

TAPE 190A AMBROSE MURRAY Recorded on 7th July 1983

1:24	Ambrose went working after completing primary school at Abermain. Started at Abermain No 2. Started as a tracker. The pit closed for about 4 years and then it reopened in about 1936. He was unemployed living on 6/8 a week. You couldn't live at home. Many men had an address in King Street belonging to Dickie Harris (Hurst?) so everyone could get the dole. It was a one room batch with about 88 men registered living there. An inspector came around once expecting a boarding house and found this one room batch and did nothing about it. If you gave your home address you couldn't get the dole.
3:05	The dole was 6/8 a week but a husband and wife didn't get two payments of 6/8. They got about 11/3.
5:15	Sundays were spent taking the family out on the horse and buggy and while they were away people broke into the house to rob them. When they saw how little they had they left a donation on the table.
5:46	Ambrose's schooling was very limited. He lost fingers in the cage down the mine. He was holding the gates and the bolt which had worn over the years just dropped and "down came the monkey and landed on my hand and the gate." "Twenty one years ago last May".
7:09	He was cabled out when he was 21 – he went to a sheep station at Moree, returned to Richmond Main and then Abermain No 2. in 1942. He was on the Northern District Federation Board of Management .
8:15	Bob Bryant and Norm Smith, Ray Norris were managers there. Ambrose remained at No 2 until " I got my hand chopped off". He went into greyhound racing for 50 years – from 1931 until 1981.
8:58	John Murray was his uncle and he had stud dogs. "Nature's gentleman". His advice regarding alcohol. He started at the pit aged 11 at Neath.
11:51	Ambrose was involved in trialling and breaking dogs in. Racing every Sunday afternoon. The police stepped in and stopped them racing on Sunday afternoon. Two priests had dogs. They raced on a Sunday "sometimes the nuns would sneak down". There was no charge. There were probably 108 dogs run on a Sunday afternoon. 8 to a race. 12 – 14 races. He charged the bookmakers so much and then 2/- for the dog. There were 32 bookmakers at the peak.
16:54	John Murray, his grandfather, came to live at Sawyers Gully. The main Cessnock /Maitland road went through Sawyers Gully, as did the main Morpeth /Wollombi road. Wollombi was known in those days for "Wollombi wool" – tanning bark. It was collected by bullocks from Wollombi taken through to Morpeth and sent by boat to Botany. Sawyers Gully was one of the bullocky's stops. The road went over Native Dog Hill but it was too steep for the horses and the bullocks and they got the convicts to build a deviation round at the bottom of the hill.
19:50	The Farrells (John Farrell) built the first bakery in the district, at Sawyers Gully. The Bakehouse and the wine shop were both owned by the Farrells in about 1890 and later Mrs Monnix took over the Bakehouse.
20:59	John Farrell and Ambrose's grandfather John Murray came out from Ireland together and married two sisters. The sisters' name was Walsh originally from Ireland and then from New Zealand.
21:49	The bullock drivers played cards all night and often a bullock was their stake. That was the cash in hand.
22:18	Dennis and Barney Farrell. Martin Farrell.

22:42	The Sawyers Gully school – the original school was Mick Frame Drive, Abermain. Ambrose’s father went to school there. John Farrell’s brother Martin, worked at Abermain No 1 or 3. He also went out looking for gold.
24:25	Dennis’ grandfather, old Joe Farrell and old Martin Farrell looked like twins and they were no relation. Old Joe was the drover who brought all the cattle and sheep to the slaughter yards.
25:05	The bakehouse was opposite the school. A second bakehouse was built later.
26:13	The Cross Roads. Charley Edwards had the wine shop near Weston. His brother had the vineyards out there.
27:23	There was an orchard on the left coming towards Cessnock – Donnin’s. Mosley’s. Peter Baus were on the right. Joe Griffiths was the head slaughterman at the Coop stores at Kurri. On the right hand side his grandfather John Murray had a house and a 50 acre paddock which was no good.
29:10	Wilson Barrett. Barney Kempe. Bobby Smith. Mrs Huston. Reg Wyburn came from Bishop’s Bridge. Dulcie Farrell nee Griffiths.
34:32	His grandfather took over the wineshop from the Farrells and “unfortunately him and the boys were the best customers”.
34:52	Abermain and Weston were bag towns in those days.
35:34	His grandfather died in 1926/7 when he was a young boy.
36:37	As a boy Jack and his father would walk with a billy to Nulkaba. It was a 5 mile walk. They’d boil the billy and walk home. It was an 8 hour day.
37:30	John Murray told Ambrose the story of smelling the rubber on the road when a car came through. All the cars heading for Newcastle couldn’t get through Pete’s Ferry and had to go through Sawyers Gully.
38:37	Bullock teams doing 4 miles an hour - Black Water Hole – named before Sawyers Gully. The school was known in early records as Heddon. Early football teams. Mayfield Abermain. The Pagan Football team. Fr Cullen.
42:19	The nuns travelled by train and then by Joe Doyle. They taught in the Catholic hall before they taught at Billy Goat Hill.
44:04	They would hold a euchre party and dance and then have tea and cakes out the back. One Friday night Tommy Junor put an old boot in the tea and people remarked that it was different to the usual billy tea and the following week he put in a cake of soap.
45:14	Big Hurdler Tomsey was an ostler in the stables at Abermain. They gave the horses 5lbs blocks of Epsom Salts – he put a 5lbs block in one pot and 5lbs in another.
46:13	Charley Dando – May Day Sprint – Tommy Junor put a clock on Charley to see how he’d go and Tommy told him “No good Charley – your left foot is too fast for your right”.
48:28	The Lodge Banners – where are they?
48:55	Tape duration.