

# DC Turnbull Oral History Project Interviewees

Hugh Turnbull	6861642	No 33 Strathallan Lifecare, Konini St, Timaru
Matt Mayo		DC Turnbull's, 1 Strathallan St
Bob Cowan	6888137	13a Raymond Street
Neville Twaddell	684 6600	211A Douglas Street
David Weith	6886610	21 Newmans Street, Timaru
Paul Talbot (and Dereck & John Talbot)	6847982	0274337858 Daniels Rd Kingsdown Timaru
Neville Watson	0276845889	
Ross Hall	686 4752	
Craig Smith		DC Turnbull's, 1 Strathallan St
Barry Stringer	03 6806789	8 Scott St, Lake Tekapo 7999

- 00:00 [Recording Identification]
- 00:25 Robert David Cowan 27/4/34 & Neville Francis Twaddell 2/8/45 – explains nickname Roo.
- 01:20 **Bob:** 1958 began working at wharf – comments that wharf changed a lot. Mentions meat loader set up 1965 possibly. Started work as Foreman/carpenter. Previously worked as boat builder at Doug Robb & Co. Started work for NZ Shipping Co. Runs through work history until gained job at DCT (there for 21 years).
- 03:00 **Bob:** no particular skills necessary for job but needed to be able to handle men. Explains was given a plan so knew where and how to pack ship. Talks about the loading of meat. Mentions London & Liverpool the ports where meat landed.
- 04:36 **Neville:** Talks of Bob's boat building skills came in when repairs on ship necessary. Started on wharf 1971 – working as watersider aged 26/7. Explains why started work on wharf. Good money. Thought 28/30 men taken on that year. More taken on following year. Talks of the 'big blow' in 1975 creating more work for wharf. Thought 300 men down at wharf.
- 06:38 Recalls hours they worked. Ten hour day 7am-6pm.
- 06:58 **Bob:** Explains numbers of men working on the meatloader. Explains some of positions when on meatloader.
- 07:30 **Neville:** Explains how he came to work with DCT prior to Waterfront Industry Commission change in 1989. Talks about idle time – having trade training skills to use when not on wharf – Neville an electrical servicemen.
- 09:05 Clarification on change made at 1989 when Turnbull Stevedoring and Timaru Cargo Services were established. Neville came to DCT. Opportunity to become foremen. Mentions Graham Jackson and Brent Foster (Fozzie) also taken on as foremen. Explains why chose to work with DCT. Laughs at memory of 'Two Tray Ray'.
- 11:05 **Bob:** Explains decision to work with DCT. Knew Turnbull's 'hard firm but honest and fair.' Hugh MD but dealt with Peter Weith and Noel Stray more. Explains Noel and Peter's roles. Explains ordering of product for boats.
- 13:15 **Neville:** Talks about transition from wharfie to foreman. Talks of brainwashing by unions. Talks of gamesmanship between union and firm. Recalls Noel saying 'all the funs gone out of this job' at the time of the industry changes in '89.
- 15:35 Clarification on whether 'them' and 'us' between foremen and wharfies. **Bob:** 'you were a team' **Neville:** - talks of occasional keg put on for boys by Andrew.
- 16:25 Begins to recall a typical day as foremen. **Bob:** describes the process of bailing water out of the tents covering the hatches – explains why he did it. Explains why had tent over the hatches. **Neville:** further description and explanation of why the tent over the hatch.
- 18:15 **Bob:** Explains how long it would take to load a boat. Full load - 5,000 ton – take a week. Talks of ship in 1950s being in port six weeks being loaded – not loaded in rain. Talks of still having coastal shipping when he working on the wharf but worked on the international ships.
- 19:15 **Neville:** - tells first job was on coaster – memory of 3 or 4 of them north mole. Breeze & Storm. Memory of Noel being accurate in determining how much more cargo needed to make full load.

- 20:05 **Bob:** - continuation of running through normal day. Further talk of bailing water off tent. Clarification on how gang got assigned. Explains worked out on wharfie's hours. **Neville:** - wharfies did all jobs – got swapped around – no monotony.
- 22:00 **Bob:** Explains they didn't set up the gangs. **Neville:** two foremen on a meatloader usually **Bob:** plus one on the wharf.
- 23:00 **Neville:** describes system of how meat loader worked. **Bob:** briefly describes what meat loader looked like. Thought 160 bags on the loader – further description of how meat loaded. Memory of straight lines of meat right up to the top.
- 25:12 **Bob:** Talks about the different style of loading when the meat loader came. Talks of the loader being made. Tells of going to look at loader in Bluff – describes a difference in design in Timaru. Memory of Bluff loader being impacted by work.
- 27:03 **Neville:** laughs at possible tricks but briefly describes incidents that could cause a problem with the loader. Mentions 'panic button.' **Bob:** talks about the six different speeds on loader. Laughs that speed six might be used when wanted to finish early on a Saturday. **Neville:** describes situation where couldn't use speed six. **Bob:** memory of the weight of some of the ewe carcasses – 'take two men to lift them'
- 28:50 **Neville:** Explains size of crew – 12 in hold – explains crew in hold rotated – only an hour in at a time. Further description of where all gang working. **Bob & Neville:** discussing who working there. **Neville:** talks about conditions for the deck man - panic button person.
- 30:15 **Neville:** explains the gang rotated to time – mates not happy if late! **Bob:** explains what foremen were doing. Talks about Japanese ships – different grades of meat – explains process of how it was checked by agricultural department in Japan. **Neville:** liaison between foreman in shed to foreman on ship – let them know change of grade. Explains why important to ensure knew what grade was loading.
- 32:00 **Bob:** Explains could be going between two hatches. Up and down hatches all the time. **Neville:** Describes ladders climbing up and down in ships. **Bob:** Occasional accidents. Describes the gradual process of freezing holds. Four decks – lower hold, lower tween, main deck & shelter deck. **Neville:** four or five lifts of meat in each hold. Comments walking across carcasses – hard work. Memory of Port New Plymouth – had massive lower hold – 'be in there for a week' up to six or seven lifts. Explains what a 'lift' is.
- 34:30 **Bob:** explains why load couldn't tip over. **Neville:** further description of filling hold. Clarification on whether seasonal work. **Bob:** explains meat held in cool stores so could be loading meat all year round. Loaded onto trucks (rail) & road trucks. **Bob:** talks of old wooden meat trucks and then loaded into containers. **Neville:** then used iceliners – refrigerated. Explains the difference between them.
- 36:37 Trying to remember when meatloader stopped. **Neville:** 1997-1998 something like that. **Bob:** memory of being on the first meatloader and finishing on the last one. **Neville:** other loaders – seed, wool, barrels of casings, **Bob:** Tallow. **Neville:** bags of seed 160lb – memories of sweat being lost loading some of load. Memory of being tested with loading seed. Laughs at memory.
- 38:48 **Bob:** seed loaded on slings. Run through process of loading. **Neville:** Explains gang didn't rotate jobs when loading one ship – only rotated jobs from ship to ship. Explains the process of loading grain in the underrun – where hook couldn't get to.
- 40:22 **Bob:** Grain taken straight from lorry on to sling and into hold. Continuation of explaining foreman's day. **Neville:** priority to organise cargo there ready for the gang to move it. **Bob:** keep it rolling. Radios form of communication. Memory before

radios calling over side of ship or run out on wharf and tell them. **Neville:** thought radios definitely there when he started.

