

**Interview with Allen Horder 5/7/06**

Interviewer: Interview with Allen Horder on the sixth of July, fifth, fifth of July 2006.

Interviewer: Have you given your consent to take part in this research?

Allen: Yes

Interviewer: Do you understand I am not being paid, and, from any source for this research?

Allen: [Allen Nods].

June: Yes or no.

Interviewer: [Laughing] Its alright I know you nod, I can write it in. Do you understand that the finding will be my own perspectives supported by this interview and other kinds of historical sources?

Allen: Yep, I understand.

Interviewer: Do you understand that, sorry hard without my piece of paper, do you understand that although you read my ad in the Common Cause I am not working for the union or any other political body.

Allen: Yep, I understand.

Interviewer: And, I've done my own perspectives haven't I. I think that's all of them. You've got the idea anyway. Just so this is all about social history and it's my perspectives from these interviews and other research and all that sort of thing, and I'm not working for anyone or anything like that.

Allen: Wouldn't matter if you were.

Interviewer: Well it could change my findings a little bit if I was, but I'm not. So it's just me.

First thing could you give me a bit of background about yourself, so where you were born, where you went to school, all that sort of thing.

Allen: Born in Weston, want the date too? Twenty second of the second thirty five. I was born in the house next door. Moved in here . . . I went to Weston Public School. I left there when I, oh, left there when I was sixteen I think, and started in the coal mine. No I never actually, sorry, I started there

June: Chook farm.

Allen: At the chicken place out here. Collecting eggs. I left there. I started up at the Colder factory at Cessnock. I don't know how long I was there, might have been six months to twelve months, something like that, and I got a job at Hebbon, Hebbon Number 2. Yep, out that way, about four kilometres away, till it closed down in 72. When it closed down I left there and was off work for a while. Anyway, I decided to go down to the Cardiff Work Shops at Cardiff, and I, I think, six months I think, we were there. And, I worked harder

there than I did in the coal mine. Because it was working underground all the time down out the pit, and I come down there I had to work outside in the hot sun. And I couldn't take it. And I, of course I got all the muck jobs down there. Anyway, the job come up at Stockton Borehole, and that's when I kicked off there.

Interviewer: So did you have any family who were miners?

Allen: On the mother's side.

June: Grandfather.

Allen: Yeah grandfather he was.

June: Most of your uncles.

Allen: Yeah, my father he worked in the pit. But he never went underground. He was on pit top.

Interviewer: Oh right.

Allen: And, the pit he was, this pit out here [pointing in the direction of his father's pit], when he finally retired, they stuck me up on his job.

Interviewer: Oh, OK.

Allen: And I made a few big mistakes up there, everything, because they're all button jobs. You know I put a few, skips they call them. I put a few, a few of them into the ditch a few times. I wasn't very popular. It's because I pressed the wrong button. And all this pressing button business, it's a bit out of my class. But I lasted there a long time, that job, but, I went down the, like I said, when I started at Borehole down there I was on night work. From, it was half past six wasn't it. Half past six start, at night. Till half past one in the morning. And get home and into bed at about . . .

June: Two o'clock.

Allen: Two o'clock. Winter time, get home, she wasn't happy when I crawled into bed along side her. Put my cold feet on her. [Referring to June].

Interviewer: [laughing] I can understand that.

Allen: Then, I left there, they transferred us over to Teralba, and they put us off site and on the bolting machine, the Wombats they call them. That was the name of them. They're driven by air and water. And every time the miner would cut in so far, you know, you'd have to go out in exposed roof, and go bolting, putting these straps up. And if you were lucky, you'd bolt from here, from here to that old clock over there [indicating around 4-5 metres], out in front of the miner, with all this roof falling down around your head. We were lucky we got out of that alright. But, using these chemicals putting these . . . some were alright it was though the really solid ones, we had two of them, and they were so long [showing length with hands] and you'd have to shove them up these holes. But, yeah, but going back to Borehole, I was over there, we worked over there putting props and putting

slabs, long slabs up. And used, used to cut them, cut them with a hand saw half the time until they decided to bring these air saws in and they were pretty good.

