

Fred Puschell

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Interviewer: Margaret Cook

Frank Long and Iris Long  
also participated



I was born on 3 March 1929. I started mining when I was about 17 and then until I retired I stayed in the mine. 42 years. I started up at Rosewood up at Mountain View at what they called the Daylight Tunnel.

The tunnel went from outside straight into the hill. There was no tunnel. Normie Rules's father Bob and George Rule (brothers) and Eric Peaddie owned it. I got a job up there through Alf Maddox, one of my mates. It was the Daylight tunnel. You wheeled your wagon in and wheeled your coal out. When it got too far they got a horse to drag the wagon in and out. The coal seam was only 2'3" or 2'6" high.

It was hard work. You had to brush the roadway so you could wheel your wagon. It was all pick and shovel. There was no mechanisation in those days.

When I first went there they had 14 miners. That was about all they could

handle. Wheeling the wagons in and wait - there was that much congestion there. You had to wait for one wagon to come out before you could go in. Later on they put a new incline shaft in further over and they could put on the haulage, down into the mine itself. It was easier and better.

When I started I was outside and I used to be the rope rider. The shed was way up on the hill and they would wheel the wagons out on the bottom deck at the bottom of the hill. I would take the full ones up and bring the empties down. That was my first job. I was there for quite a while doing that.

Then the horse rider left and they asked me did I want a promotion? I did the horse riding and then I eventually got on the coal.

The one we had was a good horse. A quiet horse, anyone could ride it. It would never east below. I would take a bag of chaff down below but he

wouldn't eat it but when we knocked off he would eat. They kept the horse over at the farm – at Herbie Freeman's place. The tunnel was in Herb's Place. Des Freeman used to be Mayor of Ipswich – that was his father. Des was a miner in those days. He used to bring the horse over when he started in the morning and take it home when he knocked off. It was pretty good.

The pony worked from start to finish. They never knocked them about. We never hit them or anything. We had to treat them well. He wouldn't eat down below. He would have a drink of water but he wouldn't eat.

I waited two years and when I did get on the coal I went with George Clarke in a Welsh Board.

Some miners only use a six yard board – they have a six yard place to work in. When they have a Welsh board it is double that. An old time miner does his 6 yards and you do yours alongside him and he is supposed to look after you and teach you. But he was shrewd. He used to wait till I got in and make it easier for him. He was a good old stick old George. Pretty old but he was alright.

He was supposed to teach you how to fire a shot or put timber up.

*Frank Long: You had to have 2 years experience before you could go on your own.*

Yes and that was how you got it. I was in quite a few Rosewood pits up there. We put the new tunnel down over in Tallegalla, in Herb's farm at the bottom there. That was just before we worked out Mountain View. It was on its last legs. They wanted another place to put the men in. So they sent three of us over – me, Alf Maddox and the Deputy at the time, Harry Wass. We started to sink the tunnel there and we got down to the coal.

*Interviewer: At Rosewood, were you just with Normie Rule and his family mines? Or did you work in all of them?*

I didn't work in all of them but I worked in a few of them. Langfield. I worked behind Amberley – Roose's owned in – in Catlow's paddock. I worked at Bogside. I dragged the main haulage there for 2 years. At that time Eric Peaddie was one of the owners at Rules. He took Riverside Colliery on and worked with about 12 men just to make some money on the side.

When I worked at Langfield there were only ten of us there. Roos's owned it. It was a well worked mine there. They went up there to get extra. It was mainly pillars left up there. There was a lot of water. They used to have to pump day and night and if it broke down overnight you nearly had to swim to get to your place of work. The wagons would be floating and you'd have to bucket it all out before you could get a wagon out.

Rosewood was full of pits. All little ratholes – nothing big.

They are probably pushed in. They'd have bulldozed the fronts of them in. They would never open them again. I would think so. There was a lot of water in the mines up there. They had more water up there than down here,

At Proudie's they would pump it day and night but it was very brackish. Minerally water.

*Interviewer: Cattle wouldn't drink it?*

They did at Langfield. They pumped it outside and ran it down into drains, like a bore drain, half a kilometre down the road. It sort of purified it. They would drink it. Where it ran down the road it was like a rainbow underneath it because of the mineral in the water.

I went to Bogside in the 1960s, well after Frank (Long). FL: What year did you come to Ipswich?

*Frank Long: It used to be on fire all the time.*

You could see before you went below. If you were outside talking to the blokes there you would see the black smoke coming out of the hill.