42:30 **Bob:** talks about bulk loading of grain – Turnbull's did most of it. Turnbull's didn't do much wheat but a lot of barley. Description of loading ship with grain. Explains what the trimmer did. Two people working the trimmer. Tells what crew wore when loading barley – suit, oxygen fed in. **Neville:** loaded Lucerne at one stage too.

45:05 **Neville:** Always had a preference, liked the clean job. Barley – was hard – dusty. Talks about the banana boats – saw it as a game between Lyttelton and Timaru. Meatloader used in reverse at the time to unload bananas. Now all palletised.

46:20 **Bob:** Talks about roll on roll off ships. Successful but a lot slower. Explains why they were slower. **Neville:** Container carriers Scancarrier and Nedlloyds – efficient – tells story of working on the first one and the need for precision driving – recalls accident. Had to have forklift down below. Showed skill of drivers.

48:15 **Neville:** Tells of being sent to Auckland to train to use forklift. Laugh at the memory of it – good trip.

49:00 Further clarification of foreman role. 'you were just a cog in the wheel to make sure it kept going well.' **Neville:** worst situation when temperature in hold too cold. -14 degrees. **Bob:** Squid boats colder minus 28/30 degrees. **Neville:** talks of good gear for the conditions. **Bob:** memories of guys coming out frozen **Neville:** beards come out white. Talks about the temperature change between hold and outside – come home exhausted. Talks about being a tough job.

51:08 **Bob:** livestock ships. **Neville:** remembers protests. **Bob:** describes loading the lambs on to the ships. **Neville:** continues description. **Bob:** didn't allow dogs – so men had to do it. Crew needed – ½ dozen on ship and ½ dozen in the pens. **Neville:** taken off trucks and put into pen made of containers – done on north mole. One point of entry for whole ship could have 11/12 decks. **Bob:** decks just over a metre high. **Neville:** laughs crawled on knees – and wasn't clean. Comments lost a few at the start but now down to a fine art. 'take the good with the bad'

55:30 **Neville:** old coasters bring in newspaper for Timaru Herald. Clarification on what coming in on coasters.

**End of Track**

- 00:00 [Recording Identification]
- 00:10 Nicknames: Horse, the Moose, Mudguard, the Judge – cos he was always sitting on a box and didn't shift quickly. Gollywog Sandry, Milo. Laughs can't tell where names came from. Cuddles, Dumbdumb, Munster. Everyone had a nickname. **Bob:** comments workers pretty good. Comments when he started on wharf the old guys were 'hard' – wouldn't let you away with anything – unionists. Later wharfies were younger, father's had been wharfies, didn't fall into line... **Neville:** old workers always ready to start right on 7 now days wharfies still drinking coffee at 7 and have to get them to shift.
- 03:50 Explains (pause while train passing) why the system of lates and earlies meant workers always ready to work on time. Lates and earlies a perk for working in chiller. Explains building goodwill between boss and worker.
- 05:50 **Neville:** Tells of situation where wharfie didn't agree with decision that Neville made and the consequence. **Bob:** nothing hard about being foreman but had to keep an eye on movements of everything things running 'sweet'. **Neville:** Tells of Bob avoiding the loader shed – seniority meant he was on the ship – more perks. They laugh.
- 07:20 **Neville:** Runs through the process of working out the talley sheets for the day. Tells story of Melbourne cup being on and stopping loader to listen to it telling 'the Hare'(Ray) that there was a problem with the loader. Explains process of having to shift the chutes.
- 09:03 **Bob:** Talks of making the chutes in the gear store at end of the tunnel. Explains what was stored there. Meat loading gear, boots for walking over the meat Spider net, spider slings, wire ropes, meat trays. Explain what the wooden pegs in the cupboard were for – used for splicing ropes. **Neville:** explains how they were used. Foremen made the slings. Comments Bob was a champion at splicing.
- 11:04 **Neville:** talks of going down to Tapley Swifts and having to spend a day splicing ropes and making snotters. **Bob:** describe how to make snotter and what it is for. Make bridles for meat trays. Describes how used. When no ships they worked on these. Still had idle time though if all gear ready for next ship. All gear now sold given away. Mumblings about a ghost down around the store.
- 14:30 **Neville:** brief story of accident on loader. 'hilarity everywhere' Mudguard liked playing tricks, Yogi bear got picked on. Ray Green's knock off wave story. Ray – always 'just two trays more'. Gamesmanship.
- 17:55 **Bob:** - loading wool – taking snotters out – caught under tray of truck on wharf – tipped whole truck on its side. **Neville:** wharfie with foot caught in snotter and hanging up in the air. **Bob:** story of wharfie helping hold rope down of tent over hold wind caught tent and wharfie went up in air and landed in the water.
- 19:50 **Bob:** accidents – few squashed fingers. Brief story of guy getting hit by container. **Neville:** story of 'Chiefy' injuring ankle. Dragline comes along as first aider – Chiefy walked off didn't like Dragline.
- 21:10 **Bob:** Explains issues when loading a logging ship – recites lengths of the logs. **Neville:** Talks about intricacies of loading logs. Memory of Munster in a dangerous position. **Bob:** recalls him being accident prone. Mentions Peel dogs – taking bark off log and logs being greasy.
- 23:00 **Bob:** comments on OSH. **Neville:** talks about being 'brainwashed' into always watching for 'the hook' – where the cargo was. Recalls the call 'under' person someone under the load. **Bob:** Mentions the phosphate ships – and the weight of a 'grab'.