June: What about down at Teralba too?

Allen: I don't know. Yeah, that's about it. I can't think of no more.

Interviewer: That's O.K. When you started at Teralba, obviously you were married by that time?

June: Oh well and truly.

Interviewer: Do you remember how old you were?

Allen: When I started at Teralba?

June: Oh, it was 88. Forty something.

Allen: Well Hebbon Number 2 closed down in 72.

June: I will work it out.

Allen: When I turned fifty eight I had to go and get bypasses done. And, had them done in Prince Henry Hospital in Sydney. And they supposed to done three, but they only done two. I started back down at Teralba on light duties. Walking around doing nothing. Boring, very boring. I used to go for a couple of mile walk every morning when I got to work [laughing] boss didn't know. Yeah.

Interviewer: So have you always lived here while you were mining, at Weston?

Allen: Pardon love?

Interviewer: Have you always lived here at Weston?

Allen: Yeah, always, always.

Interviewer: You used to travel?

Allen: Yeah always travelled. Yeah. Chappy I used to go to work with, we'd start work at half past six at night, and he'd lob here at five past six. We had to go twenty two kilometres to get to work.

June: [laughing] He had to go down by six thirty.

Allen: Come out the bath houses, shoes all undone, boots undone, half a shirt on, race across. Oh, can't believe we didn't get killed. Yeah. What date? [Question directed to June]

June: In 88 he was fifty three.

Interviewer: Fifty three when you started at Teralba.

Allen: Back then my [can't understand next words]

Interviewer: So when you initially got into the coal mines, so which was at this what was it?

June: Hebbon

Interviewer: Hebbon. Did somebody get you the job.

Allen: I think my father spoke up for me, you know, since he was working there at Hebbon. Jobs are easier to get them days, not like now, where you've got to go through a degree to get into them. You know, I didn't get no degree or no nothing, I was the biggest dunce in Weston school. That's why I didn't get to High School.

Interviewer: So you never got a trade or anything like that?

Allen: No, No trade. No. We got this, we got this [unable to understand next words] factory, from, we bought a couple of bottles, I used it on me, bottles go through and when they pull a drink and that you've got to see there's nothing in them, in the bottom of them. A bloke come back off the truck one day and in the bottom of the bottle there's dead flies in the bottom. What have you got to say?

Interviewer: Okey dokey, what is a question to get you started. Do you remember your first day at Teralba?

Allen: God!

Interviewer: I'm testing you now.

Allen: Good reason love good reason. No really.

June: Pretty much the same as any day, wasn't it. One day he was a Borehole then he went to Teralba wasn't it.

Allen: All days are alike. Bit, suppose it was a bit strange, going different place and different faces.

Interviewer: Do you remember the events of the amalgamation between Borehole and Teralba?

Allen: Not really. No. Just another, walk into one walk out of another.

Interviewer: So what did you think mining as a job. What's your opinion of it?

Allen: Excuse me love?

Interviewer: What's your opinion of mining as a job?

Allen: Oh, good. It's only what you get used to. I had six good mates I was working with. I, when I retired I missed them for a couple of months.

June: If it wasn't for his mates I wouldn't have had him. They carried him basically when he was sick and didn't know it. Lucky he didn't have the heart attack at work.

Allen: What's next?

Interviewer: So tell me what it was like to work in a unit? You mentioned your mates. What was it like to work there with them?

Allen: I told you before, it was quite hot. Good working with the boys and that you know. The old deputy there, he was, every time we had a full moon he'd go off his head. We used to go down, we'd start, we used to go down and he was a terrible liar. Making stories up about fishing. And we'd go down for something, go down the transport, get out in the crib room, all sit around and got him talking about fishing. Half an hour we'd have him talking about fishing before we started work. We enjoyed it. Half the shift was gone. Yeah, he wasn't a bad old fella, one bloke couldn't get on with him, he wanted to fight him a few times. Had to cool them down.

Interviewer: What's some of the funniest things you remember?

