Full transcript of an interview with

PADDY AND DAPH FAHEY

circa 1977

By Janice Kelly

Recording available on CD

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A series of dots, .... .... .... .... indicates an untranscribable word or phrase.

Sentences that were left unfinished in the normal manner of conversation are shown ending in three dashes, - - -.

Spelling: Wherever possible the spelling of proper names and unusual terms has been verified. A parenthesised question mark (?) indicates a word that it has not been possible to verify to date.

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Mr Fahey, when did you first come to Kangaroo Island?

PADDY FAHEY [P.F.]: 1948 or twenty-eight years ago.

And how did you come?

LS: By boat from the mainland. We had our own plough and trailer which was loaded up with goods and chattels ….. ….. ….., and one man that was working over there and the truck driver, Dick Wilson, he was always in to meet the boat in case anybody was on it. ….. ….. here and see the furniture and all and that and out ….. …..

What was the road like then?

LS: Oh, it was just dirt and gravel, sort of thing. (loud knocking of microphone)

Mrs Fahey, how many were there in your family then?

DAPH FAHEY [D.F.]: Five. Children ….. ….. ….. …..

And where did you live when you got here?

VS: In the hut ….. ….. ….. bottom end of the huts.

What do you mean by ‘huts’?

VS: The sheds or whatever you like to call them. We called them huts then.

And this was everybody went to live in these huts?

LS: Yes, yes. Had about ten of them up or partly up, and as each one came in they finished them off, and if they wanted more room they just finished a bit more of them off.

There were two families –

LS: Per hut.

– per hut, and partitioned off in the middle.
LS: Yes.

**What were your facilities like, inside the hut?**

LS: We had plenty of shelves but there were no blinds. The lining was on one side on one side, and not on the other side on the other side. (laughter)

No problems there. Wasn’t that a bit draughty, though, a bit cold?

LS: Oh, they were cold and draughty ..... ..... ..... 

VS: The bathroom was the worst, it wasn’t partitioned at all, and that was out on the back verandah. Just ..... 

Yes.

VS: Pretty draughty.

**What sort of – how did you heat your hot water?**

VS: In a copper.

LS: If you wanted any privacy you ..... in the dark. (laughter)

**Sort of air-conditioned job? What did you cook on, Mrs Fahey?**

VS: On a wood stove.

**Like a number – Metters stove?**

LS: Number two.

D.F.: Number two. (sound of coughing)

P.F.: You’d have to go from here to Camelback and get a load of stumps to burn in it.

That’s quite far, isn’t it? How far would you think that would be?

LS: ..... ..... , about eight miles or nine miles ..... ..... the stumps.

That would be a real excursion to go and fill up the wood heap, wouldn’t it?

LS: Yes.

**During the daytime, Mr Fahey, what sort of work did the men do?**
LS: Oh, well, when we first came we used to have to go with the surveyors for about a fortnight, go away cutting tracks for them. And then, you know, work just around the place. But there was only two tractors and two drivers, and you had to do so much before you’d become a tractor driver. That meant you went up two bob a week.

**You sort of had an apprenticeship, stepping up?**

LS: Yes, well, there was only the two tractors. Jack Chapman was out with the surveyors, Ross ….. ….. drive one of the tractors and Jack Polites would drive the other. But as tractors came in, as the people were there, the longer they were there, they got lifted up into tractor driver, and then you got a couple of extra bob a week.

**Mrs Fahey, five children – you must have found it a little bit difficult to cope, living in such close contact with other families. Did you find that there was any interference with your privacy, like ….. ….. …..**

VS: Not really. We had our own ….. ….. divided up the boys and girls, boys in one room and the youngest come in with us.

**Well, how did you get on about food supplies?**

VS: We had to go to Kingscote once a week on a truck with a big tarpaulin over it, and we’d all go in – seats were ….. and we’d go into Kingscote and get in stores from there.

**Was there ever a shop out there?**

LS: Yes, well, several years later Mrs Day put up a little shed down where the research centre is walking along the road there, that was there for quite a few years.