*Frank Long: Half the time we couldn't go down.*

We'd go down sometimes there would be green smoke everywhere. It was on

fire. They would have to clear all that before they would allow you to go down. She was a pretty dangerous pit at that time. It was getting towards the death and it was a bit hairy. At the early stages it might have been alright.

*Frank Long: They worked up to two feet high and there was 30 feet of coal there. The board and rails are still there.*

The cut throughs. There wasn't a stick of timber. They just cut them. Mostly they would fire them 6 yards wide and timber them but in those days they just went through with no timber.

*Frank Long: Another time they were going to go straight down with Wayne Wilson. But it was that hot that you could only work 3 or 4 minutes at a time to fill up a wagon. Wayne Wilson had to hose it all the time.*

You couldn't do it for very long - 3 or 4 minutes. That was the worst mine I worked in.

*Frank Long: It got that bad at the finish there. It used to be 120 or 130 degrees down there.*

They shut it down. They finished up there open cutting it. They took the top off it when it was finished.

*Frank Long: It finished up with Haenkes. They called for volunteers and only you and I and another mate of mine volunteered. We finished on the Friday and it didn't work after that. They pulled up all the cables overnight.*

She was a bad one.

*Frank Long: It was a wonder it didn't blow up when we were down there.*

They knew it was a bad one. They'd check in the morning. Roy Biddle was the Deputy there and many a morning he'd say "don't go down there boys she's full of green smoke".

*Frank Long: So we didn't go down.*

In Rosewood we never had that sort of trouble as it was a different type of coal. The seams weren't as big as here. It was 30 feet high here.

We went over to Haenkes. We started that off, just near Cooneana. That was the last one Rhondda/ Haenkes had. The old Rhondda was closed.

We put all those tunnels down. When we kicked off there was Jimmy Stewart, Alan Miller, Roy Abraham and myself. We put the belt in and then they brought them over.

*Frank Long: You and I put down the last belt tunnel. It was that hard. The miner wouldn't be able to cut it half the time.*

When we put the air shaft down – that was a trick and a half.

*Frank Long: I did the first one with Lenny Trevorrow.*

And Graham Binny. He was there too.

*Frank Long: It was right under the power lines there. We had to be careful.*

One day we fired a shot and the rubber belt went rut off over the top of the power lines. It was a panic then. Matthews nearly had a heart attack. That was the way it went. We had some funny things happen at the pit. It was good. You wouldn't stay there that long working there if you didn't like it.

In the finish the conditions weren't too bad. It was in the early stages where they were pretty rugged. Although it is a funny thing that I still like the contract days better than the other days.

You worked for yourself. If you worked you got paid. If you sat on your backside you got nothing.

When they got mechanisation and crews of 7 or 8 you always got one or two blokes that wouldn't pull their weight and they got the same wages as you. You got a bit snakey over it. When you worked for yourself it was better because you got paid for what you did and I enjoyed it. It was better money in the pits in those days.

*Frank Long: I have a docket from 1952 and I was getting £12 a week.*

FP: That was good money in those days. Better than if you had a job as a shop jockey of the woollen mills, they were pretty mean.

In '58 I got £23. That was equal to a fair bit on money. You could live on it.

*Frank Long: The worst part we went through was that big fall.*

Yes there were some falls down at Haenkes. Some of them were 30 or 40 feet straight up. It buried the miners.

*Frank Long: And we had to dig them out. No one up top wanted to help.*

When we think about it we lived a charmed life. We should have been killed there I reckon.

*Frank Long: What about when they took Ivan off the seams and they got us to put the drums up. Trevor and I were the only ones who put the drums up. We put drums on top of drums.*

We put up 44 gallon drums, one on top of the other, to stabilise the roof. You put a false roof in where it fell. Then you put the boards in and then stack the drums up and up and up until you could get closer to hold the roof up. You couldn't get up to try it to see if there was any loose stuff there. You had to take pot luck. They were dangerous jobs. No extra money. Same as the bloke sitting outside having his lunch.

*Interviewer: In which mine did you do this?*

Haenkes. The last one down below Cooneana.

*Frank Long: The last one was the worst one.*

*Interviewer: What happens after there has been a fall? What is the process?*

After a fall they have to let the Inspector of Mines know and he comes out and inspects it.

That section was shut down and they would get the Inspector to come out and look at it. It mightn't be that day, it might be the next day. They gave you another job somewhere else.

He would have a look over as there would have been an inquiry about what happened. You'd go in and the boss would send you in to clean it up.

*Frank Long: We would have to tear it our first and then put roof bolts in first. It was touchy.*

It all has to come out. We got it out with loaders.