June: Some of the things that his deputy did [Laughs]

Allen: Some of the things, its funny things, one of them, there's a lot of rats down the pit. And one bloke used to have a box, and he used to keep his, keep the rat in a box, and he'd take it home at the weekend and, and sometimes you'd get, you'd start off out on the locos, on the locos, you start out from out-by they call it. And there's this switch hanging down with a light on it, and you had to pull the light switch to let anyone on the other end to stop travelling through. And when you get to the other end you switch it again. Not looking up this time going through, put my hand up like that, and there's this dead rat hanging on the switch. That's one of the things. Yeah, we had some good times.

Interviewer: So you said the conditions were dusty. What were sort of the most dangerous things that went on at Teralba?

Allen: Like I said, the bolting out in front of a miner, which they don't do now. They bolt off the side of the miner. It's not so, it's no where near as dangerous because when you were out in front of that miner, the roof's not like this here, it's all broken, split, and sagging and you've got to get in there and put your first bolt in before, and tighten it up and hold it there before she'd fall down around your ear holes. You did about, six, six hole in either strap. You'd either put about two or three of those up, back a couple of feet, spaces a couple of foot. But that's the most dangerous part I think, when we were, that's before they got the side miners.

Interviewer: And you said before to me that miners weren't paid enough.

Allen: Well . . .

June: Not at Teralba they weren't.

Interviewer: Not at Teralba. How come?

Allen: Well, bonus for us. If you don't make any bonus, you don't get no money. You didn't get no bonus, much bonus at Borehole, down there we didn't get no, much bonus at Teralba either. But these pits up the line, Muswellbrook and all them places up there, they were on terrific bonuses.

June: For the conditions they worked in.

Allen: They get this bonus system, some, you go in, you get in to working and that, and you got to try and keep up with the young ones. And they're going flat out, you got a bit of age on you and you can't keep up with them, you know, because they want to get more coal out, more coal out. They don't care what they do, they do it, breaking all conditions.

June: Just before he retired they started getting a little more bonus, I think it was about two hundred dollars a week bonus, compared to up the Valley where they were getting two thousands some weeks. But the wages were pretty awful, but we managed, paid off our house and all that. Raised kids.

Allen: That's what I for my present from Teralba when I retired. The glassware.

Interviewer: Oh, that's nice, was that from . . .

June: Management.

Interviewer: From management was it.

Allen: Oh . . .

June: Yeah, that was from management.

Allen: Oh yeah, that was from the main management and the mates that I worked with they all [word unclear] in and bought a camera for me.

Interviewer: Oh how nice. So how was your relationship, like you said, was it your undermanager . . .

June: Deputy.

Interviewer: Deputy was a bit of a liar . . .

Allen: Oh . . .

June: He told stories more than he lied.

Allen: Hey, shoosh [to June]

Interviewer: How was the men's relationship with their bosses as a general rule. How did they act . . .

Allen: What the other five men in my unit. With that bloke?

Interviewer: With any boss.

Allen: Oh, pretty good, you know. All well up. We, on this shift we were in, we didn't see the deputy, and you might see the undermanager every so often, but very rare. But the undermanager, we, I can't think of his name, he was alright. You know.

June: I know when he had to stop work, after he had the bypass, and they, a lot of them went out of their way. The guy in the office, [REDACTED] he was great, you know fixed everything up for us and, they were all good.

Allen: I've got a tape in there of my retiring party we had at, up here and most of the, a lot of the blokes I work with are on the tape. It goes for half an hour, bit of half an hour, mightn't be that long. Yeah. Next question.

June: He'd bring his clothes home he'd be wet. Stink. You'd have to wash them two or three times to even get them half decent.

Allen: Right O. Shoot away.

Interviewer: I've got heaps. I can keep you going. Did you get injured in the mines?

Allen: Huh?

Interviewer: Did you get injured working at Teralba?

Allen: Only that time like I said, when they carted me to Wallsend hospital. Yeah

Interviewer: Can you tell the story so I've got it on tape? Didn't you tell me that before I turned the tape on?

