

Recorded: 26 March 2021

Interviewer: Sue Johnston

Abstractor: Sue Johnston

File 01 (25 March 2021)

- 0:00 Introduction- GRAEME ROBERTSON STEWART.
- 1:04 Recording agreement
- 1:49 Born in CROMWELL. Lived mostly in BANNOCKBURN.
FAMILY BACKGROUND. Father – JAMES DUNCAN STEWART. Born in SCOTLAND.
1927 came to NZ. Explains. Reference: EMPLOYMENT; RAILWAYS; GLENORCHY; GOLD & SHEELITE MINING.
[Date*] – married – moved to SCOTLAND. 1942 – returned to NZ. 1945 Moved to BANNOCKBURN, ran
GENERAL STORE with wife until his death, [Date*].
- 3:14 GRAEME’S mother – MARJORIE GWENNETH STEWART [nee ROBERSTON], BORN CROMWELL,
Grew up in BANNOCKBURN. [FAMILY BACKGROUND: [Date*]. DAUGHTER OF ROBERT ROBERTSON
& LUCY MARGARET GRAHAM]. Explains. Reference: EMPLOYMENT; HOUSEWORK.
- 4:05 GRAEME’S early years in BANNOCKBURN. Describes. Reference: EDUCATION, (TEACHERS – BRIAN ST
JOHN,REG REG GARRETT), BANNOCKBURN SCHOOL opened 1871- closed 1971.
- 6:52 Original STEWART family HOME. Built 1880. Describes. [GRAEME married MARY CAROLYN ANN CROOKS in
[Date*]: Old house demolished in 1988.
New STEWART HOME – railway house purchased from RANFURLY 1988. Describes purchase process,
section included, difficulty selling unwanted section. Reference: KING’S HOUSE REMOVALS.
- 10:00 BANNOCKBURN of GRAEME’S childhood. Describes. Reference: CLYDE DAM; WATER SCHEME; SEWERAGE;
SUBDIVISIONS; CLIMATE.
- 11.38 HORTICULTURE – early BANNOCKBURN. GRAEME & brothers worked in ORCHARDS. Describes.
Reference: FRUIT; PRUNING; WAGES; BOTTLING; PRESERVING; OTAGO BOYS HIGH SCHOOL.
- 14:31 GRAEME’S memory of father (JAMES) - more generous than his mother- (MARJORIE). Explains. Reference:
GENERAL STORE.
- 15:22 GRAEME’S brothers – ALISTAIR MCDONALD STEWART. Explains. Reference: EDUCATION; AUSTRALIA.
GORDON MCALPINE STEWART. [CENTRAL OTAGO DISTRICT COUNCILLOR for 21 years.
FORMER CENTRAL OTAGO COUNCILLOR, CROMWELL COMMUNITY BOARD MEMBER. REAL ESTATE
AGENT] LIVES IN BANNOCKBURN.
- 16:18 SUNDAYS in BANNOCKBURN- No family TRANSPORT. Describes. Reference: PRESBYTERIAN; SKATING;
SLEDGING; BIRDNESTING; WALKING the HILLS.
- 18:16 SPORTS – explained. Reference: CRICKET, RICHIE CLARKE; ST JOSEPH’S; ALEXANDRA; CROMWELL;
TARRAS.
- 19:40 SECONDARY SCHOOL – OTAGO BOYS HIGH SCHOOL 1964. Explains. Reference: PRIVATE BOARDING;
SUBJECTS; SPORTS; UNIVERSITY TRAMPING CLUB;
- 25:00 1969- Left SCHOOL. 1970 - started a CIVIL ENGINEERING COURSE with the MINISTRY of WORKS IN
DUNEDIN.

