



Verbatim transcript of an interview with

ALBERT HENRY FLYNN

Interviewer: **Linda Coleman**
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Mr Albert Flynn provided postcards and photographs of old Mullaloo for copying by the Wanneroo Local History Library. To accompany this material an interview was conducted in his Mullaloo home on the 8th January 1994.

LC: Bert would you like to tell me your full name and your date of birth?

AF: Yes, Albert Henry Flynn F L Y N N, born on the 2nd January 1917.

LC: And where were you born?

AF: I was born in Bunbury, we lived in Worsley its 12 miles from Collie on the timber mills there and I was only just born in Bunbury that's all and I went back to Worsley.

LC: OK, and you grew up in that area?

AF: Yes, I was there until I was 18 and then I went to the goldfields, I was up there and joined up from Coolgardie and then after the war I didn't go back there anymore I settled in South Perth, we were there for oh about 30 years I suppose.

LC: And you had a family Bert, you had children?

AF: Yes, we had four boys and a girl.

LC: And eventually you bought a block here in Mullaloo.

AF: Yes, we bought it for the kids for a beach house and we bought the block. I wish I had, what's happened to that piece I had with the date we bought the block and all that on?

LC: I think it was 1958 you said.

AF: Yes, 1958, we come out one Sunday just to have a look at the place and after I, between here and Wanneroo Road there was 2 gangs I suppose you would say of young chaps all having a fight over who was going to get off the track, it was only a sand track and pretty hard to get off at the time and anyhow they sorted that out and got on their way and then we come along and they were, they had a card table and some chairs at the corner of Laurel Avenue and Mullaloo Drive and they were selling blocks of land here so we decided to buy a block and we only went along two or three blocks from where they were selling them and said 'Oh this will do' and that particular block was on Mullaloo Drive was £450. The ones in the next street Marjorie Street were £100 cheaper so £350 and so we just settled for that block. The only thing that was here at that time was what they called the Seaside Gardens, like little caravans with no wheels on and there was a screen for pictures on the tennis court and a few beach shacks down on the beach. Apart from that there was nothing, there was no other roads out of the place only the one sand track in.

LC: Had the blocks been advertised in the paper?

AF: Well I don't know whether they had or not we just happened to, we'd never been here before we were just Sunday driving.

LC: You had never been into Wanneroo area before?

AF: Never ever been in here before, we'd never heard of the place I don't think and we just decided then, because every school holiday my wife always had to take the kids for you know holidays, for the school holidays but she wasn't only taking our kids they were allowed to take their mates too cause they wouldn't go without their mates so she had a house full all the time so we decided then we would buy a block here and build a place and I bought the block and the next weekend I brought the lawnmower out and knocked all the scrub down, there was nothing heavy on it and then I got a truck from work and went down and I had a friend out behind Mornington Mills, he had a mill there and I got timber off him and brought it back and started building straight away, I was actually the first one to start building here, then O'Brien on the block that they were selling them, he brought a gang out and built a house in, you know, in the couple of weeks. But I'd no sooner started building when I was sent over to Victoria, I had to put a crushing plant in Glen Rowan, Ned Kelly's country, for the standard gauge railway they were putting through from Melbourne to what do they call that place? Anyway they used to have standard gauge from Sydney to this place and then from there on to Melbourne it was five foot three gauge and they had to tranship everything there and now it's straight through from Sydney to Melbourne. And I came back and I suppose I was about at least two years building the place at least whereas there was quite a few houses got built in between.

LC: They had builders in to do it.

AF: Yes.

LC: Right can you tell me a bit more about the shacks on the beach?

AF: Well, Charlie Norman a baker from South Perth he was one of the main ones out there and Crisafulli. Mrs Crisafulli she used to, there was a shed down there that they used for a first aid room and she used to bring all her family, she had a big family too and they all used to all camp in that shed there for weekends and holidays and all that and I think the Crisafulli's are still around. Santa Crisafulli family that one and Ned was in the beach ones and they got Ned into the into the Shire, it was the Roads Board then I think, so that they could try and battle to keep their shacks but when they got him in he wasn't allowed to vote then so they missed out on one vote and oh they were a long time fighting about those shacks but they eventually they had to go and then Whitfords had to go and right on down.

LC: How many shacks were there down there?

AF: Not a lot some of them were very rough you know, they were really rugged but there was three or four that wasn't bad, they were better at Whitfords and Hillarys but they weren't the best here.

LC: And what about the caravan park?