- 25:15 **Bob:** Memory of Turnbull Stevedoring coming to end because of containerisations. **Neville:** Explains wasn't the volume of work to keep 50-60 blokes in full work. **Bob:** Explains the change from conventional loading to loading containers.
- 26:25 **Bob:** Mentions 1989 being crunch time. **Neville:** Two stevedoring firms took up staff they wanted then others offered redundancy. Thought 60 or 70 wharfies taken on by Turnbull's. Throughout 90s doing meat for Japan and some for Iraq. Talk about the requirements for the Iraq meat. Mentions the inspectors checking done right.
- 28:50 **Bob:** Recollects what ships dealing with when started with Turnbull 1978 – grain, meat, not much general cargo – general cargo went on top deck. **Neville:** Memory of 'home' boats coming – memory of crated glass – boats from England. 'Home' boats all have English crew – English officers. **Bob:** dealt with officers – Chief Officer. Japanese had English. **Neville:** Comments on Russian officers.
- 30:40 **Bob:** Memory of getting vodka on Russian ships. **Neville:** Memory of getting flagons of sherry for crew. **Bob:** Russian gear rough **Neville:** 'makeshift I tell you. How they put a man on the moon I'm buggered if I know..' **Bob:** Relates how Russian ship run on to rocks at No. 3 wharf. Laughter at the memory.
- 32:55 **Bob:** Couldn't trust Russian gear. **Neville:** Didn't check everyone's gear but 'were conscious of it'.
- 33:45 **Bob:** relates the process of Turnbull Stevedoring coming to an end. **Neville:** Talks of there being no push from firm for them to leave. **Bob:** Tells of being left til 65 when he could get his super. Talks of them being an excellent employer.
- 34:50 **Neville:** Memories of Peter Weith and how he worked – ordering cargo (train in background) **Bob:** brief comment on relationship with staff at Timaru Cargo Services. **Neville:** 'general banter'.
- 36:30 **Neville:** - highlight – when had work at another port.– work in Bluff. Memory of going to New Plymouth, Nelson – prior to working for DCT when watersider. Memory of going to Bluff as a foreman – a perk – well rewarded. **Bob:** working at Tiwai Point – five months had a rental car – when with NZ Stevedoring Co. Explains the workings down at the Point. Talks of it being good pay.
- 39:20 **Neville:** Tells story of being down south with Ray – and eating crayfish when dining out. Peter Weith winding Ray up over it.
- 40:15 **Bob:** memory of working for Andrew. **Neville:** Andrew fair employer – memory of a keg being laid on. 'He slotted in just like one of the boys' Mentions being instrumental in the Port of Tauranga deal. Mentions growth in the port and the snowball effect – one comes in then the others come in. laughs at the memory of Peter Weith getting any meatboat going passed to call in at Timaru.
- 42:49 **Neville:** comment on Noel Stray and Peter Weith.
- 43:33 **Bob:** talking about photos – transformer for Benmore Dam going on to ship and nearly tipping ship over –2 cargo lids fell off side – description of truck carrying load. Tells of divers having to go and retrieving the big lids. Uncertain of the timeframe when it happened twenty years or so ago. Further description of what happened with ship and why it happened.

#### End of Interview

(nb: cross reference meatloading with an interview by Linda Hepburn with boat builder Arthur Bates (will be housed at South Canterbury museum on completion of the 'Timaru

Recorded: 24 November 2014  
Interviewer: Ruth Low  
Abstracter: Ruth Low

DC Turnbull Co Ltd Oral History Project  
twaddell\_and\_cowan\_interview  
Track 2 of 2  
Neville Twaddell & Bob Cowan:

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Commercial Fishing Project'). Arthur talks of the need to line the meatloader holds with timber and explains the process.)