End of File 01

File - 02

- 0:00 Explains. Reference: ENTRY ATTRIBUTES; LAND SURVEYING; INVESTIGATION; DRILLING; HYDRAULOGY; DUNEDIN'S SOUTHERN & NORTHERN MOTORWAYS.
- 2:56 1974 – Offered job on CLYDE DAM PROJECT for 3 months. 1971 – 1974 SURVEYING IRRIGATION SCHEMES. Explains. Reference: WAITAKI; MANIOTOTO; MANUHERIKIA.
- 5:12 Helped upgrade survey trigs around CENTRAL OTAGO. MINISTRY of WORKS courses every year. Explained. Reference: TAIERI; CROMWELL GORGE; LUGGATE; LASER GEODIMETERS; AERIAL PHOTOGRAPHY.

End of File 02

File 03

- 0:00 NZ CERTIFICATE OF ENGINEERING – 5 years long, GRAEME completed the first 3 years. Explains. Reference: ENGINEERING GRADUATES.
1974 – attended a 3 month SURVEY COURSE at TRENTHAM. Explains.
- 2:35 1974 – GRAEME ENGINEERING OFFICER on DRILL RIG in CROMWELL GORGE. Explains. Reference: SURVEYING; MAPPING.
1976 – DUNEDIN DISTRICT SURVEYS – MAPPING in KAWARAU; UPPER CLUTHA VALLEY; CLYDE DAM.
1980 – MAPPING completed. Offered job investigating potential DAM SITES in CLUTHA & KAWARAU. Explains. Reference: GEOLOGY; LUGGATE; QUEENSBURY; NEVIS BLUFF.
1985 - 1986 – COVENANT put on KAWARAU RIVER to preserve it. DRILLING CONTRACT stopped.
End of 1989 – NATIONAL GOVERNMENT needed CLYDE DAM finished. 1993 - INVESTIGATION with DRILLING UNITS required. Explained. Reference: LANDSLIDE CONCERNS; LANDSLIDE IN ITALY [DIGA DEL VAJONT DAM OCTOBER 9 1963]; STABILISE; DRAIN; BUTTRESSES; DOWNERS; ROYDEN THOMPSON.
- 4:10 1993 – 1994 – LAKE DUNSTAN filled over 14 months.
DAM DESIGNER – MURRAY GILLAN, found Graeme new DRILLING jobs. Explain. Reference: RIG to RAKAIA; HIGHBANK POWER STATION; MANAPOURI; DEEP COVE; TRANSPORT; WEST ARM; FIORDLANDER; DEER; ROLY HARREX; RUSSELL JONES.
- 5:15 1994 - CROMWELL GORGE PROJECT finished. GRAEME started working for MCNEILL DRILLING. OWNER HAMISH PEARSON before GRAEME took over. Explained. Reference: ALEXANDRA HEAD OFFICE; ENGINEERS; GEOLOGISTS.
- 7:58 MCNEILL DRILLING PROJECTS – 21 year involvement. Described. Reference: VIADUCT ARTHUR'S PASS; MACRAES; MINERAL EXPLORATION; PILINGS; DRILLING. WORK CONDITIONS.
- 10:05 CROMWELL GORGE PROJECT – WORK CONDITIONS. Described. Reference: Covered RIGS, HARD WINTERS, LONG HOURS; SENIOR ENGINEER – BRIAN HAARE. Described. Reference: UNIONS; SAFETY GEAR; WORKFORCE LOST; WAGES.
- 16:47 MCNEILL DRILLING – like “COMING HOME” TO GRAEME. Explains. Reference: FARMERS, CONDITIONS, CONTACTS.
GRAEME & WIFE MARY, WORKED on CROMWELL GORGE PROJECT. [MARY - DRAUGHTSWOMAN]
Offered a HOUSE to purchase from MINISTRY OF WORKS. Explains. Reference: PRICE; CROMWELL.
- 18:37 MCNEILL DRILLING PROJECTS – INVESTIGATIONS - explains. Reference: WAITAKI NORTH BANK TUNNEL;

SOUTH BANK PROJECT AQUA KUROW; OPPOSITION; GOLDMINING L & M MINING; NOKOMAI;
EARNLSLEUGH; GLENORE ISLAND; HINDEN; OTUREHUA.