June: Yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah. Could you tell me again?

Allen: I told you that when the tape was on didn't I?

June: Yeah the tape wasn't on.

Allen: Yes it was.

June: No it wasn't. Don't argue.

Allen: I'll leave the other part out of it. I, like I said I can't think of it. They called it, I don't know whether they called it a pie carton or something, with rubber wheels on. I forget what we were doing going on with some props or timber on top of the miner or something. I stepped back, and down I went. And they carried me out on a stretcher and put my neck in a brace and next thing I knew was Wallsend Hospital. Just my shirt and a pair of pants, shorts. They checked me out and that. I was certainly sore. And they said that I had to go home. I said how am I going to get home? I said why can't you put me into one of the beds? Cause you, where I was standing I could see the empty beds. I could sit down, no we can't do that. Got a cab for me, sent me home in a cab. Freezing cold. Gets out of the cab, could hardly walk and they told me I had to come back half past eight the next morning. I wasn't very happy. I don't think anybody would be.

Interviewer: No.

June: And I don't drive so he had to drive himself, which was, you know and he could barely walk. And I must say that the cab driver, he was really nice, you know he come in and knocked on the door "don't be afraid I've just bought your husband home" helped him in the door and got him inside and he was great. But I was not impressed.

Allen: Lucky I, I had no other after effects of it.

Interviewer: So what was, do you know what the injury was? Did you break anything?

Allen: No, no never broke nothing no.

June: No mostly muscular, but they thought he'd broken his back to start with. He had a few weeks off with that.

Allen: And then there were a few, with my head run into a few roof bolts every now and again, and jerk your back. And I'm still getting a lot a neck pain and I think a [word unknown] of them with it. Sure I've got some muscle out in my neck there somewhere. Cause the old roof bolts don't give. Your head does.

June: Deafness caused through the noise of the place.

Interviewer: So that's, you have industrial deafness?

Allen: I have gone for, I went for two claims. The first claim I go, I forget now, it wasn't very much. Five grand was it?

June: Oh no, it wasn't that much. It was about two or three.

Allen: Two or three. And they said oh well you can always go again so months and months later, it might have been longer, a couple of years I suppose. I went again. A couple of old, I won't call that, a couple of old doctors there, with each other ready to die, and asking me all these questions and that. And all the boys said you wont get much the second time, you'll probably get less. I got more. I got seven thousand.

Interviewer: Good!

June: We weren't going to fight with them.

Interviewer: No. So over the time you've been mining, so you mined from, what date did you start, sorry, at Hebbon?

June: About twenty, twenty odd years out there wasn't it.

Allen: Twenty two years at Hebbon. I had about twenty, twenty odd years down at Borehole and Teralba.

Interviewer: So has mining changed, or did mining change very much over that time?

Allen: No.

Interviewer: No!

Allen: I went, at the pit, pit out here, Hebbon Number Two, I started there when, just after mechanization started. Had the horses, only had one horse left there then.

Interviewer: Did the conditions change very much? Like did the union get you better conditions or anything like that over the time period?

Allen: Nah. Na. You don't get better conditions in a coal mine. Some places you do, other pits you might, but the pits I've been at they've been rough.

Interviewer: So what made them rough? What makes one pit better than another?

Allen: The earth conditions. Like talk to some blokes who work in other mines and they say Oh we've got good roofs and we can go out so far without using any bolts and all that. And I say yeah come down to Teralba or Stockton Borehole and have a look at that! I, one, what part was that, where did I bring that hunk of petrified wood from?

June: I think that was from Borehole. Or Teralba. Teralba I think.

Allen: I bought home a hunk of tree about so long by that round [showing me dimensions with hands, about 40cm by 15cm in diameter] petrified wood. You could hardly lift it up with two hands. It was really heavy. And up in one part there, up in the roof all little ferns, in the roof. But as soon as you go to chop them out they break all up. You couldn't bring them home. We tried that many times its not funny. I don't know if that was Borehole or Teralba.

June: I think that was Teralba, just after you went over there. It was probably eight to ten inches long and probably . . .