AF: The caravan park was good, very good, our kids loved it down there but that was when Merrifield took it over, when the other chap he had it he put all barbed wire around there and if people go to see someone that was staying in there he would bring them out to the shop and you had to talk to them outside, it wasn't a good set up at all but Merrifield threw it open and he let our kids and that go down there and they used to play table tennis and oh they loved it then but no he done a good job. It was a great pity that Merrifield, told me himself that he wanted, he offered that land there when the Council said it was substandard and closed it up, he offered it to the Government, that was to Charlie Court Government cheap so that the Council could do what they wanted to do in the Shire, they wanted to extend the grassed area and the parking area, this would have been the best beach in Australia if that had happened, they should never have allowed houses to be built over there at all so he wouldn't give them the money. Merrifield told me he didn't want to have to borrow money to do it and he wanted the Shire to do what they wanted to do so now we've got that problem over there with those houses and Mullaloo Beach is, well it's just ruined that's all now.

LC: What kind of facilities did he used to have in the caravan park?

AF: Oh he had it quite good, he had septic tanks down there and running water, he had a tank up on the hill that reticulated the park, couch growing there, no it was, I thought it was quite good and he got the job then selling the blocks here afterwards and I think that he was quite happy doing that and he didn't mind that he could go, well he couldn't do anything about it anyway, he got Peter Brothers to bring the dozers in just pushed everything over, all those old shacks and that are still underneath down there and those people are living on those old shacks still under the ground.

LC: So on the caravan park they had a shop and they had a games room did they?

AF: Well yes, there used to be a chap he was Mrs Orton, Merrifield, Mrs Orton and Merrifield's son, they owned the park, they bought it off the original owners and Mrs Orton's brother, he used to play a gramophone, he had a speaker up the tree down there and he used to play records of a night time, that's what our kids used to go down doing that, they had that there and then oh no it was quite good, it was really open when Merrifield took it over, he opened it all up it was good and they had a shop there you could buy food and so forth there that's all there was there was nothing else in the district.

LC: They used to put on entertainment at nights did they?

AF: Well Crisafulli, Ned Crisafulli used to show the pictures once a week or once a fortnight or something when there was people about you know holiday times and that but he used to run the pictures up in Wanneroo so he come down and show a picture here and we used to take a blanket down and drop on the ground and get it full of clover burr and there were no seats there you had to take your own seat but it was quite, we all enjoyed it you know.

LC: He had the screen set up there?

AF: The screen was there permanent yes and it was quite good we liked it here then better than, well our kids they liked it better than they do now you know.

LC: And was there a surf lifesaving then?

AF: No there was no actual life savers, but there was Mrs Crisafulli she used to have the first aid room and I remember our kids would get bluebottle stings and she would put something on them and no it was quite all right.

LC: Did you ever have any...

AF: There was no power, they had their own power plant down there at the Seaside Gardens but there was no other power, when we first come out here it was a long time before we had power and there was no water, we had to put our own bores down and the bores had to be put down in the front of the houses so they could be 100 feet away from the septic tanks or the dry well so you will notice that all the wells are out the front otherwise they'd be in the back and we would have had deep sewerage.

LC: So what did they do for power on the caravan park then?

AF: Oh he had his own lighting plant there.

LC: A generator?

AF: Yes, yes he had a bit of a, yes he did have it for sure.

LC: And what about a phone if they had an emergency down there?

AF: No phone, no, no, no, no phone, Wanneroo was the closest.

LC: Bert would you like to say a bit more about your block?

AF: Yes, well I've got the receipt here. We paid \$112 deposit and @ 6% over three years, the block was 450. We bought it on the 24 April 1958. I remember quite well we were paying this off for about six months and I thought we were never going to pay for it. So rather than let it go on we went and paid it off and at the end of the six months we didn't like this paying interest and, but that was the interest was 6%. I don't suppose that was too bad, that was the block we paid \$112 pounds that was.

LC: And that's your receipt, and once you've cleared your block you brought your own materials in.