Occasionally they would have tricky problems. They were down there cleaning it up and all of a sudden the roof decided to go and the slabs were coming off just like that. Just like a pack of cards.

*Frank Long: That is why I nearly got killed. I was the last one out.*

*You said can you get the miner and I said I would have a go. It started to fall. Everyone went and I was the last one off the miner. I got a couple of the roof bolts in and I fell over and it stopped then.*

Just as well it did mate. It would have been all over the top of you.

*Frank Long: It wasn't bolted.*

It fell at the face for a start and it just pushed the crowns out as it went just like a pack of cards. It stopped before I got right out. It is a dangerous practice mining. Mining is not a job where you can go in and enjoy yourself. You have to be very wary of what you did in there.

We tried to put those arches in but hanging above it was a great big block of stone. It was about 20 to 30 foot up and you didn't know if it was loose or what it was. You couldn't get up to do anything. We used to go in there and put the arches up. They wouldn't have done anything. They used to fall.

*Frank Long: They fell every night. There would be 30, 40 or 50 ton every night.*

Graham was in there one day and we were putting the last arch up. They were sliding the wood in. He had his hand or his head up through there and the next moment a piece fell out of the roof and it hit him. I thought he was dead. I dragged him out and took him down the road with the ambulance and the Manager. I thought the way he was that he was gone. That is how dangerous it was. You never knew. From that height you only want a little piece and it could fall and hit you and you'd think someone had hit you over the head with a maul. That is how hard

they hit. A big block and you wouldn't stand a chance.

*Frank Long: We ended up putting that Armco through.*

They ended up going round the side then and driving back towards it. As they drove back they made some arches up of Armco and kept pushing them in. It was a lot safer then as you were working inside the arches.

Armco is steel. They bolt it all together full of bolts like a meccano set. It is strong, very very strong. Most tunnels they put down they use it. It is all armco.

*Interviewer: When did they start using Armco?*

*Frank Long: When we put the tunnel down. We came over in 1972. We put the tunnel down in about 1980.*

That was the only time they used it.

You were there a while before it was done, before they thought of it. They used the old tunnel that we put down until it got that way that the front of it had too much weight on it and it was coming down on the belt all the time. They decided to put new tunnels out.

*Interviewer: So until then were they still using timber?*

Big round crowns. Even with the big crowns you could put them up tonight

and tomorrow morning they'd be cracked with the weight. You'd have to replace them. It all depends.

They used crowns and legs and that sort of thing. Then all of a sudden they had the brainwave of using steel straps and bolts. I didn't like that at the start.

Not for a while, but even then I didn't think they were a great success. But they had faith in them. They reckon if you put them up straight away before the roof leaves, you bolt it up and then the roof can't leave. It can't break away from the other. That's boloney! That bolt was only 6 foot bold. If the seam left 7 or 8 feet at the parting and let it go at that depth then the bolts would just drop out. They knew. We said that has been proved with some of the falls down here. It was cheaper. Buying big round timber was pretty dear.

It was like a glue. You put the bolt in and pushed it up and put it in a machine (leg) and it stirs it and it breaks the seals and it makes a bung on the bolt. That is the only thing that holds it. You bore a small hole, just big enough for the bolt really. Then you push the glue up first and push the bolt in and then the air leg would come up and push it right up through the glue. Then it would stir and mix the two sorts of chemicals. That is supposed to be it.

They had air legs and in the finish they put hydraulic legs on the miners. It was run off compressed air. They had compressed air coming down below.

An air leg was a borer. They hooked the air hose onto it. It had a valve to turn on.

It was about 4 feet in height and then the leg would go up and 3 or 4 feet on top of that. It was in a sleeve sort of thing like a hydraulic lift.

They were heavy. I'm not sure they use that method now up north. I heard they have hydraulic legs and they walk themselves. They take a run off (6 to 8 feet) and when they have finish they move them forward one at a time. They leave it all empty behind because they want it to fall.

*Frank Long: The worst thing we did was clean up after the 74 flood at the Haenke mine. Remember you had the miner there – a brand new one? Wayne said "get into it". You had to stand up to drive the miner.*

He was a rough old manager.

*Frank Long: Livermore had a fit.*

It was a brand new continuous miner and they were expensive.

*Frank Long: We had to cut the coal out and put it in the water.*

It was the only way to get it out. I can remember that Alan Mill was there and there was an old cut through there that they wanted to start working again but was half full of slurry. They couldn't pump it out. Wayne Wilson had a brain

wave and sent Alan Miller to get it out with the mines mobile. He went in once and then twice. Everything was good. The next one he came down the ground got wet and when he went to back out of there he couldn't control it. He went straight down and into the slop. He was in a mess and the machine was half under mud.