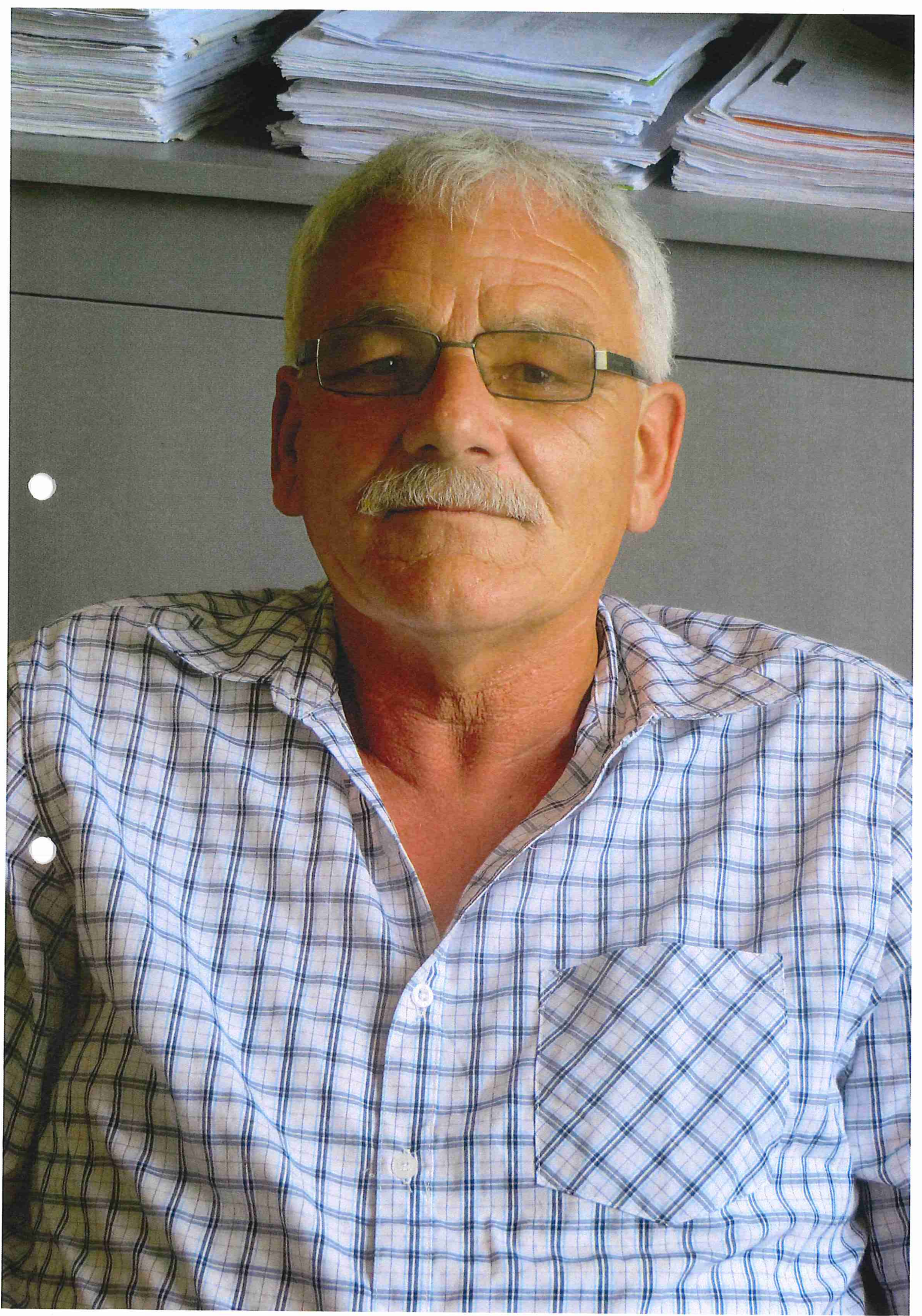
















- 00:00 [Recording Identification]
- 00:25 Neville John Watson, born May 8 1953 Timaru. Grantlea Primary School, Technical school until 4<sup>th</sup> form. Ross Edward Hall born 30 July 1955, Timaru. Scared Heart, Marist and St Patricks (Roncalli)
- 01:20 Neville – taken on as the Storeman. Explains how he came to work at DC Turnbull. Talks of ‘matriarch’ of the office Earline (Messiner) knew Neville – thinks she put a good word in for him. Memory of interview. \$13,000 – paid once a month. Thinks it was mid 1980s when started.
- 03:10 Mentions ‘them and us’ of grain and seed department and shipping. Tells story of trying to change radio channel off National programme. Staff: Ross, Alan Puttick and Bill Farthing the boss of grain & seed. Noel Stray, Peter Weith, Colin Wiberg– doing containers and Russain boats. Ron Rodgers did accounts/wages from wharf. Rob McKinney – ‘he sat there all day adding up thousands of wee pieces of paper of how many meat carcasses went on the ship.’ Mentions one adding machine and a ‘a one armed bandit sort of a thing like a poker machine...’ Describes process of tallying the meat carcasses.
- 05:11 Replaced Dave O’Leary – O’Leary stayed on and trained Neville for a month. Describes bringing grain and seed into the big shed. Talks of stevedores helping him when no ships in. ‘By the time each bag left they were personal friends.’ Wool in the other two floors. Brief description of how wool loaded up into second floor. Mentions stored some seed downstairs if going in and out quickly. Brief description of seed coming down the chute.
- 07:30 Talks of sacks being jute and changed half way through his time. Explains why he didn’t like the change to new bags. Talks of everything being handled manually – could be 5,000 bags of Manawa ryegrass come. Describes the process of loading the truck, bell being rung as a start and stop sign.
- 08:55 Grain now stored in bottom floor because wool dumping no longer there. Tells of getting in trouble with Social Welfare across road for trucks blocking roadway. Tells of avoiding loading wool as much as possible. Tells of mixing seeds, explanation of mixing seeds. ‘make a brew up.’
- 10:35 Explains impact of seed losing germination gradually and need to be remixed. Talks of seeds being tested at seed testing place, Ross also did seed testing.
- 11:50 Explains how job stayed the same until the Agricultural Remedies Act (Fertilizers, Farm Feeds, Agricultural Remedies and Stock Remedies Act?) came in – changes to how handled poisons. Talks of paperwork and inconsistencies of how followed. Mentions Ross get MAF ticket for seed sampling. Details process of splitting bags of seed and the paperwork that went with it.
- 13:40 Lists some of the old seed types stocked when he started the job. Nui ryegrass and ruanui ryegrass commons two plus white and red clover, timothy, subterranean clover & wana cocksfoot main ingredients. Makeup varied depending on farmer’s needs.
- 15:05 Talks of having the agency for Yates seeds. Pallets of seed for winter feed, lists. Other companies bought off them. Forage seeds sold for winter feed. Tells of keeping representative samples of each seed type in case farmers complained about a mix of seed.
- 17:10 Talks about growing of barley – issue with ‘kim’ variety – too long. Explains the process of rogueing. Memory of Ross and him having to clear out weeds in a crop. Did not enjoy it. In ‘Basic’ seed crop couldn’t have any contaminates. Describes further the process.

- 19:45 Details chemicals handled. Roundup, Fodder Clean, spray for rust, powdery mildew. Recalls the change in price of Roundup after Monsanto no longer had sole rights to it.
- 20:45 Tells of being sub-contracted to liquor shop across the road forklifting the alcohol. Memory of Hugh tallying Nev's notebook. Memories of being responsible for cleaning the buildings in winter.
- 22:30 Talks of helping the stevedores when he didn't have much work and them helping him when they weren't busy. Clarification on how much contact with the wool dumping side he had. Talks of still being mates with some of them.
- 23:50 'a job for life' – Talks of Turnbull's reputation in town – could get goods on credit easily. Memory of Andrew taking over and 'new broom sweep'. Mentions Turnbull's owning Illam Mall and Flour Mill in Dunedin.
- 25:35 NZ Flax – Hugh 'turned a blind eye'. Eventually dealt with it 'typical Turnbull's took it on the chin'. Tells story of Andrew using drench guns to serve drinks at Rotary Ball.
- 27:05 Memory of Andrew's sense of humour – drawing picture on client's bill. Recollection of how knew every client by name. 'I was a keen duck shooter so I knew every farmer who didn't have a son and a duck pond...'
- 28:45 Lists some of clients - Talbots – south of town 3<sup>rd</sup> generation, Evan Talbot – 2<sup>nd</sup> generation (Graham is) John Norton JP, Colin Hill, Gerry's. 'those people came here and came here and came here...' Story of recent encounter with past client and their memory of Russell Turnbull's support.
- 30:15 Memory of hard time with Forge Holdings. 'dicey time' Memory of the tough times in 1980s – drought. Talks of fear of losing his job.
- 32:05 Doesn't recall the changes in the 1980s as having been a stressful time for Turnbull's. Turnbull backed their clients. Memory of flood in Pleasant Point – Turnbull donated \$10,000 to aide people.
- 33:15 Talks about dealing with other grain businesses everyday as they dressed Turnbull's seed. Explains dressing seed and describes the process of collecting and stacking seed. Memory of little Nissan truck shared with stevedores so not always available. Andrew got new vehicle so could load more on to it. Mentions level of fitness.
- 35:20 Explains the cycle of selling and buying seed. Talks of the seed agents selling the seed for a commission. Talks of filling out his 'Bible' with all details.
- 37:18 Talks of supplying barley. Describes the process of loading barley – talks of how horrible it was – itchy. Got to North Island – stock food.
- 38:55 Lists merchandise they sold. Explains why stopped layers mash – seed mites. Memory of dealing with the mites. Talks of poison stations/traps prevent rats. His store known as 'cleanest' in town. Mentions old days – office boy had to go to Mortons butcher shop to get meat for cats. Memory of Bill telling him to kill some kittens once.
- 41:10 Comments didn't carry a big inventory. Buy it in as needed. Describes using the old rail turntable when loading goods for the Mt White Station once a year. (as aside he adds thought the turntable been donated to Pleasant Point Railway Society) Memory of having to keep on top of weeds – Bill would get him to climb the fence and spray the railway line 'cos it wasn't a good look'.
- 42:20 Clarification on when tunnel stopped being worked. Tells of clearing away little brick building where weighbridge. Explains why he didn't like the railway line there.



- 43:25      Memory of enjoying job and how day divided up. Didn't enjoy filling in for Ross on holiday.
- 44:22      Memory of job not having changed much over the years he was there. Recollection of the hour he filled in for Ross at lunchtimes being a good time to chat with Rob McKinney.

**End of Track**

- 00:00 [Recording Identification]
- 00:05 Explains about way paid and ability to take out advance. Memory of Colin Wiberg getting charged with DIC – and having to help Colin as a result. Mentions firm car. Tells of office girls working late to type manifests for the ships. Talks of not being paid overtime but the company looked after you – no issues when sick.
- 02:40 Lists other grain and seed staff. Alan Puttick – Craig replaced him. Neville, Ross & Bill. Talks about how the store is run now. Tells of making a mistake with naming a seed mix once.
- 04:40 Ross prompts Neville to tell the story of Ben weighing the eggs that Andrea (office girl) had brought in for sale. Lows – doing the cleaning – particularly because of cigarette smoke. High – staff parties when people left – old stories come out. Tells story of how Bob got an extra day away with expenses paid by company.
- 06:10 Turnbull's unassuming, conservative, not throwing money around on doing building up, money makes money – invest in farmers. Memory of Hugh 'the king was in the counting house' – once every three months when Hugh calculated interest to be charged.
- 07:55 Memory of the visit of Lord Vestey of Borthwicks from England toward end of 1980s.
- 09:00 Reference to the 'home' boats – comments that Turnbull's owned Canterbury Steam Ship Company. Names Calm, Storm, Gale, Breeze. Talks of enjoying time at Turnbull's. 'it's a family.' Tells story of Turnbull's (Andrew) backing him financially to buy a new car. (gets emotional with the memory) Tells of paying back loan quickly.
- 11:20 Talks of the 'them' and 'us' of shipping department vs grain & seed department. Comments on the fickleness of shipping industry. Memory of Colin voicing how much he'd earned for Turnbull's before smoko through container shipping. Mentions shipping coming to end and Colin accepting redundancy.
- 13:10 Mentions Turnbull's making money selling oats for the horses at the Boer War.