19:47 Finished with MCNEILL DRILLING 23 DECEMBER 2015. Started WORKING for SOUTHDRILL 6 JANUARY 2016. INVERCARGILL based firm, WATER BORES. GRAEME a CONSULTANT NOW.

22:47 GRAEME'S LAST WORDS – explain. Reference: enjoyed WORK, rewarding, great career, management opportunities.

End of File 03

File 04 (26 March 2021)

0:00 Introduction- GRAEME ROBERTSON STEWART.

1:03 Recording agreement

1:36 Explains grand uncle, JAMES GRAHAM, ran BANNOCKBURN STORE from 1914. Owned by JOLLY'S, CROMWELL. Store open and shut over 10 year period, reflecting supply and demand. Grandfather [ROBERT ROBERTSON GRAHAM], bought store in 1925 off the JOLLY'S. Owned until 1945.

2:30 GRAEME'S father [JAMES DUNCAN STEWART] returned from SHEELITE MINES, GLENORCHY - bought store in 1945 – ran until death, [Date*].

2:53 Describes stock in store – needle to an anchor as reported in newspaper article. Reference: GROCERIES; HARDWARE; BOOTS; HABERDASHERY; CLOTHING: WHEAT; GRAIN: BULK POTATOES. Describes peeling runners off seed potatoes before selling. Family ate what didn't sell.

4:03 Explains area served by store – BANNOCKBURN, LOWBURN, RIPPOVALE. Farmers came to chat and buy stock. Ordered in what not in store. Explains father, aged 69 years, ran store as hobby, business dwindling. Left store to GRAEME and older brother GORDON. Other brother [Alistair] not interested, saw it as a financial liability. Describes RESTORATION of store, EARTHQUAKE PROOFING – steel walls built within stone walls.

5:40 Explains store built in 1880 as cooperative – three people subleased - GROCER, BAKER and BUTCHER owned by shop in CROMWELL. Business struggled for number of years. 1885 JAMES HORNE took over store, until 1945. Sold supplies to miners. Reference: BOOTS; PICKS; SHOVELS.

7:00 Describes working in store after school. Compulsory to help out stacking shelves and other chores – store looked prosperous if shelves full. Describes in summer scrubbing tar off wooden floor with butter and SWARFEGA - TAR removed, but floor was slippery and smelt.

8:28 Describes poking sticks into a drum of TAR discovered on way home from primary school - friends and brothers played chasing with tarred sticks. Describes TAR in hair – father disgusted, dragged into bathroom, hair washed with warm melted butter.

9:30 Explains PAYMENT of goods from store. Some customers paid weekly, STATION OWNERS waited until lamb and wool cheques came in. Father sent out monthly accounts. Wonders how family was able to send three boys to boarding school on their income.

10:20 Explains why business declined, 1971 – people more affluent, had cars, shopped at FOUR SQUARE in CROMWELL. Father happy to wind business down. Some items from BANNOCKBURN STORE went to the GENERAL STORE/ MUSEUM in OTUREHUA. Store has been leased to a variety of local businesses – helps recoup cost of building repairs and upgrade.

End of File 04

File 05 (26th March 2021)

