14:15:36:06 No, I haven't read it but I know of her through my husband when he sort of, like people his age and older that worked out west and they sort of, yeah, talk about Miss Kemp and they talk about the family. And, yeah, I think now I'd appreciate reading sort of something like that but, for me, I get more out of it if I can, like a book like that historical book, if you can relate to the places that they're talking about and it really, it brings it alive and it just makes it a wonderful thing to read, because I am interested in that type of work. There are several books here ummm that ... there's one *A Well Borer's Daughter* and an old lady, she wrote it, and it just tells about the early life and they shifted from, like they used to dig the wells by hand and that but her mother, everything got packed on the wagon and had its own particular spot and they had a cage under the wagon and the chickens were kept there. But it just, you know, sort of, it was probably something that she put down in words and you can just sort of really relate to it and, yeah, definitely books like that bring things history – alive.

I I don't know a lot of this history but I know this battle, is it called Battle ...?

R Battle Hole.

I Battle Hole, here near Jundah, like there was, as I understand it, a very tough frontier between white and black here going back more than a hundred years. Did you grow up knowing much of that kind of history, like the Aboriginal

resistance to white occupation and skirmishes back and forth? Was that ever part of ...?

R **History**

14:17:17:06 No, it was ... I never knew about that till, I suppose, I'd lived here for a long time because sort of everybody lived together. We sort of grew up, there was no difference between black or white and I don't know whether it was because in those days everybody had to live together or what it was but I think, you know, sort of to me if that had have been kept alive ummm the amount of tolerance, like it could have affected it, whereas to me it doesn't matter the colour of your skin, you're a person, and the skin doesn't affect you and I think if we dwell on things like that and keep going, harking back to them, ummm it's not going to let us all live harmoniously together these days and go forward together, which is the only way we can go. We can't live in the past. Ummm that happened before my family, or a lot of the families were, well I don't even know if there's any descendants now, ummm so we can't be held responsible just as the Aboriginal people can't be held responsible for the things that their ancestors done, so yeah.

I So you think that histories of conflict are best forgotten to stop them creating distrust in the present?

R 14:18:42:16 Yeah, Trish, I would say so. Ummm because there were horrible things, atrocities, happened on both sides. It wasn't just the white, it wasn't just the Aboriginals. Ummm and I think if people keep harking back to it, we just can't go forward. Like, by all means document your history ummm and that's part of history and we have to learn from that and go forward, and to me sort of people are living together no matter their race, and that's the way it should be. There shouldn't be any difference ummm, or perceived difference, or people treated differently, because that just creates disunity in our little communities. But, yes, I just look on, it doesn't matter who you are, you're sort of welcome to come in and have a cuppa and, yeah, I don't care, you know, sort of I'll look at the person and not the colour of their skin.



I Fair enough. Tell me how it was that you came to be living out here Julie. I guess I'm interested in where you and Ian met or whether you'd come to work out here.

R **Romance/Braided Channels**

14:19:56:02 Ummm I met my husband when he went to the Pastoral College in Longreach. Ummm I was only, I suppose, about 16 when I met him, 15 or 16, and they sort of went up there for two years, the courses ran there, and yeah like, they sort of have a group of, there was only, you know sort of males there at that stage, and they'd sort of have a group of six, I think it was, that they'd sort of work together in that group like a more or less a class in school, and I suppose I got friendly with the group that he was with. Ummm and they come from different walks of life and it was never actually a girlfriend/boyfriend thing on my part at that stage. We were just all friends. And then after he left the college, I suppose, he'd sort of send a card and a letter and one thing led to another and he was working, or sort of worked west of Windorah, and then at Cordillo Downs just over the Queensland/South Australian border in the top corner there, but to me the letters were, they could make a relationship really rosy and we, you'd sort of only see each other ... I never had a car ummm, wouldn't have been game to drive down there in those days anyway, and he would sort of come to Longreach and, to me, to build something on it sort of for the future, you couldn't do it by letters. There were no telephones out there so you'd only ring up the few times he'd get to Windorah, so I was very fortunate, he'd come up ummm, tried many jobs working around Longreach, like bridge on the railway, parks and gardens for the council, did work, casual work on properties around town, sort of two or three months, so yeah like the commitment was there on our part and we worked with it but I would never have got married, you know, though I know people do and did a lot in the old days just sort of through letters and things. To me it was a lasting partnership and we had to put the ground work in and, yeah, so we were sort of comfortable together and ummm we were both working. Then he got a job at the stock and station agents in Longreach – that's where I worked –