**End of Track**

- 00:00 [Recording Identification]
- 00:15 Ross explains how he came to work for Turnbull's. 1982 saw the advertisement for job at Turnbull's doing grain & seed and general mercantile office work. Memory of interview. Mentions Bill Farthing had actually worked at Dalgety's at same time Ross had. Relates conversation with Hugh offering him the job.
- 02:10 Memory of first impression of walking in the door of DC Turnbull – 'old fashioned'. Description of layout of office. Mentions the office being empty at the time other than one person – deserted. Told by someone it's 'A bit like Dickens an office full of old men' also told if 'oh well you'll die there...'
- 03:22 Memory of office being full in the mornings when everyone came through. Runs through the staff in the office at the time. Hugh Turnbull, Bill Farthing, Alan Puttick, Barry Templeton (shipping), Ron Rogers, Rob McKinney, Ben Turnbull just started in shipping as an understudy, Rodney Hewson – young shipping boy, Noel Stray, Peter Weith and Colin Wiberg, two girls Earline Messiner, Rebecca Brosnahan Office junior and David O'Leary storeman.
- 04:40 Ross employed as a clerk. Relates what he did on his first day of work. Ross replaced Alan Puttick who was in turn replacing David White who had been on the road. Talks of Alan teaching him the ropes. Talks about working with clients – acting as liaison. Learned about clients and as a result learned what their needs would be – gives examples of learning client's ways.
- 06:15 Describes how the clients would come in and have morning tea with them and how it was an opportunity to further his understanding of their needs. Talks about Turnbull's being about 'word of mouth'. They had a good name. Tells story of getting credit for a product because worked at Turnbull's. Privilege to work at Turnbull's. Tells of clients introducing their neighbours to Turnbull's and then they would become clients.
- 08:00 Explains Turnbull's acted as a bank to farmers. Memory of Andrew having desk out in office – explains why Ross saw this as a benefit. Talks of benefits of an open office. Comments on Turnbull's being a nice family. Memory of Hugh supporting Ross when Ross' mother was unwell. Talks of the ease of working in the place.
- 10:25 Talks about relationship with Bill and Hugh. Talks of how easy it was to work with Hugh – no real hierarchy – 'no power trips'.
- 11:45 Clarification on Ross' background and whether had a background in farming. Gives details about his schooling and how he started a commercial course at St Patricks. Memories of his course and how practical it was. Further explanation of work background – working after school at Dalgetys in 1970s – stayed on at Dalgetys. Then moved to Cloverlea selling cheese then applied for DC Turnbull job.
- 14:20 Family been around farming. Father's family dairy farmers, family had racehorses. Talks about the Hall family being an old Timaru family. Comments when farmers came in he was interested in what they were doing – more so on the livestock side. Comments he bred dogs and left Turnbull's to breed dogs.
- 15:30 Explains why stayed in Timaru. Enjoyed working at Turnbull's. Begins to describe a typical day at work. Describes In and Out sheets and processes attached to it. Keeping stock inventory balanced. Explains how could take a loan of product from other grain and seed companies if didn't have stock for a client.
- 18:10 Details the process of seed sampling. Explains the importance of ensuring the seed sample was done well. Explains the need to look for mites. (Phone ringing in the background) Process of sending it to MAF to do their testing. Talks about the certificates coming back for the seed and keeping the certificates valid.

- 21:15 Continues to explain afternoon work. Talks about ordering of chemicals. Comments chemicals coming and going and seed coming and going. Farmer's wives phoning through orders and pick them up when came shopping. Comments on the changes in the drenches. Explains process if farmer ordered drench with selenium in it. Talks about the orders for fertiliser. Fertiliser from Ravensdown. Explains why had to work fast with orders.
- 23:00 Explains Ravensdown was sole fertiliser company they dealt with it. Limited alternatives. Talks about the process of pricing – and timing of the pricing of products eg lambing products. Liaising with product reps – memory of Cyclone – Stephen Reed rep come in every Friday morning and have morning tea. Runs through some people who came at morning tea time. Talks of the long links with some families – one client remembered sitting on DC's lap as young boy. Memory of past client shaking his hand 20 years later.
- 24:55 Comments went out on road very rarely. Explains about rogueing – happening around Christmas and New Year. Just before harvesting – foreign grain would stand out. Memory of Neville getting heat stroke. Pull in extras to do the job. Explains why needed to do the job properly.
- 26:10 Explains how rogue grains can get into fields. Continues to explain the process of farmers running accounts through Turnbull's. Relates process of growing crop and costs incurred growing crop. Clarification on harvesting process – explains farmer head it and send in to grain company to have it dressed. Then Ross would sample it and buy it off the farmer on the analysis of the testing. Talks about the role of the seed broker.
- 29:07 Explains the process of delivery orders and the ability to trace the product. Comments all the processes were manual. Mentions Hugh did not like account numbers – names only used. Liked it to be personal, used first name 'like a family.' Talks about the relationships with clients. Talks of the relationships unique to Turnbull's not the same in the big companies. Thought 150-200 clients.
- 31:25 Explains how dealt with some clients only once or twice a year. Talks about Mt White Station. Mentions use of Tordon. Other clients in several times a week for various things. Mentions dropping drench off to some clients on way home. Talks of having a poisons licence later. Explains the process of keeping poisons locked up. Memory of MAF visits to check the poisons cage locked. Got caught out once.
- 33:12 Lists sorts of chemicals – insecticide – Thimet, dasnit. Tells story of poisoning of farmers dog with chemical. Memory of smell of chemicals in the store. Memory of not too much personal care taken around the chemicals. Tells of other staff getting chemicals out for clients. Talks of keeping poisons book.
- 34:45 Explains in later years did wages for Wool Dumpers on Monday morning. Talks about the clerical side of the job. Describes technology used for accounts prior to computers. Mentions photocopying newsletters as well.
- 36:30 Comments Andrew did most of the computer work. Describes the basic nature of the computer system. Explains how big a job the seed mixing was. Bill Farthing worked out proportion of seeds and then individually charged out. Mentions GST coming in. (came in 1986 at 10%)
- 38:25 Description of the cyclical nature of seed process and charging out for it. Explains how fuel accounts run. Talks of the markup on goods. Runs through the charging system and invoicing for fuel.