- 0:00 Introduction – recording agreement
- 0:34 Explains first hearing of THE NEVIS. Groceries from the STEWART family's BANNOCKBURN STORE taken over THE NEVIS Hill. TEDDY LAWRENCE BANNOCKBURN truck carrier and other old trucks delivered groceries. First trip to The Nevis when 12 years old. GILL and IVY CAMPBELL - managers of CRAIG ROY STATION shopped in Cromwell FRIDAY nights, had tea at STEWART'S. IVY needed help with garden for 1-2 weeks. Learnt difference between plants and weeds.
- 1:57 Describes GILL CAMPBELL - farmer / musterer dressed in heavy suede coat, heading out to work with horse and dogs.
- 2:32 Describes second trip to THE NEVIS, aged 16 – 17. Remote. PRESSER in SHEARING GANG on CRAIG ROY STATION. Lived in huts for 1 week to 10 days. Unpleasant job – last to finish in shed. Describes trip out of THE NEVIS in AUSTIN CAMBRIDGE car with GARY SMITH, following wool truck with HARRY AINSLIE and MAURICE TURNER down SMITH'S PINCH. Truck had poor brakes, took short cut.
- 4:06 Describes next trip to THE NEVIS - GOAT SHOOTING near THE NEVIS BRIDGE. GOATS plentiful. GOLDMINING – early passion, searched down edges of the river. Camped in GORGE with friends when had own vehicle, aged 20 – 21 years. Describes camping one CHRISTMAS EVE, waking up on CHRISTMAS DAY to 2 inches of snow. Access to old NEVIS SCHOOL across river. SCHOOL shifted from SCHOOL HOUSE FLAT to CARRICK STATION in 1912. Describes cleaning out birds, lice from the SCHOOL, putting in beds and bunks. Very good ACCOMMODATION – COAL RANGE. Still used on CARRICK STATION.
- 6:04 Explains brother GORDON, REAL ESTATE AGENT (CROMWELL) had section for sale in THE NEVIS, on behalf of BROWN FAMILY. Advertised for 2 years, no interest. Negotiated price – section purchased. Describes section empty except for stone wall gate way and surrounds, corrugated iron hen house. Camped on section with family for several years. Recalls one CHRISTMAS holidays, wife MARY, working night shift at MILLBROOK, camping alone with children, JAMES and ESME. Heavy rain all clothes wet, drove home to BANNOCKBURN, dried clothes, returned to THE NEVIS.
- 8:08 Explains offer from L & M MINING to sell STEWART family, the ACCOMMODATION HUT (sleeps 6) at SCHOOL HOUSE CREEK. HUT previously in SHOTOVER at WHITTEN'S CREEK, moved by BARRY SARGEANT to MARK COLEMAN'S MINE in LOWER NEVIS at SCHOOL HOUSE CREEK. Price negotiated – HUT purchased.
- 9:42 Describes engaging JOHNNY SYMES, (ALEXANDRA) and BREEN'S CRANE to move the HUT 5-6km.
Moved to Stewart's land in THE NEVIS. PILES already down, shift done in a few hours. Men did great job. Describes finding empty bottle of whiskey on top shelf in HUT - still upright after move.
- 10:44 Describes IMPROVEMENTS made to HUT. Reference: SEPTIC TANK, WASTE WATER DISPOSAL, INSULATED. Moved MINING ARTEFACTS from BANNOCKBURN SHEDS to THE NEVIS section. Recalls drilling on farm in WAITAKI VALLEY - 2004, seeing HALF YARD CONCRETE BUCKET and PILE SPIKES in a paddock. Farmer happy to have them removed - no charge. Recalls father, JAMES DUNCAN STEWART, worked on THE WAITAKI DAM for 12 months in 1930's. Workers were allowed to work for 12 months, then had to leave.
- 12:50 Explains criteria for collection of MINING MEMORABILIA. Anything goes. SCRAP DEALERS in CROMWELL (JEFF CONNELLY) and ALEXANDRA, helpful. Explains payment.
Gathered abandoned MINING ARTICLES from edge of KAWARAU RIVER before LAKE DUNSTAN filled. Regretted not salvaging whole dredge below GIBRALTAR ROCK in 1974, now lost forever. Local FARMERS helpful, happy to gift items for relocation to THE NEVIS.
- 15:00 Explains CELEBRATING 150 YEARS of GOLD MINING in THE NEVIS - 2012. Applied for and got funds for celebrations over 3 days, estimated 1500-1800 attended. Reference: REPLICA of OLD NEVIS POST OFFICE BUILT by HENRY FLUKSA, POSTAGE STAMP, NEVIS POSTCARDS, BLACKSMITH, PHOTOS, FAMILY HISTORY, GOLD PANNING, NEWSPAPER NEVIS BUSTER, VIDEO INTERVIEW WITH LEX MCLEAN & SAM GRAHAM.