Allen: Only sorry I didn't keep it now.

June: It was so heavy. You couldn't move it.

Allen: Could have used it as a door stop.

Interviewer: Would have made a good one. Bit you might have hurt your foot if you kicked it.

Allen: You'd have broke your foot. Nearly swore then.

Interviewer: Don't worry about that. So what made you finish up mining?

Allen: What made me finish? Getting the bypasses done.

Interviewer: So you went back to work after you had the bypass?

Allen: I went back on light duties. On pit top. That's just mowing lawns and that. Sometimes. Sometimes, more no times than sometimes.

June: They were quite good with that because they didn't have to let him go back. But yet again it was the guy in the office that said to him come back, we will put you on light duties and if you can work through to I think it was March or May the following year, because he had the bypasses in September, that would take him up to an extra years employment, and that gave us a little bit more money, retire with a little bit more. So there again they were really good in that way.

Allen: When I retired down there I had 178 sick days.

Interviewer: And you got payed out for them?

Allen: Mmm (nodding). Payed my car off.

Interviewer: Oh very good.

Allen: They kept saying why don't you take a day off, why don't you take a day off. I said I'm home all day as it is doing this night work. What's the good of taking a day off? I'm home all day.

June: Only probably in the last two or three months before we found out he needed a bypass that he had a day off. Because he just couldn't go to work.

Allen: She's always fight'n ya. She'd always go crook at me "Why don't you take a day off?" What would I take a day off for?

Interviewer: So you were happy enough working night work?

Allen: Yeah I loved it. I'd go over in the morning, at the hotel across the road here and have a couple of beers, come home and have lunch, lay down for a while. It was alright in the winter time, but summer time it got a bit hot.

Interviewer: So if someone came to you and said they wanted to be a coal miner, would you encourage them to do it or discourage them?

Allen: Well, yes I would I think, yeah. Yeah its good getting mixed up with other fellas and working with them and that you know. All the blokes working in a coal mine, they're all pretty decent blokes, but.

June: Its extraordinary the mateship in a coal mine.

Allen: But I, when I worked out at the other pit, out at Hebbon Number Two I worked with a lot of English persons, but I couldn't get on with them because they'd cut your throat to get a job. They'd cut your throat to take your job off you. Pommies as they call them.

June: I hope your not one [laughing and speaking to interviewer].

Allen: No she's not a pommy, you can understand her. She might have pommy relations.

Interviewer: No I don't.

June: We had a soccer player come out . . .

Allen: We're not talking about soccer now!

June: No I'm just saying about old [REDACTED] how he was killed at Teralba.

Interviewer: Killed at Teralba?

June: Got caught up in the belt or something I think.

Allen: Caught up in the end of the belt.

June: It's sad, it's sad at any time I hate hearing about death or anything at any time. But when it's in a coal mine, like the two blokes who were trapped at Beaconsfield.

Allen: Want me to switch this off now? [referring to tape]

Interviewer: No, no, no, we can talk.

June: You feel for them because you've got family that worked there or is working there and you know what the conditions are.

Allen: I'm waiting for you to ask any more questions.

Interviewer: No you're right, you're right, I just give you time to think that's all. I just give you time because sometimes it's hard for you just to think off the top of your head.

Allen: Like you say, you only want to know all about Teralba don't you.

Interviewer: Oh no, no, no, I'm happy to hear about your other pits as well.