AF: Well I cleared the block and then went down to and brought the timber up and there was a young chap I knew his father very well, no not his father his wife's father that's right and he told me that he had this young chap out of work who was a carpenter looking for a job. So I said I would give him a job just putting the floor and the frame up of

this house you see and he said oh that would be fine so I told him to go out and start work out here and he had been out here three days and I to come out for something and when I got out here I discovered he had done nothing. So I went round, he lived in Rivervale and asked him what was going on and he said that he wasn't feeling the best or something and it was such lovely weather he decided to go down to the beach and he said he spent most of his time down there swimming so needless to say he was paid off and that was the finish of him and as I said before I battle along and I got another young carpenter bloke to help me with the frame, he was very good and then we got the framework up and then I had to go away for three months over east so it was just left but there is one thing I will say all the timber and that we had stacked here and I was away for three months I can't honestly say that we lost one bit of timber you know, it was very good. The only thing I have lost here was a long time after, I had a copper in the laundry the old time one, cast iron, and then we put a hot water system on years after and I took it and put it in the back yard and I had a chap stopping here from Kalgoorlie, an old mate of mine he looked after the house while we went around Australia for a trip and when we come back they were advertising chickens up here cheap, you know old ones from the, he said oh you've got this copper here we'll go and get some and boil them up, he was very good at dressing poultry, and when we come home we lifted the lid, we got the chickens all ready to go, we lifted the lid of the copper up to put some water in – no copper – that was the only thing that I lost here was that copper and I know who got it too and anyway that was pretty good I think.

LC: And did you used to come down at weekends while the place was being built?

AF: Weekends, yes, weekends not only as I say bring our own children but all their mates too used to come here.

LC: Yes, and where did you sleep?

AF: We built one room for a start and we put asbestos around that for a start put our tools in there and we used to have five beds in there and the kids used to all sleep in that room and we then eventually got the rest of it put up the outsides and we had the rest of the place, it's only a very small house now but big enough for two of us, all the rest of the family are all scattered around all over the countryside.

LC: And what did you do for power?

AF: Well we had kerosene light, my mother had an old Aladdin lamp that we used to have down the mills, it was a beautiful light, kerosene and we had that and then we had, we eventually we put the bore down and put a tank up so we had water laid on. it wasn't long before that all took place and then I used to have up a..made up a lighting plant myself just a little motor and I used to use it for pumping water out of the bore and I used to pump it up into a 1,000 gallon tank every night and while that was pumping it was driving a 12 volt car generator and that was giving us light and when the tank was full we'd switch it off and go to bed that would be about 10 o'clock at night and during the day we would drain the water out with the sprinklers and empty the tank so that we would have another night for pumping.

LC: Right

AF: Yes, we had no problems.

LC: And you were telling me the story about the cattle.

AF: Cattle, yes well those days they, it was people leasing Whitfords it was all fenced pretty poor fences though because the cattle used to come just straight through the fence anywhere and we had at that time a windmill pumping the water and they used to put their head through to get a little bit of water that was leaking out of the windmill and they used to wreck the mill and everything. The cows were a real problem then but it didn't last too long before things were organised. Duffy's, Duffy's was leasing that, had the cattle run and that's Duffy now he's got that car yard and he owns Trotters, he sold all the land, he got a lot of money out of that. Well known family, yes.

LC: And that fenced land went right down to Merrifield Place?

AF: The fence went right down to Merrifield Place, yes, right down to the beach actually, yes, right down. Wanneroo it's Mullaloo Drive comes from old Wanneroo Road before they put that dog leg in it there and it comes straight out to the beach but now it's split up, it's got five different names now Mullaloo Drive and people that used to come out here to us then they try to find their way now and go into Mullaloo Drive they have a lot of strife. I tell them to come up Whitfords Avenue is the best way to come not to think of Mullaloo Drive.

LC: So Mullaloo Drive is the only access into Mullaloo at that time?

AF: That was the only track in was Mullaloo Drive, there was no road down the beach to Sorrento or no road north but Coopers had a truck coming up here carting limestone, they had a kiln out Ocean Reef they owned land here at Mullaloo, they sub-divided it, that's the land that we bought and they had a kiln up there and they used to also cart sand off the beach into the glass works, they used to do a few trips, not many, but they used to cart because that was 90% lime that sand and if they hadn't come and took that land up there on the beach Mullaloo would have gone under, it was just a desert it was just moving sand you know and then whoever somebody bought the land and they ripped it all up and covered it with overburden and saved it otherwise these houses would have all gone, those houses built along where you are would have all gone under and Coopers had a truck carting that limestone into the glass works because it was 90% lime and then they started carting that at 6 o'clock in the morning down at Kwinana. They were using it down there BHP I suppose and after they stopped carting it from there they used to bring it in from Japan back loading from Japan they used to bring it from there, I don't know what they are doing now.

LC: And can you remember any of the other residents that were around here when you first built?

AF: Of course Henry Lester was right behind but he doesn't live there he lives elsewhere but Henry and the Martins, they are still living here at the back there but I

didn't know a lot of people out here but my memory is just bad, I do remember there is more that I do remember but Webb's and a few more but it is just that my memory is not the best, I suppose at 77 you'd go downhill a bit.

