

Recorded: 25th April and 5th June 2021

Interviewer: Jeanette Whittaker

Abstracter: Liz Holland/ Jeanette Whittaker

The time codes in this abstract summary have been recorded based on the original audio files. Please note that the times may differ for the online audio due to the original files being combined into one file. However, the order of content in this abstract below will match the online audio.

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

File 01-

00:30 Recording agreement.

02.06 Born in INVERCARGILL.
Mother, b Reefton, ELVIRA MABEL GREEN,
Father, b Dunedin, JOHN WYNDHAM BEGG
Sisters – PAMELA LINDSAY BEGG, deceased (m Constable) –b Invercargill
HELEN PRICILLA SARAH BEGG (m Kidd) – b Invercargill
PETER ALEXANDER BEGG b Invercargill
Grandparents-all but father’s father died before he was born.

06.47 **EARLY YEARS**
MOKORETA VALLEY – WYNDHAM STATION -42,000 acres. 1936 parents took over farm from grandfather. Primitive house, own hydroelectric power plant. House 1880, cold, simple no hot water. Food –porridge with salt, mutton, spuds (potatoes), vegetable garden, mother a baker.
Unprocessed basic food. Natural fibre clothes – wool and cotton. Went to school with tie on first day –got nickname “Jolly Beggar”.
Chores –washed dishes, helped on farm. DESCRIBES

12.17 Grandfather influenced him – Philosopher, fascinating person. Died when Ian was 18. JOHN CAMPBELL BEGG- co-founder of BEVERLY BEGG CONSERVATORY, DUNEDIN.
Older sister bossy; second sister closer relationship; can’t remember conflict in the house. Never hit.
Discussed things that needed doing.
Family history based on Presbyterian Church of Scotland. Great Great Grandfather signatory to “Disruption Document” 1843 –split church in two. “Free Church” founded Dunedin City. His son [Great Grandfather] came to Dunedin, accountant and preacher. Ian attended church with parents and Bible Class. DESCRIBES

19.25 **EDUCATION**
RECALLS. Attended JOHN MCGLASHAN COLLEGE – great Uncle, JAMES BEGG, one of founding director of college. Influential businessman, DUNEDIN –FARMERS MUTAL INSURANCE, Frozen Meat Trade

- 4 generations of family attended the school.
Primary- MOKORETA SCHOOL – 9km, mother drove them. Boarding School at 11yrs.
Mother a teacher – some correspondence school for siblings- they boarded at St Johns Invercargill; sisters to Columba College at Form 1.
Favourite subjects: Biology, Physics, Agriculture course
Boarding school at 11 – thrown in “deep end”. 25-30 boys in one dormitory. Found it very challenging. Caning was common. Prefects could also give corporate punishment.
- 26.36 SPORT: Hated team games. Had to play rugby. Got medical certificate through fake sore knee. Likes skiing, motorsport.
Left school second year 5th, about 17. Failed School Certificate first time.
- 29.41 **INITIAL EMPLOYMENT**
Returned to farm employed by father. Some conflict on how to farm. Brother not interested in farm – worked in retail. Sisters not interested in farm.
Did all the jobs on the farm and gained great skills. Had married couples living on farm.
Father had trouble with labour – living conditions very primitive. Single men working on farm- has more positive memories.
RECALLS. Mother found the isolation difficult. From Christchurch, intelligent, had MA in Latin (Hons) ; met dad when he was at Lincoln College, Christchurch. Visited a Psychiatrist in Dunedin.
- 37.48 **ENTERTAINMENT**
No TV or radio, no appliances, parents read a lot, battery operated radio; made dams in creek; climbed trees. Didn't feel bored.
WYNDHAM on Friday night. Salvation Army Band marching up street. Strong Brethren group preaching on corners. In 1960s – to Gore for the East Gore Dances. Girls sitting one side, boys standing other side. Pretty girls asked to dance. Ballroom Dancing. “East Gore Stroll” as many couldn't dance. DESCRIBES.
- 41.45 **OTHER EMPLOYMENT**
1983 moved to CROMWELL. Restless as 18/19 year old and went to Invercargill as house barman at Grand Hotel. Father stopped that as he wasn't 21. Got job cold calling for selling photographic portraits.
Sold smallgoods for 3 months. Went back to farm. Away 6 months altogether. Had fun. DESCRIBES.
- 45.46 **MARRIAGE + FAMILY**
Married at 23. DOROTHY SMITH, from farm near his. She asked him to formal (dance) at Gore High School. She was 18. Dux of Gore High- did not complete her nursing. Married at Wyndham. Has 8mm Movie of their wedding. Lived on the farm.
1953 built new farm house, Ian and Dorothy lived in old house.
1973 built new cottage on farm.
- 3 children:
Jeremy Campbell
Juliette Estelle
Annabel Jane

Went to MOKORETA School. Daughters went to Logan Park High School, Son to John McGlashan.

1979 marriage failed – an upheaval. Children moved to Dunedin. Had holidays on the farm.

50.40 Finish File 01.

File 02

00.00 Interviewer identification

02.11 Describes his earliest memories of CROMWELL. Remembers it being a small community with strong connections to GOLD MINING with old established families

03.28 Recalls travelling through as a child 6-7years old, on the way to WANAKA, with his parents. Mother, ELVIRA MABEL BEGG nee GREEN and Father, JOHN WYNDHAM BEGG.