Allen: Well when I, as I said, when I started out at this pit out here, I don't know how long ago it was that I started out there, I drive around, I was driving around the locos underground. Anyway, we had this loading point we was at, and they ditched five, they call them skips down the pit, five skips on, and I had a shunter, another bloke with me, and they call it a shoe, they put under the wheels so they wont turn, made of steel and that, and they shove them under the wheel. Anyway, it declined, anyway he missed the shoes and away we went, away I went anyway, don't know where he got to, he was alright. As were, as I'm going down all these props sitting up on the side, and were going past, going quick, I was going to make a split decision will I stay on or will I jump off. So I made a decision to jump off. Anyway as I jumped I hit one of these props with my thigh and luckily when I hit it I rolled and there was a ditch between the prop and the wagon, the skips going past about so wide, just wide enough for my body to fall into. And it all clipping down the side of my body, they finally dragged me clear after the skips went past and one of my mates he said, he got hold of my boot and give it a turn like that and he said, you're alright, he said you'll be right, he said nothing broken. And I said ain't there hell! I could feel the [makes a cracking sound with his mouth]. Low and behold, they put me on a stretcher and they carry me out on another loco and that, low and behold couple of kilometres down the road, here's my loco just sitting there. Nothing happened to the loco. Its just sitting there in the side. Just stopped itself.

Interviewer: Oh you're kidding.

Allen: If I'd stayed on I'd have been right. But it's the split decision you've got to take.

June: That was five weeks after we were married. And he had five months in hospital. Ten months off work.

Allen: Up at the hospital they put me in tractions. First of all they put plaster down each side of my neck there, and put the weights on. But that wasn't working, my cape kept pulling off. So they put me out to it, and they put a pin through below my knee, to hold the weight, anyway three months came, there was other blokes in there older than me, in the hospital, three months, they recommended three months and you'd be right, you'd get out. Anyway these just, all these other ones were going out. The physiotherapist come along and he said, they took all the weights off my leg just laying there dormant. He picked my leg up, like that, he said hold it there. Naturally, there been no muscle left in your leg, been laying there that long, just fell down again, cracked the callous in my . . .

June: Snapped it again. He'd been laying for three months with his leg that far off the be in this traction . . .

Allen: That put me back another two months. Five months laying on my back.

Interviewer: Oh my goodness.

Allen: And the only when they let me out, they decided to put me in plaster from my ankle, right up here right round my waist. Sent me out with that on and crutches.

June: That was in November.

Allen: Anyway, I, I don't know how long I was in plaster for, but it was a while. And then they took it off and then they put a calliper on me then. So when, I don't know how much we got paid but it wasn't very much because there shortness in my, there wasn't very much difference between the two legs. Actually, when they knitted, once when they knitted they should have been knitted like that. But they never.

June: About an inch difference I think.

Allen: But I'm still getting at bit of trouble with my knee now.

Interviewer: What happened to your income over that time?

Allen: Oh we get paid compensation then.

June: It makes you wonder, you know even when he was at Teralba, the wages were pathetic, it makes you wonder how we paid off the house, we could because it was a coal board house.

{Discussion about positioning of tape between interviewer and Allen}

June: You know we, even though there are nine years between our children, [unable to make out what June is saying due to tape static].He could have been up the Valley, but its two hours travelling every day. Which he didn't want to do.

Interviewer: So what was the distance from here to Teralba?

Allen: About twenty odd, twenty two kilometres.

Interviewer: Oh OK, so it's really not that far.

Allen: No, no it's only, just across the Blue Gum they call it.

Interviewer: I thought it would have been longer.

June: No about twenty minutes, twenty five minutes. Where as if he'd went up the Valley as I said, it was an hour going and an hour coming, sometimes more. So you know, for the extra dollars.

Interviewer [referring to tape]: If you want to put it up on the table Allen, that's fine.

Allen: I, yeah when I started down at Teralba down there, everybody up there knew me as Allen you know. When I worked down the pit and my father was named Eddy too. Anyway they got tangled up with the pays a few times, so they decided to say call you Allen instead of Eddy. Right-o. So when the pit closed up in 72 I went down there and they didn't know my name and I told all the boys what my name was and I changed my name, I got them to call me Eddy. Her [pointing at June] she used to ring up the office and ask is Allen Horder down there? Allen who, no Allen Horder works down here. There's an Eddy Horder.

June: And even now, they all still call him Eddy. So if we run into anybody they say G'Day Ed, and I think he must have worked with him at the pit. We still see a couple of people socially and they all call him Eddy. And when they had their retirement party, his here and Cliff had his down there, and people from down there and people, and I called him Allen, and his party especially, we had friends from up here and down there they're all calling him Allen and they're all calling him Eddy and they're all going huh?