**That would have been open once a week, or – – –?**

LS: Three times a week, she used to come out? Was it three times, or twice a week, something like that.

D.F.: Twice a week, and then it got down to once a week ….. ….. ….. ….. …..

**What about bread? Did you have to make your own, or were you able to get that from Kingscote?**
LS: Arthur Williams used to bring it out and drop it off ….. ….. ….. Drop it off up the corner, or the District Clerk, if he was in Kingscote, he’d pick it up. Taffy Williams used to make one run a week.

What about meat?

LS: Oh, you went round and bought a couple of sheep wherever you could, for a while, each. Then they decided they’d have a community, and they used to go away and buy ten or fifteen sheep and run them in a little paddock over there. And those that were in the camp during the week would kill the sheep, dress them and then those without work on tractors during the week would kill on Sundays, then it was split up amongst them.

What about power? What did you have for lighting your hut, Mrs Fahey?

VS: ….. lamps.

Did you ever get thirty-two volt, while you were there?

LS: No, there was not any electricity in the huts at all. Candles and ….. ….. …..

Yes. What about mail? How did you get your mail?

LS: It was brought out – we got it once a week from Kingscote in the start, and then the District Clerk used to go in sometimes on a Wednesday and pick it up, tip it out on the floor and each one would sort it out.

Until quite recently you had a post office here. When did you start?

LS: No, the post office was with a farm over to ….. ….. ….. ….. department owned the farm ….. ….. ….. from there.

Did you actually – what, you held the licence for the first post office?

LS: Non-official post office.

And how many years did you do this for?

VS: Twenty-one years.

That’s quite a long time to be giving service to people. (pause) How did you find that the people around the Kingscote area reacted to new people coming into the district?
LS: When we first came here, when we walked into the shop, they’d just walk up and down the inside waiting for a Kingscote person to come in before they’d serve you, but after a while they gradually sort of served you because it wasn’t ….. in the first place.

It must have been something of a shock, actually, for them to find people coming to live, where they’d been undisturbed for some – – –.

LS: Oh yes, course they didn’t know what it was, it was on such a big – it’s got to be on such a big scale and blown up for all these people coming in with their new ideas and all this. Sort of knocked them a bit.

The children’s schooling, Mrs Fahey, how did you get on there?

VS: There wasn’t any school at the start because they stayed home. And then they got a bus to Kingscote and they used to go there until the school started out at Parndana, ….. the primaries. ….. children ….. ….. …..

LS: ….. ….. ….. …..

VS: Then you’d think about was, you know, after school ….. ….. After the school opened out here we used to take the children, the ….. ….. ….. ….. …..

How long were you in the camp before you came onto your farm?

VS: Three and a half years.

That’s quite a long while, wasn’t it? At the time, during those early years, did you envisage that Parndana would develop as it has done?

LS: Oh, yes. We thought – actually, the first Parndana site was supposed to be ….. ….. ….. ….. ….., but I think the office part was a bit close to the ….. so they decided they’d make one out there in the swamp. ….. ….. ….. …..

Well, looking back to the day when you first decided to come over here, would you change any of it now?

LS: Well, see, we – no, I don’t think so. We actually came over here just to help out for twelve months as an apprentice ….., ….. ….. ….. ….. ….. South-East …..

How long was it before you started getting any return from your farm?
LS: A long time. Because we only started off with a hundred and twenty-eight sheep, that’s all we were allowed to run.

On how many acres?

LS: Seven hundred. A return? ….. ….. ….. ….. our costs.

No, not really. But I suppose it would be the first full cheque.

LS: Well, about two years ago we got a cheque. All the others went to the Lands Department. (laughter) Oliver Veale used to say, ‘Don’t forget ….. ….. ….. money, ….. ….. ….. ….. ….. ….. bits of paper.’

And what about you, Mrs Fahey, would you change anything?

VS: I don’t think so. We’ve been very happy here.

END OF TAPE: END OF INTERVIEW