

Interview Abstract



Interviewee: Lesley Forbes

Interviewer: Suzanne MacKenzie

Date recorded: 23 February 2026

Abstractor: Margaret Bennie and Suzanne MacKenzie

File 01

0:02:2.42	Introduction.
0.43:3:16	Childhood in Alexandra, schooling and activities. Boarding school in Dunedin aged 12.
03:16:5.20	Father Stan Robertson – owned garage in Hampden. Bought Bendigo Hotel in Alexandra in partnership with Alan Pitches. Mother Kathleen (Rene) Cumberbatch. Scottish heritage.
05:20:7:20	Describes life at Columba College. Always wanted to be a nurse. Decided on psychiatric nursing. Recalls training at Cherry Farm Psychiatric Hospital near Dunedin.
07:20:9:14	Describes life at Cherry Farm for patients and staff. Also did part of training at Orokonui and Seacliff Hospitals.
09:15:9:59	Describes social life in Dunedin in the 1960s.
10:04:11:12	Explains the types of therapy used to help people with different mental illnesses. Alcohol addiction also treated at Cherry Farm.
11:18:14:55	Married Don Forbes. Moved to Cardrona. Worked for John and Mary Lee on their farm. Mentions the development of the ski field and snow farm on Lees property at Cardrona. Bought 35 acres in Middlemarch. Don worked as a fencer and Leslie worked on the farm. Describes community life in Middlemarch with 2 children. Moved to Balclutha for 9 months. Don worked as a Stock Agent for Reid Farmers.
14:57:17:49	Moved to Ōwaka for 4 years. Leslie worked for Dr David Cook.

	Remembers busy life with 4 children and part timework as a nurse learning new skills.
17:49:20:59	Moved to Cromwell. Worked at Cromwell Hospital. Dunedin Hospital Board planning mental health services because Cherry Farm to be closed. Leslie on working group planning Psychiatric services for Central Otago. Describes work needed to start Central Otago Mental Health Services. Sets up Mental Health Service in Cromwell with Toni Anderson and Anita Liggett.
21:00:23:28	Recalls early days of Central Otago Health Services.
26:00:34:35	Instrumental in starting RAPE CRISIS in Cromwell with police. Started the Youth Group in Cromwell. Describes youth group activities. Successful with application for funding from Central Lakes Trust.
34:14:35:22	Presented paper at Medical Conference in Australia with psychiatrist Tariq Mahmood. Also published in Medical Journal. Topic – How Mental Health Services function in New Zealand.
37:00:40:20	Talks about her hobby of gardening and mentions the Mental Health Act 1972 which made clinical staff duly authorised officers which meant staff were on call. 2 people always on call – describes what this involved.
40:20:53:53	Describes how the Mental Health system has changed: Addiction, anxiety and the effect of COVID.

End of File 01