Allen: All the blokes on that side of the mountain down there, they nicknamed all us on this side of the mountain the Mountain Larry's. We're the Mountain Larry's they call us.

Interviewer: So did you have any other nick names in the pit?

Allen: What?

Interviewer: Did you have any other nicknames in the pit?

Allen: No, no. There were a pair worked out at Hebbon Number Two out there they nicknamed some of the managers and under managers and all them. We called one bloke Chrome Dome, because he had no hair on his head. Chrome Dome.

June: You're a bit like that yourself these days [laughing].

Allen: Another bloke he, called him, I think you called him No Neck, because his head was down on his shoulders.

June: Teralba had an open day down there one day didn't they. We went down and took our daughter and [unable to hear] down but I wouldn't go, not getting me down no hole!

Allen: Took them all down the pit and got down the pit and told them to switch their lights out. Amazing how black it is. Blacker than black. Blacker than black. It's a funny thing that's happened, I never seen it, but over at Borehole there is a shaft, cage shaft and over at Teralba they had a cage at Teralba too and a shaft. But they told me lots of time they found dogs down the pit, raced down the drift you know. But those rats that are down there, are enormous. You'd lay down to cribbo and get, rat, there are garbage tins there but blokes you know what they're like they wouldn't put their stuff in the garbage they just throw it at their feet and that. Just harbouring the rats. Many a time they'd chew through my bag and that, I used to carry a bag down there and they'd chew through the bag. Get at your lunch and that, get at.

Interviewer: Lots of people carried things in tin didn't they. Stop the rats.

Allen: Crib tins yeah. Not many blokes have crib tins anymore either. Wake up and feel something running over your feet and that and yuck rat.

Interviewer: So you used to have a snooze at crib time did you?

Allen: What?

Interviewer: Did you sleep at crib time, sometimes?

Allen: Sometimes, yeah. I could throw a hunk of brattas down on the coal or the dirt. You were that tired you wouldn't take much to go to sleep I can tell you.

June: And he can still go to sleep anywhere.

Interviewer: So did you find the work physically hard?

Allen: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Carrying bolts, yeah. I don't know how I lasted so long. Only skinny bugger I was.

Interviewer: Did many other people last into there fifties mining? Were many other people in their fifties?

Allen: There was yeah. Yeah, yeah. Not to the [can't understand word]. Few, couple of blokes that were a lot younger than me. They were fit too, they were really fit.

June: One of his mates, he retired two years after him at sixty.

Interviewer: Anything else you want to add? Anything else you want to tell me? That you think I should know if I am going to do research on coal mining?

Allen: Don't think so. Yeah we had a few cranky blokes but . . . Got a lot of scars on my legs and that from saw blade flipping up and sticking in my leg. Still got the marks on the bottom on my leg you know from the marks of the saw. I got five teeth marks on the bottom of the leg. Where the coal usually gets you, and leaves a blue scar and that. But, like I said picture a stone as big as that (holding hands up to the size of a soccer ball), if it hits you, knock you out, that heavy, really heavy stuff. And the coal, you know at Teralba and Borehole, I don't know how they sold it. Cause it wasn't good clear coal it was all streaks of stone running through it, you know. But like I said, out at Hebbon number two out here

the coal we were getting out there it was just like that (pointing at table top), sheet of glass. Not a scerick of stone through it you know. I used to bring, when I was young I'd drive the car sometimes, drive to work and I'd bring the car and bring some coal home for the mother and put on the fuel fire out the (clicked in direction of back yard). Put that much on it the whole top of the stove was red (laughs). Yeah it's terrific coal. That was what they called the Holmesville seam. It, its that much deeper than all the other seams, that its, you know they just couldn't, it's too costly to keep getting it.

June: There's still heaps and heaps of coal out there.

Allen: It's a lot deeper than all the other seams. I can't get much more to tell you.

Interviewer: That's OK. Have you got any questions for me before we finish up.

Allen: No I don't think so love.