LC: How many streets were there just in this first sub-division?

AF: Not many but first Coopers had built the first sub-division called the names after their wives and families and the other Cooper took over because there was two brothers that owned the area and they split it up. Dan Cooper sub-divided the first and then his brother sub-divided the second lot and they called them all Aboriginal names the second lot, some of them a bit hard to, I don't know how you got on, that's how it come about those names.

LC: So when you first came to Mullaloo the Coopers were mining the sand at the back of Mullaloo here.

AF: Yeah, they were burning lime for the builders and that was one time that the builders only used hot lime, they used to soak it and it used to be really hot, that was Coopers were doing that and then they had this truck carting the sand into the glass works, they used to use for what do they call it, I forget and, but only about two trucks a day that's about all they carted and that went on for a long. I don't know how long Coopers were doing that, they used it for a flux because it was 90% lime, it was almost pure lime and then that sort of cut out as the place grew up then you know after that they brought the dozers in and cleaned all that sand drift up altogether, covered it up with overburden now it's all built on, I don't think there's any vacant blocks left there is there?

LC: I don't think so, there was a problem with drifting sand for a while there.

AF: But not now, it's all built over now with housing, oh what a big problem, really bad at that time.

LC: And do you remember when the surf club first started down here?

AF: Well that surf club has been there a long time it has been there a long time. I just wouldn't have a clue how long but well that snap that I showed you, the last one, those two small ones well the surf club was in that so that surf club has been there a long, long time, the first one, of course they have got a new one, I don't even remember them building it but it was in that snap.

LC: Was it here when you came here?

AF: No, there was no surf club then but it must have been put in soon after I am sure, there was no surf club only just those beach shacks that's all.

LC: And what about the Mullaloo Progress Association?

AF: Yes well that started up more or less trying to get the power and water that's all that started that up, but we didn't have that right from the word go either. Do you remember

the name of the people that chappie he used to be a bank manager or something that was very good, he was the one that really got the power out here, do you remember his name, him and wife? They were a very well known family around Perth but I have often tried to think of their name, I thought you might remember them.

LC: Do you remember what year it was when the power first came out here?

AF: No I don't, I don't remember at all. No it was in '58 when we first came here well it could be five years afterwards I should imagine around about that time because the power didn't worry us at all, we just had the old kerosene light and we had a kerosene fridge too an Old Silent Night I think it was, it used to be alright.

LC: Did you belong to the Progress Association?

AF: Yeah, I used to be in that like everybody else just backed them to get the power.

LC: Can you remember any other issues they were fighting down there?

AF: No, I think one of the early people, what was the chap's name that we put in there into the Shire, Ray Ivan, well it was before Ray Ivan's time I suppose so how long ago would that be, do you remember?

LC: I think that was early '70s.

AF: Yeah, it would have been because it was quite a while before, because where Ray Ivan lives when you come to think of it he's up there near the Blackboy Park well there were no houses anywhere along there that wasn't even sub-divided then that was in the second sub-division so it's a long time before Ray Ivan got in.

LC: Bert, could I just ask you a little bit more about the caravan park, do you recall what it was called?

AF: Yes, Seaside Gardens and the advert used to say "Seaside Gardens 16 miles from Perth" I wouldn't know whether that was correct or not I think it would be.

LC: That was advertised in the newspaper?

AF: Yes, it was a popular little place, we used to get lots of people out here and they used to all say they were honeymooners, but no I liked it down there and it's a darn shame to see it all get bulldozed I reckon, our kids wouldn't come out here after they bulldozed it.

LC: Now they weren't caravans as we know them were they?

AF: They were like this caravan only they had no wheels under them, they were sitting on the sand you know.

LC: And what were they built from?

AF: If I remember rightly it would have been Masonite, yes Masonite because that's what they used to build caravans out of in those days, Masonite, they didn't have aluminium and so forth that we've got today.

LC: And how many caravans were there down there

AF: There was a lot, there was quite a lot as you will see, there's quite a lot right down along there.

LC: And people would come and stay for weeks, people would stay for a week at a time down there?

AF: Oh yes, weekends, it's a great weekend place and holiday place, yes there would be perhaps 20 or 30, well there would be 30 I should imagine, but you wouldn't get them all in this snap there, yes Seaside Gardens, Mullaloo.

LC: A lot of local Wanneroo people used to come and stay there?