and his father, through fate, ended up buying, there's sort of two places where my family had originated from ummm yeah, and I suppose, we never expected to go on the land ummm and that he sort of just, it wasn't something that was part of the family. You know, once you get married you come back sort of thing. But, yeah, so once we got married I think we worked for about six months in Longreach and then we came to Coniston just next door to here. Windorah's its local town.

I So you say you two weren't expecting to end up on the land. Why was that? What was Ian's expectations for his future when you and he were getting together?

R 14:23:08:12 Ummm I suppose we never really talked about it ummm and that he was ... he never liked living in town and I sort of really admired him for what he gave up, like I know what he means now. He used to say that there were people everywhere, like you could never get away because our children experienced it when they went to boarding school, like trying to be alone, and I know that I've got to the stage now that if I go somewhere where there's a lot of people, like to a city or something, you just get sick of having people there all the time, which I couldn't understand at first. So, yeah, I really admire him for that. But as far as his expectations, he was just sort of going to ... we were still sort of trying to find a niche that he fitted into because, I suppose, he worked at the agents for about six months and found that really hard at first because he's a very shy person and having to sort of actually speak, but he was still working with stock. So, yeah, he was sort of settling, gradually settling in, but the land was his great love so ...

I Had he grown up ... had his family been pastoralists? You said his father had bought two neighbouring properties that had once been in your family but had Ian grown up with his father and mother as pastoralists?

R **Pioneers**

14:24:34:00 Yeah, his grandparents were also pioneers. Ummm they'd come up on the train, or his grandmother had come on the train, to Quilpie and then she put her worldly goods on a wagon, ummm horse and cart

wagon, and went out – that was just after they were married – and come out to a block called Bodalla just between Quilpie and Windorah, and they had to start from scratch as in the boundary fence and then build a home and all the things that go to make up a property, do all the fencing and waters. And then they sort of went on to develop another two properties from scratch so, yeah, his family on his mother's side, they had a cane farm at Mackay, and that was another case of pioneering. Her father had – he was a Scotchman – he'd come out from Scotland and had actually developed a cane farm from scratch so I suppose on both sides that pioneering spirit was there, ah and Ian's father, they owned ummm he and a brother, and after his mother was married, after they were married, his mother come out there and they were on a property about fifty mile away from here, so it's not sort of that far out of Ian's home stamping ground either, so we were lucky like that.

I So it wasn't as if Ian's family had had one property in the family for three or four generations and he was the son to next take it on. It wasn't that kind of thing?

R 14:26:14:10 No, there was never any expectation like that at all. He just had no expectation of even owning a property to go on the land ummm but when we sort of came here to these two places, they were sort of very run down but nobody had sort of been living here and there was sort of cattle had trampled all the fences and that, so yeah we sort of had a lot of rebuilding and stuff to do and sort of still waiting on the house part but, yeah, the property generates the income so the property has to be producing the money and that, and just as long as you're sort of comfortable and you've got a roof over your head that doesn't leak, ummm yeah, sort of your turn will come one day.

I So how did it actually happen that you two were here? Like did Ian's Dad after a time give it to you two? How, Ian's Dad having bought this property, and when you say 'bought', is it freehold, bought outright, or bought for long lease or ...?

R 14:27:19:18 No. There's only leasehold ummm and that but, yeah, you sort of pay the, I suppose, the owner for the lease and improvements or whatever ummm and then we were, we come down in '78 ummm and that and we moved up here in '86 but all the ... oh well, sort of like there were two brothers at home at Clifton, well then they all worked together to sort of get these places on their feet ummm and that, and then sort of we had the option of buying Coniston or, like they sort of had everything valued and that and then Horton Vale was a lot smaller block and that and we took it for the part of, oh well Ian took it as his sort of share of the family partnership and then we sort of purchased the stock, ah the cattle come with it, and then we sort of started from there. But yeah, it was sort of very hard ummm because you had, even though I'd worked in a stock and station office, just sort of the book work and everything. In those days there was no ... DPI like run a lot of workshops and that today and you didn't have any of that so you were more or less flying by the seat of your pants and sort of the guidance, to a certain extent, of his parents. Ummm so yeah.