05.16 Explains what made him decide to come to CROMWELL as an adult. Talks about the actions of Prime Minister MULDOON fast tracking the building of the CLYDE DAM in 1982. One of the biggest projects of its kind in NZ at the time. The impact of by-passing the consultation process and the effect that had on the community.

06.15 Moved to district in 1983. The Dam was about 10% into construction. Fascinated by what was happening to the community, the upheaval to the families and the disruptive effect of the politics of the times.

07.09 Talks about the infrastructure for building the dam in place and the workforce to make that happen. Very keen to be in the district to watch everything unfold and to be part of what was happening.

08.25 Explains in more detail of his earlier interest in CENTRAL OTAGO and why he was motivated to move here more permanently.

09.35 Describes how he was able to finance his move to the district by selling part of the family farm.

10.35 February 1983 went to ALEXANDRA to enquire about orchard land for sale. A real estate agent JEREMY ELRIDGE advised him to look for land in CROMWELL. Only one real estate agent in CROMWELL, COFFE HOLMES (unsure of how name was spelt). Looked at properties in RIPPOVALE Road, LORD HAMILTON'S Orchard.

12.24 Agent told him about a remote property on CORNISH POINT. Place rich in mining history. Originally owned and set up as an apricot orchard in 1963 by the OLDS brothers, PETER and MICHAEL. Purchased 72 acres including 38-40 acres which would be flooded when the lake was flooded.

14.11 Describes the significant mining history on the land, DREDGE TAILINGS

Recording was interrupted by a telephone ringing at this point and was stopped

File 03

- 00.17 Interview continues with IAN describing the significant evidence of gold mining on the property he purchased in '83 at CORNISH POINT. HERRINGBONE TAILINGS and old MINER'S HUT. (photos supplied)
- 01.37 Describes his fascination with the phenomenon of a town about to disappear under water. Bought a canoe and spent many hours paddling around the river watching the water level rise and documenting its process. Mentions the loss of the old bridge and the discussions held about the direction the highway into CROMWELL would take. (photos supplied)
- 03.26 Old roads were narrow, railway lines, CLYDE RAIL TERMINAL. Last stop was CROMWELL. Railway had been closed down before the dam was built.
- 04.23 Community in CROMWELL was small and close knit. Families inter married. Lots of discussion about the lack of compensation. Level of negativity amongst people of CROMWELL at the time was huge. Nobody thought the building of the dam was a good thing.
- 05.54 Describes the three hotels in OLD CROMWELL TOWN, " top, middle and bottom pubs." VICTORIA ARMS HOTEL, the top pub and only one still surviving from before the dam was built. Old swing bridge connecting CORNISH POINT and OLD CROMWELL TOWN across the river. Not part of the highway, condemned. Documented it being removed by bull dozer. (photos supplied).
- 07.58 Recalls some of more prominent people in community. KEVIN JACKSON being the best orchardist in the district. Met the challenge of losing his original homestead and large proportion of his orchard at the time. PERRIAM family, large farming holdings in the district since the 1880's.
- 09.32 Details the conversation with a stock agent after moving to CROMWELL about land for sale from the PERRIAM FARM in 1985. Explains how the sale enabled CHARLIE and BOB PERRIAM to plan their future and cement them as successful business men in the CROMWELL area.
- 11.45 Describes the development of area now known as PISA MOORINGS. (photos supplied)
- 12.35 Resumes talking about the political upheaval which occurred during the building of the dam and his recollection that it was driven by the MULDOON Government at the time. Contracting of German company ZUBLIMN WILLISMDON created bitter rivalries between their contractors and local MINISTRY OF WORKS employees. Describes situation as "scary" at first with fighting in the pubs. Belief that there was deliberate ploy on the part of Government to highlight the hold of unions at the time.
- 15.32 Lengthy delays in the building of the dam.

File 04

- 00.34 Continues with the hold ups with commissioning the dam. Talks about terminating the project. Fault line discovered beneath CLUTHA RIVER. Discovery of potential slips as water levels rose. Drainage tunnels built. Build took 10 years longer than originally estimated.
- 02.43 Lake took 8 years to fill. Community helpless in relation to delays.
- 04.22 Township of 120 years demolished. Relocation of town to the now CROMWELL MALL. Site was like a desert, with no infrastructure in place.
- 05.22 Government Planners made decision re site. Business people at the time lobbied for town to be near the highway as opposed to being by lake front.
- 06.23 Placement of highway from CLYDE through to CORNISH POINT with bridge across river dismissed due to geological issues in the gorge. Belief those issues still exist and mentions some engineers at present believe may impact the new cycle way in the future.
- 07.19 Township of CROMWELL was blank canvas. Massive undertaking in regards to infrastructure. Fascinated by the local politics at the time and the changes unfolding.
- 08.35 Completion of dam brought fears of demise of town. Mass exodus of business owners. Number of buildings empty and negativity about the future. Buildings were selling at 1/3 of their GV. Felt responsible to invest in the future of the district. Purchased buildings in the mall.
- 09.59 Talks about current Master Plan happening in CROMWELL at present. Explains why he believes Mall building should remain. Not because of his own personal interest. Current owners should be more proactive in trying to make things better for community.
- 11.56 Current buildings reflect the architectural mores of the 1980's urban design. "A snapshot in time" Hopes that if buildings saved future generations may appreciate that aspect.