

Mr Eric Tweedale – Oral History Interview Log

11 October 2018

Time	Subject
	DISC 1
00:00:00	Introduction
00:00:27	Family background – Rochdale (Manchester), Lancashire – family were millworkers – 1924 parents decided to emigrate to Australia for a better life – settled at 35 Mary St, Merrylands near Guildford
00:02:31	Attended Guildford Public School ('GPS education') – then high school in Parramatta – memories of how Merrylands looked during Inter-war period - passed first Merrylands RSL Club en route to and from Merrylands Station – family lived at Mary St from 1924 to 1966
00:03:50	Tough conditions economically as early as late 1920s – father had difficulty finding a job after migrating and became a storeman at Arnott's Biscuit factory, Homebush – Conditions in Rochdale and reasons for leaving – local roads in Merrylands mostly unsealed
00:06:58	Attends Parramatta Intermediate High School but no sports programme then – 1930s Depression era memories of general hardship in the area – father worked part time at Arnott's because they reduced staff hours rather than sacking people – but happy childhood with much freedom, open space, few cars and settled area surrounded by farms and brickpits
00:10:22	Describes shops at Merrylands
00:12:39	Recalls seeing first electric train from Guildford Public School going past on railway line from Granville to Liverpool circa late 1920s
00:13:15	Guildford Public School – happy memories – barefoot boys – kids with patched clothing – tough times due to Depression era but learnt good values from lack of money – children made own fun without money – Christmas one present not many
00:16:13	Friendly Societies – parents involved with Manchester Unity - popular locally as provided social outlet – few home comforts as houses were basic at this period – no hot water system or indoor toilet
00:18:20	Recalls walks to Prospect Hill with friends and swimming in Lower Prospect Canal on hot days
00:19:37	Left school aged 14 with Intermediate Certificate and got job at Anthony Hordern's in the city – earnt 12/6 in first pay packet
00:21:08	Sense of community despite hardship of Depression years – people knew neighbours and helped each other – helped poor neighbour in Mary St with large family collecting cow pats from Fairfield/Yennora area with

	horse and cart and then hawking them locally to make money
00:23:33	Scholastic ability – spent three years at Anthony Hordern’s then applied to join Police force – advised to learn typing and shorthand so attended Metropolitan Business College – unsuccessful with Police but through MBC gained a good job at Shell Oil Company and remained there for rest of his career – Shell excellent employer supported him through War service and football career
00:27:14	Sees life clearly divided into sections – World War II and aftermath completely changed life as it had been before – Merrylands RSL Younger Set
00:29:52	Declaration of World War II – father broke down after hearing news on radio – had served in WWI for British Army in Lancashire Fusiliers in Middle East – developed bronchial complaint and died of TB aged just 56
00:33:19	Merrylands RSL Club building – first members were WWI veterans including Alexander Tweedale (Eric’s father) – during World War II they formed a Voluntary Defence Corps (VDC) – VDC weekend exercises at Prospect
00:36:39	Merrylands RSL figures 1930s-40s – Les Mitchell (President/Chair), Sep. Smith (real estate agent), Joe Smith, Mr Davies (barber), Bill Heckenberg, Albert Woods and others – introduced RSL Younger Set which undertook fundraising – Merrylands drill hall
00:39:40	World War II service – applied to join Navy but had to wait four months for call up – served four years as convoy signalman – training at Flinders Naval Depot for convoy duty till May 1942 – his group were to have been sent to the Atlantic but attack on Sydney Harbour by Japanese midget submarines (31 May – 1 June 1942) changed plans – served as a pallbearer at military funeral for dead Japanese found in captured midget subs
00:43:50	Importance of coastal shipping at that period for freight transport – BHP ships carrying iron ore and coal between Whyalla and Newcastle became a target for Japanese submarines - <i>Iron Chieftain</i> sunk 3 June 1942; <i>Iron Crown</i> sunk 4 June 1942 and a third ship damaged but not sunk shortly after
00:46:37	Sinkings brought immediate introduction of convoy system so that no ship sailed alone – Eric drafted to a naval ship escorting merchant ships as part of a convoy up and down the Australian coast to guarantee their safety from enemy attack – still lost about 20 ships despite the convoys and others suffered torpedo damage – recalls first night at sea in a convoy of 14 ships in which one ship was sunk
00:48:44	Danger of carrying iron ore as a cargo – convoys lasted 18 months along east coast – shortage of escort ships
00:50:58	Views of role of Merchant Navy during the War – unfair that they were not recognised as servicemen at the time despite the dangers they faced