- 40:35 Clarification of Turnbull's role. 'we were their bank in other words'. Money made 'each step of the way.' Comments did crop insurance – brief explanation of process. Talks of various products being dropped over time – other co's had shops with all those products. Focused on sprays, seeds and grains – 'a lot easier'. Merchandise had never been a big thing – courtesy really - money loser. Mentions selling vaccines – talks about difficulty of expiry dates.
- 43:00 Talks of canvassing farmers for different products. Oct/Nov canvassing for drenches – drench companies offering Christmas hams and turkeys. Trying to anticipate need before ordering it. Explains process of canvassing clients for orders. Take 4 or 5 days of ringing around. Talks of favourite clients and the tricky ones. Talks about canvassing at baling time – need to do it in advance.
- 45:10 Describes process of communicating with rep about what clients doing with crop and then canvassing client. Turnbull clients 'select group of clients...not like other clients I've ever dealt with....' In early days 'almost invited to be a client'. Talks about the generational links with Turnbulls.
- 47:35 Tells of still having clients coming up and talking to him today. Memories of Andrew – 'he was one of the boys'. 'Breath of fresh air'. 'Brought us into the twentieth century by computers for a starter.' Mentions Andrew being on Harbour Board and made links with contemporaries younger managerial type. 'Everyone knew everyone else's business... like a big family'
- 49:30 Technology. Describes the phone in the old brick building. Phone from farmers house – not the cellphones. RT radios used in cars. Adding machine – (looking at a casio machine in Hugh's old office). Memory of use of adding machine and hoping that you balanced.
- 51:10 Talks about the introduction of GST. Lady coming in to teach them how to do it. Memory of farmers jumping on it 'because it was something new and they didn't quite understand it.' Talks about changes after the subsidies coming off in the 1980s. Sales of chemicals slumped dramatically because not subsidies.
- 52:55 Clarifies farmers not developing as much. After a while – people started spending again. Recognised the good and the bad farmers.
- 54:25 Further explanation on why rogueing happened. Further explanation on the importance of seed testing for germination percentages. Explains need for high germination and purity. Talks about the results depending on the work of the farmer.
- 57:13 Explains why he came to leave Turnbull's – mid-90s saw more opportunities with his dog breeding business. Talks of working reduced hours and Graeme Morris took over his job. (interrupted by Craig) Mentions Debbie since taken over from Graeme. Mentions keeping in touch with staff at Turnbull.
- 59:17 High points of working with at Turnbull's – environment relaxed, friendly, not goals set like big companies, got to know clients well. Low points – 'be at three places at once.' Small staff numbers so had to fill in when staff were away – even mixing seeds. Describes process of mixing seeds. Talks of staff just stepping in and doing jobs that they saw need doing. Talks of taking holidays in winter when quieter. Always back before lambing and farmers starting to sow crops. Mentions the bell from the ship 'Peru'.
- 1:03:40 Talks of it being a privilege to work at Turnbull's. 'Turnbull's is a one off.' Talks of no hierarchy or pecking order. 'You do life here.' Memory of Hugh giving staff money before Christmas. Hugh always a gentleman, quietly spoken. Andrew – not looking like a manager.



Recorded: 2 February 2015  
Interviewer: Ruth Low  
Abstracter: Ruth Low

DC Turnbull Co Ltd Oral History Project  
Audio file 3 of 3  
Neville Watson & Ross Hall: Interviewee

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1:05:00      Talks of good natured banter no vindictive jokes.

**END OF INTERVIEW**

Image 1:- Road out in front of Turnbull's taken from third story of the old brick building.  
Note: the old Turnbull's turntable bottom right of picture. Shaw Savill building become Wool dumpers No 1 store where the Ash Press wool dumper went in.

Image 2: upended container – 'bad day at the office'

Image 3: Trucks waiting to be unloaded at No 1 stores nb: old silos in background now removed.

Image 4: Trucks arriving with wool possibly predating arrival of big wool press.

Image 5: New Wool press arriving

Image 6: Wool press arriving

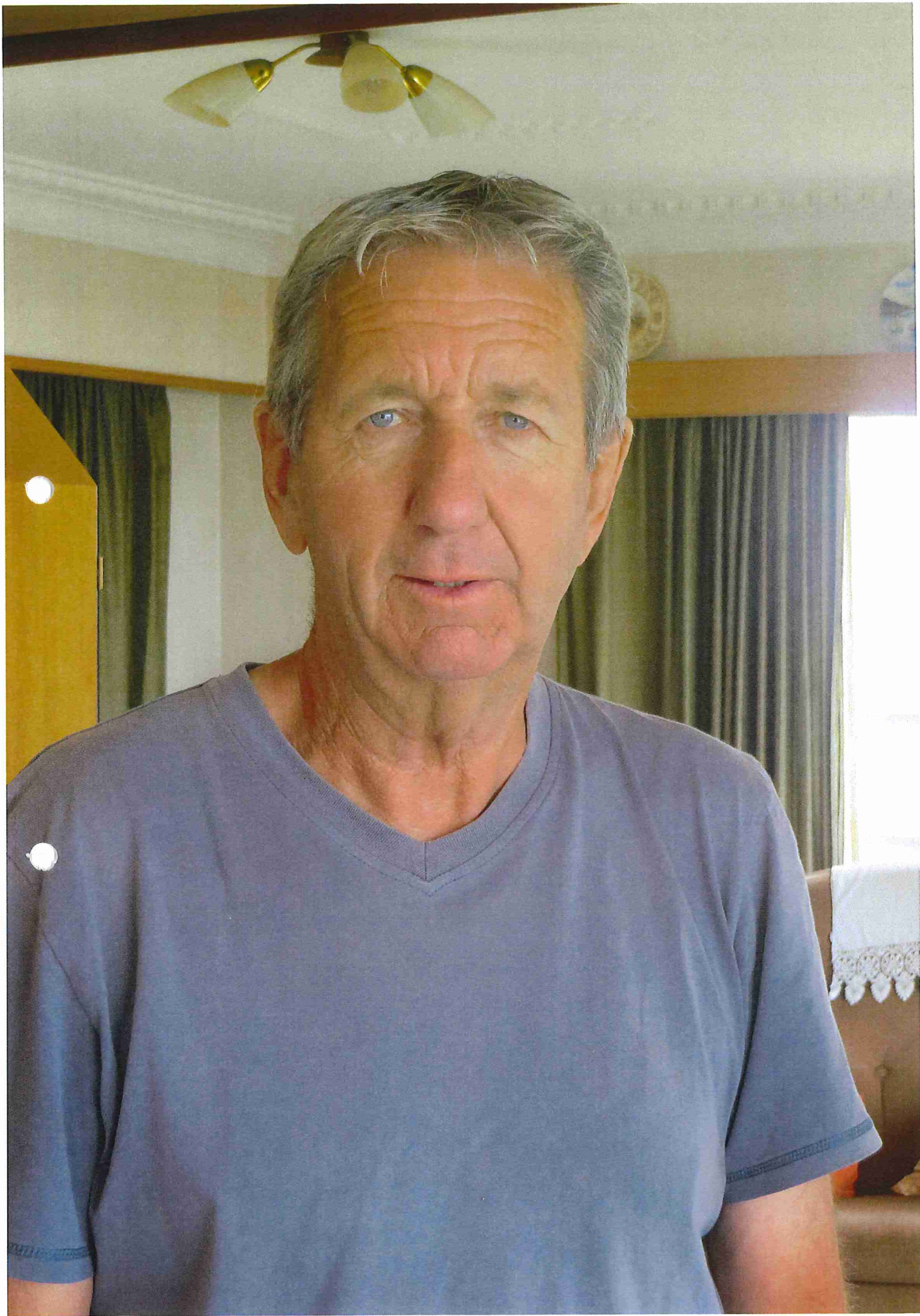
Image 7: Wool press in front of store no 1 nb: door heights changed to get press in. Hugh Turnbull looking at the new machine (on left)

Image 8: Press being prepared to go into building

Image 9: press attracting onlookers

Image 10: Press being driven into the store – hugh Turnbull on the left.