- 18:52 Describes setting up 40 FOOT CONTAINER clad in CORRUGATED IRON to store and display items collected over years, many previously stored behind BANNOCKBURN STORE. BUILDER, HENRY FLUKSA, put in DOORS and WINDOWS. Recycled T & G, ROOFING IRON and KAURI from BANNOCKBURN STORE.
Public interested and supportive, offers of items for COLLECTION.
- 21:40 Describes moving WORKERS' ACCOMMODATION from BEN NEVIS STATION to section. Owners of STATION, PHILIP and MOIRA BRAMWELL, needed building removed within 10 days. Checked out by BUILDING INSPECTOR, minor strengthening of roof required. TREVOR JONES REMOVAL, QUEENSTOWN, jacked up building and moved to THE NEVIS TOWNSHIP.
Explains waiting 6 months after winter over and RESOURCE CONSENT granted, before building placed on section.
- 26:00 Explains during 150 YEAR CELEBRATIONS of THE NEVIS, families with connections to area compiled and set up displays. These are now displayed in new building with copies of PAPERS PAST. Building is locked, but happy to show people around.
- 28:04 Describes changes to THE NEVIS noted over years. Little TRAFFIC in 1963. Poor ROAD CONDITIONS. Present day many 4 WHEEL DRIVE VEHICLES, MOTORBIKES, PUSHBIKES.
Counted 70 cars from 7am to 11am recently. Describes riding part (29km), of GUTBUSTER BIKE RACE from GARSTON to BANNOCKBURN. Son JAMES completed whole RACE (65km).
- 30:43 Describes spending LOCKDOWN in THE NEVIS in 2020. Plenty of FIREWOOD, FUEL and BOOKS.
SUNDAY NIGHTS at 5pm, met wife MARY, at top o hill for tea. Brought in supplies for coming week. Neighbours for company, KEN and ANN ADDIE from RANGIORA. Chatted regularly - keeping 2 metres apart. Enjoyed LOCKDOWN – walking up and down hills, gullies, ridges and fossicking along river banks. Not keen to return home. Very few vehicles driving through. One driver had face covered.
- 34:00 Describes special character and appeal of THE NEVIS – remote, yet only 40 minutes from home, good ACCOMMODATION, GOLF COURSE, BOWLING GREEN, project to work on, ability to walk around countryside with farmers' permission, explore with METAL DETECTOR, HISTORY of area.
- 35: 10 Explains future of area should be good, if DOC allow grazing on locked up block – FIRE HAZARD if not grazed.
Describes hope for future - more TOURISTS travelling through in 4 WHEEL DRIVES, MOTORBIKES and PUSHBIKES. Set up shop at gate selling SCONES and COFFEE.
Explains MINING thing of past, LICENCES available, but DOC requirements hard to navigate.
QUEENSTOWN TOURIST OPERATORS shown interest - contributions to upkeep of road would be necessary if traffic increases. Major work needs doing on UPPER NEVIS ROAD. COUNCIL allowed oiling and eco sealing of road outside property.
Recalls driving a XD FALCON UTE through THE NEVIS years ago, not possible now, fords rutted out.
- 38:53 Describes rescuing vehicles and people stranded – expenses involved for BREAKDOWN TRUCK from QUEENSTOWN. Many see ROAD WARNING SIGNS as CHALLENGE and drive through anyway.
- 40:53 Explains opening of THE NEVIS CEMETERY. PLOTS can be purchased. Bought first new plot on NORTH SIDE, warmer than SOUTH SIDE.
- 41:46 **End of File 05**

*Dates removed for privacy and security reasons. For enquiries related to genealogy, please apply directly to the Central Otago Oral History Project manager.