I I haven't actually asked you, Julie, but had you had any education in a particular job? What was your background before you met Ian or you started work straight from school?

R **Women/Work/Land**

14:28:56:12 Yeah, I went straight from school. Ummm I worked for, it was called Primary, or Queensland Primary Producers, ummm and it was a stock and station agent. Ummm I enjoyed the work. I suppose it was the love that my grandmother had engendered, I suppose, to me. She'd given me that love of the land. Ummm and through her I'd sort of been on a horse since before I could, oh before I could walk probably, and I went through pony club in Longreach and that, so I was always interested in horses and we sort of went on, a friend of mine that we worked with, to actually run the pony club in town. I think we were only about ... we weren't old enough to be office bearers. One of my aunts come in and sort of, she was sort of more or less the senior person, but we'd been going riding with ten or fifteen children of a weekend, just around Longreach, so that love of the land was

always there and the love of horses. Ummm and I suppose I'd worked, the next place I worked at was a stock and station agent again with Australian Estates. But I just loved the work and you're, I suppose, mixing with people that you could relate to, so I think I was very lucky in sort of the childhood and youth that I had ummm before my marriage. I ... yeah, I just really enjoyed it and I wouldn't change anything for the world.

I And tell me the physical conditions of your life when you and Ian were first living, I don't know whether it was on this property, but in terms of things like power, telephone.

R **Physical Hardships/Gender Relations: Division of Labour**

14:30:41:00 Ummm Coniston, which is just next door, we come down here and I had a kerosene refrigerator, kerosene deep freeze, a 32-volt lighting plant that didn't work very often, ummm which it was only for lighting. There was sort of an old Mixmaster there which was, I suppose, the same as what my mother used on a 240-volt, but I could never get it to work on 32 so everything was done from scratch, like if you wanted to mince the meat, you had your old hand mincer. To make a cake or stuff like that, you didn't use a mixer, you just used the old wooden spoon trick. I'd never done a lot of cooking before I was married ummm, like in those days I suppose not many of my age group did, so I sort of found it really hard to sort of be cooking for sort of for about five or six of us ummm and some of the offerings I offered up, one brother-in-law was highly insulted at my first attempt at pastry and I never tried to make pastry again for about 15 years. But their mother was a beautiful cook and I was sort of still learning. My husband, I must admit, he could cook a lot better than what I could and that they'd be cooking out in the camps and that. So I just found it really hard. Ummm coping with no telephone, we didn't have radios in that day. If I wanted to contact my family, I'd have to drive about 14 miles to the property next door, which we'd go there twice a week. Our mail was left up there. We never even had a mail man that come in. We'd sort of have to, one of us would have to drive over and get the mail and, I suppose, yeah, I never ... I'd been surrounded by people and a close family ummm all that time and I found it hard because,

with Ian and his brothers working, it was considered to be the woman's place in the home and I would have loved to have got out on and about the place and actually helped out there. But, yeah, I was there to cook and clean and that was the place that women seemed to take in those days. There weren't ...

I So what date are we talking? Is this late seventies?

R **Women/Work: Correspondence**

14:33:11:14 Yeah, late seventies, early eighties. I suppose, during the dry time in '82, I suppose, I helped out a bit on the place but it wasn't till we came up here that, you know, sort of there was ... there wasn't a lot of money. There wasn't any money, and there was just Ian and I and the kids and a sheep yard that we didn't have enough dogs or vehicles to patch up the holes in. Ummm so, yeah, we were sort of just starting from scratch and the kids and I would work and I'd be teaching in amongst it, so you'd sort of drop the school to go and help out. But then I was lucky, too, that Ian had come through correspondence. He understood the papers and with the oldest two, ummm they were virtually the same papers he'd worked on so if I went out with the kids and we gave him a hand, then he'd come in the house and he'd actually, he'd teach maths and social studies. But these days nobody can sort of understand the papers to actually come in and take over from us because they just keep changing the way that they teach things and it just makes it really hard ummm for somebody to help. 14:34:25:20