Image 11: Dumped wool (sometimes doubles or trebles) in container – max 144 bales in a container average 120 bales. Increased numbers as worked out better logistics of packing the containers.



- 00:00 [Recording Identification]
- 00:15 David Sinclair Weith born 26 April 1948. Tells of getting holiday job when aged 17 in 1967 through brother Peter Weith. Had been at Tech before then. Job – wheeling wool off trucks up to wool press.

Interview interrupted David needed to move car.

## Track 2

- 00:00 [Recording identification]
- 00:15 Wool press in Strathallan building. Describes how wool got on to the second floor. Tells gear all still there and could still work today. Probably a dozen workers – all unloading. Tells of later process of unitising wool bales. Loaded out through hole in showroom floor and loaded on to rail trucks or road trucks. Description of route. Tells of it being easier to load on to road trucks.
- 03:15 Explains summer job carried on and ‘I just never left’. Tells of working in the seed department help Jim Mullegan. Help Gordon Parry with stevedoring gear down to meat ships – making meat shoots. Not much of break with wool. Had slipe wool from meatworks as well to deal with Fairton, Smithfield and Pareora. Explains what slipe wool is – tells slipe wool still coming into DCT No 2 store today.
- 04:40 Description of the wool dumping process. No wool sorted in his time may have happened earlier not sure. Talks of the job being physical by today’s standards. Hydraulic. Tells of being hit in the face with one of the bands.
- 06:50 Doesn’t remember too many accidents. Mentions potential for accidents with the big wool press – 500 ton of force. Brief description of daily work. Loading out wool for Lyttelton and Port Chalmers.
- 07:58 Memory of Jim Mullegan chucking seed down from top floor and hitting Dick Davidson one day. Gordon Parry – stevedores – in the gear store a lot. Renowned for doing stupid things. Brief story of putting crackers around the heater.
- 09:15 Memory of driving Russ Turnbull home a couple of times – after Russ had had a drink. Thought Russ was still around for first couple of years he was working at Turnbull’s. Tells knew staff in office through his brother. Thought it was relaxed working environment – but everyone pulled their weight.
- 10:50 1977 when started with Wool Dumpers stayed at Strathallan store for few months then went down to No 2 store. Tom Bates, Rark O’Kelly. Old P & O building. No 1 store old Shaw Saville building on Hayes St. Strathallan building became store No 3.
- 12:40 Memory of the change with the wools being run through the different sheds with the forming of Timaru Wood Dumpers. Workers didn’t believe it would work. But in reality worked well. Better set up and gear. Shift due to containers and amount of wool going into containers. Other dumping operations consolidating around the country. Talk about the other companies that joined with DCT to form Timaru Wool Dumpers.
- 14:55 Explains what wool was being dumped at Strathallan store. Talks of gradual fade out to sheds become wool stores. No 1 store where most of work happened. Mentions start of using forklifts in No 2 store. Talks of just driving forklifts never went to Auckland for training like stevedores.

- 16:30 Tells of getting in trouble with Mr Davidson for using forklift for painting gates up at Turnbull's yard. No 2 shed had Dalgety's old wool dump in it – faster press nice to use.
- 17:15 Not aware of why so much wool to dump. Thought ten men working with him. He in charge. (Barry Stringer called him the foreman) Pleased to move down. Loading a lot of containers. Two forklifts working. Brief story how they stopped using the old barrows and used the forklift.
- 19:45 Brief description of dumping and loading. Talks of move to no 1 store after about 3 years. Doug Wallace Manager and then Barry Stringer. David was Foreman. Explains difference between working No 2 and then No 1 store.
- 21:39 Ten to twelve staff. Tells of No 1 sheds change to using forklifts. Mentions resistance to change. 2004/2005 thought wool still being stored in Strathallan store. Explains reason for no longer storing wool there.
- 23:32 Brief explanation how work assigned in the sheds. Clarification on years he shifted around. Talks of the revolutionising of the dumping when new wool dump came. Talks of having to go to the three bale press. 220,000 bales one year and 30,000 in one month.
- 25:55 hours 7-9 and often Saturday morning or Saturday avo. Memory of working one Sunday – explains why.
- 26:50 Details of the Ash Press – three bale press. 375 horsepower motors driving 3 hydraulic pumps with push of 500 ton. Built by Ash Press which was part of the Ferrier Woollscours. Travelled by boat from Auckland to Lyttelton then by truck – couldn't fit through Lyttelton road tunnel so went over the hill. Thought weighed 108 ton.
- 28:10 Memory of the big press arriving. Everyone wanted to see what it could do. 'Rolls Royce' of wool dumps. More and more wool coming in.
- 30:20 Explains how they stored wool for the Wool Board when prices collapsed. Staff numbers increased. Filled up a lot of old stores even in Land and Services building. Probably 20,000 bales of wool Board wool – thought it over a three year period.
- 31:59 Clarification on what happening around 2003 with quantity of wool reducing. Talks of woollscours closing or amalgamating. Some of co's dealt with faded away. Client base reduced.
- 33:09 Talks about Turnbull buying No 4 wool store – off Wrights Stephenson around 1993/94. Tells of organising the building to be gutted by the Yacht Club and material used for new Yacht Club building.
- 35:00 New Store took about 10,000. No 2 store staff work in no. 4 store with a bit of help from No. 1 store. Usually just 2/3 people in store. Memory of setting up Canterbury Wool Dumpers and why Turnbull's bought into it. Talks of it 'humming along for a while'. David running the dump side of it in No 1 store.
- 37:20 Talks of Doug and Barry responsible for getting staff for fulltime jobs – David organise casual staff. Brief talk about how he assigned staff to different jobs.
- 39:10 Mentions Barry coming in as Manager after Doug. Barry left around 2000 and then no Manager. Explains what happened after Barry left. Andrew took books to Turnbolls. Wool reduced a bit but still quite busy. 2007 when he left things still going well but eventually dumping side fell away.



- 40:49        Talks about leaving the company and why.
- 42:05        Clarification on role of Timaru Wool Dumpers and Canterbury Wool Dumpers.
- 43:10        Brief memory of Dick Davidson and Hugh. Perceptions of how community saw the company. Andrew and Ben working at Turnbolls in school holidays.
- 45:20        Brief comment on people being hit with forklifts at various stages. One person having leg broken when bale dropped on them. Reflecting on OSH in the workplace while he was at DCT. Mentions forklift accidents.
- 47:50        Memory of Andrew coming to see the leaks in the sheds on sunny days not when it was raining. Talk of staff social interaction. Reflects on time at Turnbull's as being pretty good.