AF: Oh I don't know about locals, it could have been but I've spoken to a lot of people recently that said they used to come out here and stop and have never been out here since, they would get a shock now if they come out.

LC: You have seen a lot of changes in Mullaloo?

AF: Yes, I'll say there's been some changes, even the road in here there's that many, it's so different isn't it you used to come Mullaloo. Pearsall's Garage was on the old Wanneroo Road and only a very small garage and then when they shifted the road he had to shift his service station out to the front and then he shifted it again since but to my knowledge that has been shifted three times, Pearsall's Garage and the road used to go straight out then from there but now just so many different roads.

LC: Do you recall when you used to cross Joondalup Lake?

AF: Yes, well that Lake every year that used to flood a bit more and they had to build it up a bit higher and a big higher because each year the water table was rising and I don't know how many times they filled that just to get the cars across there, quite a lot and there was one chap I will always remember, he used to be in the navy during the war, he was very popular. Jack, he lived there near those Lakes, that's where he lived just on the Wanneroo Road side of that Lake, Jack Hasting, everybody knew him, everybody liked him too but as far as I know he was a bachelor I don't think he married but I remember he used to go out fishing and come around Mullaloo when we were all building here and sell the fish because he come here one day and he had a lot of herring and he wanted one and six or something for these herring and he said to Mavis 'Take the lot for one and six because there is a keg on down there and I want to get back,' he was down in the beach shacks, he had a shack down there too and they used to have some great old times down there.

LC: A lot of fishing going on the beach here at Mullaloo?

AF: They used to net, one chap was telling me he used to have a six by four trailer and he used to run the net out round the Mullet and he said he used to fill that trailer up and race into town there and, you know, sell it to the markets or whoever and shops or whatever, that's how the herring...my son one day, he and another couple of his mates, he worked in the Bank of New South Wales and they come out here for their holidays and he went out, straight out to that, where the surf club is and he got 10 crayfish just diving, he got 12 crays there just out in front, just duck diving you know. I suppose they are still there nobody ever bothers about them, he got 12.

LC: Do you recall there being any accidents down here in the early days?

AF: No, I don't remember anything serious. One of our boys at the night time walked into the barbed wire and he got a nasty gash in the leg but that was O'Brien's fault that was and when it happened the caravan park putting the wire there. Merrifield closed it and cleaned that up after.

LC: Who owned the caravan park before the Merrifields?

AF: O'Brien opened it up. He lived in that little low place you know where they were selling the blocks when we come out here, his name was O'Brien and Merrifield bought it off him.

LC: And if you needed emergency treatment you had to go where?

AF: Oh well there would be nothing in Wanneroo, you would have to go into Perth because, now when we were coming out here the last shop coming out was in the other side of the 6WF there, what's the name of that street, there's a shopping centre there now. It was right in the other the last shop because the wife used to be telling me 'I want to get some milk, I want to get some milk' and I keep going and if we missed that shop there, there was no milk.

LC: That's Balcatta?

AF: Yes, no further down than Balcatta. Tuart Hill yes that was the last small shop and of course they had Villanova's up at Wanneroo, that was there but there was no more down this side at all not a thing.

LC: So from Tuart Hill it was just bush?

AF: No, there was scattered houses around but no shops, no shops at all and that was only just one little shop there and people had the market garden and they had the shop in the market garden there. I could have been in that Whitfords for £250, I was working with chaps that was in there, shareholders and for £250 I could have been a shareholder but that £250 was mighty handy to buy sheets of asbestos from Mullaloo but I almost went into it but when they sold that place they done alright but what always amused me they were dying to sell the land there and when they sold it they didn't want to get out of

the shacks then they fought the councils for a long time to hang on to those shacks, they had to be almost tipped out of there and yet they got their money long before.

LC: And that was the Whitfords beach shacks?

AF: That was Whitfords beach shacks yes, there was no track down to the beach. Up on top of the hill about half a mile back from the beach there was a road in there, just a track and that used to wander down through to Whitfords beach but there was nothing straight down past Merrifield Place as we know it now, nothing, no road at all. It was right a way up and that would be the end of the Merrifield and they got quite a bit out it, these people that was in there and I remember there was Toby Deering I remember everyone and Dave, oh just my memory, I knew quite a lot that was in that Whitfords place there, the insurance company bought it the shopping centre up there and they owned this land, they bought this land down here.

LC: That's Northshore?

AF: Northshore, they bought that well they bought all the whole lot.

LC: Mr Flynn on behalf of the Wanneroo Local History Library I would like to thank you for your contribution to the collection, thank you.

End of recording



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