	during the War – merchant ships bigger target than naval ships due to cargoes they carried – critical to block enemy’s supply in order to win war – servicemen acknowledged with medals and other benefits at end of War but vital role played by merchant navy personnel not recognised until decades later
00:55:10	War moved further north – sent to North Queensland – Townsville 100 ships waiting in harbour for convoys to New Guinea and the Pacific carrying supplies to troops – saw less of Japanese around PNG and Pacific as other campaigns had pushed them further north by this stage of the War
00:57:51	Reasons for choice of Navy as service
00:59:58	Role of signaller on a ship – signalling procedures – conditions for Naval servicemen – lifelong friendships formed – stationed in Sydney at Potts Point when World War II ended
	DISC 2
01:08:18	Life after World War II – returns to work at Shell and was transferred to Forbes for several years but had to return to Sydney as wife, Isabel, was terminally ill
01:10:58	Met Isabel Duncan during school days – married 1944 while in the Navy – Isabel had suffered from Diphtheria and Scarlet Fever during childhood and suffered periodic complications from these illnesses – she died young as a result at age 42 – married 20 years – they had one daughter, Kay, (b. 1946) – Eric’s mother, Annie Tweedale, died shortly after Isabel
01:13:57	Met second wife, Phyllis Addicoat, (an American), in England during the Wallabies tour – platonic friendship – re-established contact by letter after Isabel’s death in 1964 – married to Phyllis for 42 years until she died in 2008 – 2004 met former fiancée, Enid Wagner (now Bradshaw) by chance when a reunion of Merrylands RSL Younger Set was held – stayed in touch and became closer after Phyllis died – both now live at same retirement village on the Central Coast – story of their rekindled romance after 62 years made the newspaper in 2018 and was then picked up by three TV channels and a radio station
01:24:22	Beginning of Rugby career – first introduced to the game in 1937 when he was taken to a training session at Cumberland Oval – started playing in Parramatta Junior team and took to the game immediately – reached 1 st Grade in 1938 and was chosen for the only representative side of 1940
01:28:25	Cricket – also discovered a talent for cricket after joining Anthony Hordern’s company team which participated in a business houses competition circa 1939 – Bowled 7 for 11 in first game - invited to train with State Cricket side at SCG number two oval – met Arthur Mailey Australia’s best spin bowler in 1920s
01:34:05	Moved to Cumberland Oval the next year – met Lou Benaud (father of Richie) – moved to 1 st Grade too early so returned to 2 nd Grade - War interrupted cricket career and never returned as Rugby became primary

	sport after the War
01:37:25	Wallabies career – returned to Parramatta after the War and was selected for NSW team (Waratahs) and then picked for the Wallabies side to tour New Zealand in 1946 – NZ toured Australia in 1947, then selected as part of side to tour Europe and North America in 1947-48 – away almost nine months – played 41 matches and won majority – memorable experiences – met King and Queen at Buckingham Palace and British Prime Minister, Clement Attlee – returned 1948
01:44:49	Played 1949 visiting Maori All Blacks side and then decided to retire from Wallabies to spend more time with family – Shell also offered him position at Forbes in 1950 – Captained Combined Country team for three years – resumed playing and also coaching with Parramatta after return to Sydney and established Junior Rugby competition in Parramatta district circa 1960-62 – attracted huge response due to baby boom – junior sport changed greatly today
01:54:50	Merrylands RSL – early recollections of the first club building “Tin Shed” – Father active with RSL during World War II – unsure of own membership date but definitely by 1957 – Jim Crome President and Charlie Munnery Deputy – approached by Charlie to help start RSL Youth Club due to experience with Parramatta Junior Rugby – started with a few sports and expanded – decided to build dedicated RSL Youth Club in St Ann St – club ran activities five nights a week and held dances on Friday nights – huge success – attended combined RSL Youth Club days – Merrylands Junior Rugby Union links with RSL
02:02:57	Moved to North Rocks in 1966 - connection with Youth Club declined from there – after retirement moved to Central Coast (Ettalong) became involved with Umina Beach Bowling Club – Club amalgamated with Merrylands RSL (circa 2006) – Merrylands RSL good management – stable committees – highly regarded in club industry – bowling clubs in decline
02:11:07	Thanks
02:11:47	End of Interview