**End of Interview**

## **DC Turnbull & Co Project Summary**

It has been a pleasure to complete this project on DC Turnbull memories at the time of its 120<sup>th</sup> anniversary. As an oral historian each opportunity to research then interview on a particular topic is seen as a privilege. Each person in this project has generously provided insights into the running of the company. While time can play tricks on our memories in terms of exact dates any discrepancies within the interviews can later be clarified through documentation housed in the DC Turnbull 'museum'. Any inconsistency with dates does not, however, take away from the significance of the interviewee's memories and accounts of the days they worked at DC Turnbull & Co.

Each interviewee has been given a copy of their interview. Interview agreement forms have been signed and each person understands that the interviews will be housed in the South Canterbury Museum and a copy will go to Susan Turnbull who is currently planning on writing a history of the company. Any special stipulations on their forms regarding access should be noted by the Commissioners of this project, the DC Turnbull Board.

The original starting place for this project was a request by Susan Turnbull to interview her father, Hugh Turnbull. As Hugh's interview was independently commissioned it is not included in these files. For completeness sake it would be beneficial to have Hugh's interview included with those that go to the museum. If it is appropriate it may well be worth suggesting this to him.

The interviews have been copied on to a pendrive for ease of delivery, however, it should be recognised that a pendrive is not meant as a long term storage device and so the project should be copied and stored on a computer. With constant technological changes it is important for the interview material to be upgraded to new mediums as they develop to prevent the interviews from becoming inaccessible. Your History keeps a copy of the project for one year, as we are not an archive, after this time we will contact you to ensure you no longer need our copy and then it will be deleted from our files.

Each of the original copies of the agreement form is enclosed. I would suggest that a photocopy of the form is sent out to each of the interviewees reiterating the intention for the project to be housed at the museum along with thanks for being a part of the project.

Thank you again for the opportunity to work on this project.

Ruth Low  
Your History

In order to ensure the company history is well preserved for future projects here are a few suggestions;

- Appoint a member of staff as company “Archivist” with the responsibility of gathering material for the archive.
- Compile a list of the sort of things that should be kept. This may include Annual Reports, Financial Reports, letters, Sale and Purchase Agreements, pamphlets, brochures, proposals, advertising material and newspaper cuttings.
- Ensure that each item is dated and that the source is noted.
- Set up a digital file to act as an archive and consider also storing hard copies of originals.
- Invest in some archival boxes to store hard copies. These are acid free and slow down deterioration in the paper.
- Keep all photos at the maximum file size. Do not laminate photos and keep hard copies of photos in archival albums. Date and caption photos as they are taken. Check spelling of names and places at the time.

# DC Turnbull Oral History Project

## Proposal

DC Turnbull's 120<sup>th</sup> celebration seems an apt time to take stock and look back over the life of the business. Susan Turnbull is proposing to write a history of the company. The company archive will be a rich source of material for Susan's work. A collection of oral accounts of those involved in the business would add another layer to the written sources and enliven the history.

Obviously, it is not possible to interview everyone. To that end Susan is suggesting the need to carry out one more major interview and five minor ones. Matt Mayo's name has been put forward by Susan as the person most appropriate for the fuller interview. The minor interviews would be made up of a mix of past employees and clients. Obviously, you would want to interview those that go as far back as possible. The interviews would cover such things as the individual's memories of their time at Turnbull's, what their role was, memories of other staff, major events in the life of the business, the changes and developments in the business along with highs and lows.

To assist Susan in her writing the interviews would be summarised or abstracted. We are not proposing to complete a full transcription of each interview as this is hugely time consuming and would increase costs considerably.

## Things to Consider

We would need a list of names and phone numbers of those to be interviewed. It would be appropriate if proposed interviewees had been approached by Turnbull's already and that they had a clear understanding of what the interview was to be used for. A standard interviewee agreement form used by the National Oral History Association of New Zealand would be filled out and signed at the end of each interview. (Document attached)

As the commissioning body for this project it is important for you to think about where the interviews will be subsequently archived. We would encourage you to consider having them housed as a collection at the South Canterbury Museum. Copyright of the interviews would also need to be clarified.

## Costs

1 major interview	\$750
5 minor interviews @ \$400	<u>\$2,000</u>
	<u>\$2,750</u>

This includes an abstract, a copy of the interview for the business and a copy to be burned on disc for each interviewee

| Travel - \$0.77c per km. Any travel to interviewees outside of Timaru would be charged at this IRD mileage rate.

## **Timetable**

Work would begin as soon as we were given the list of interviewees. It is difficult to place an end date on the project as the interviews are conducted at the convenience of the interviewee. We are therefore dictated to by their availability. The aim would be to have the project tidied up before Christmas.

## **Progress So Far**

Work has already focused on background research, carried out at the DC Turnbull's office archive and South Canterbury Museum in preparation for Hugh Turnbull's interview. The interview with Hugh has been carried out in short weekly interviews starting from the 15<sup>th</sup> September. Some lovely memories of the business have been collected so far. The interview has recorded Hugh's memories of his grandfather, DC Turnbull, and his knowledge of the beginning of the business. It covers Hugh's working life at Turnbull's and memories of the various roles he filled. Explanations of the various departments and their workings are given along with brief memories of various staff. There are memories of the shipping department and the development of the shipping agency work. Hugh recalls what happened to coastal shipping with the advent of the interisland roll on/roll-off ferries. Also, he reflects on the impact of containerisation to the stevedoring side of the business. There are brief memories of the 1951 Waterfront strike and the development of the all-weather meat loader at the wharf.

There are likely to be gaps in what has been gathered so far. If Susan would like any other material collected I will go back for further short interviews.

## **About Us**

We are two freelance oral historians and writers working part-time in Timaru who have teamed up to form a partnership, 'Your History'.

We were recipients of an Oral History Award in 2012 for "Tales of Century" a project, conducting ten interviews on elderly South Canterbury residents. In 2010, we received an Oral History Award for the "To the End of the World" project - the story of five friends' and their cross-Tasman migration in the 1950s, now housed at the Alexander Turnbull Library.

In 2011, we undertook seven interviews for the Caroline Bay Association Centenary. This project focused on key figures involved in organising of the annual Caroline Bay Carnival, an iconic event in South Canterbury. This project was supported by the South Canterbury Museum.

We also completed a reunion project for the Waimataitai School's 125<sup>th</sup> Celebration in 2007. This involved interviewing key figures; past teachers, Chair of the Board of Trustees, the current Principal, long-term staff members as well as collecting brief interviews with past and present students. The Collection is archived at the South Canterbury Museum.



We have recently completed a history of the Canterbury trucking company Hilton Haulage Ltd. This involved us conducting interviews with staff and management and using them as a basis to write a book, "20 Years on Hilton's Highway" which was published in July 2014.

We continue to be commissioned to conduct individual life histories locally. Currently we are working on 20 interviews on Timaru's inshore commercial fishing industry.

Ruth has a Masters in History with Distinction from Massey University.  
She is a published author.

"On the Hoof. The Untold Story of Drovers in New Zealand" was released by Penguin Publishing in July 2014.

Linda has a BSc and a post-graduate Diploma in Journalism from Canterbury University. She has previously worked as a journalist for Radio New Zealand and as an Archivist for the Radio New Zealand Sound Archives before entering the world of oral history.

Linda Hepburn & Ruth Low  
Your History