The manager said "just get in there and clean that. No trouble at all"

*Frank Long: It was shocking there. We were in water for months.*

Wayne Wilson was the Underground Manager. He was a good bloke to work with – terrific.

## **TAPE TWO**

They made us retire at 60 and that was shocking. Now you can work as long as you like if the company would employ you. We could have gone on for another five or ten years.

*Frank Long: I left at 57 1/2*

You could go and do the same job now that you did, driving a machine in your condition. But we had to retire, that was the nature of the beast. Now it is a different all together. *(retirement was a union rule)*

*Frank Long: Fred and I and Trevor put up every stop down there. There used to be hundreds and hundreds of ash bricks.*

*Every time they went through we put another one up.*

You have to do that to keep the ventilation up. You block the cut throughs off so the air can't go down that one so it has to go to the next one which is closer to the working face.

*Interviewer: Is that what you used them for – to block the air passages. Are they light?*

Some were pretty heavy. Some were solid. Some were filled with cement.

They used to use bag first which they used as a temporary measure. Brattis.

They put that up first as a temporary measure until they could put the stopping up so they could keep the ventilation up closer to the working face to get rid of the dust. *(The stopping was the bricks)*

*Interviewer: Did they make them?*

No they used to buy them. You had to mix up cement. Some of them were ten feet high.

It was alright when they were down low and you could work on them but when you had to get up on planks and lift them. We used to do them in a day in the finish.

*Interviewer: Two or three of you?*

Three, including Trever Randolph. He was a big fellow. Over 6 feet.

*Frank Long: 6/4" and strong. He was the strongest man I've ever seen. He could lift one of them on his own.*

*Iris Long: In the tug-of-war he was the anchor man.*

*Interviewer: How did the three of you ended up working together? Did you choose that?*

It was how it worked. The manager decided.

*Interviewer: Sounds like you worked pretty well together?*

He was happy. I was happy.

*Interviewer: So how long did you work together?*

24 years. The blokes that worked in the mines, once you had your friends there, they were what you'd call friends. They'd do anything for you. Look after you.

You got a few rogues in amongst them but you sort them out after a while. They are a different type of bloke altogether. They really are.

*Frank Long: When you were Deputy Mick was driving the miner. I was standing beside Trevor and him and they got buried.*

*Iris Long: He never got touched.*

It was just one of those things. You take the miner to bolt up a strap and

you strike a bit of bad roof, a greasy spot, and out she pops.

*Frank Long: Trevor got buried and another bloke. I tried to get Trevor out first because he was my mate of course and he said "don't worry about me get the other bloke out". I got him out and then the roof fell.*

It was a wet sort of a roof and when it gets the water in the partings it is pretty hard to control it.

This was one of the Haenke mines. They had a bit of water in some places. Some places were dry. It was just the way it was.

Frank Long: I said there were about 40 men there that day but there were about 60 or 80.

There were was a heap there – more than 40. At their peak they were working round the clock.

The dog watch came on at the finish and they had two shift but they had quite a few sections working. It wasn't just 6 or 7 men working at one face, they had three or four sections working. They had men on the top carting supplies down. You had fitters, electricians. There was a heap of men there.

*Interviewer: When did you become a Deputy?*

Before I got to Rhondda, before Bogside. I got it when I was in Rosewood.

I went to night classes and then I did my gas testing at the old college in Ellenborough Street, where they are building the new courts. That where they did the testing. Old Vic Ball was the inspector. He did all the testing. Me and George Goofer. I got my haulage license at Rosewood too. Jo Legester was the haulage driver up there and I did an hour with him each day as you had to do so many hours before you could sit the test.

*Interviewer: So you were a Deputy in Rosewood?*

I was a haulage driver and then a Deputy.

I was a Deputy shot firer at Haenkes. Roy Biddle was the Deputy down there and I was a shot firer but when he was away hurt or sick I would take over.

*Interviewer: So there were different Deputies. There is a Deputy Manager, a Deputy shot firer. What else is there?*

You had the Manager, Under Manager and they have a Deputy and a Deputy shot firer only has something to do with the company when the others are away. Otherwise you fire your shots through the day when they want them.

*Interviewer: When the Deputy Manager left did you take over?*

No I got shifted over from Bogside to MW Haenke mine. They had started that years and years ago before we went

over. They had an air shaft down there but they were looking at opening up another pit.

The air shaft (or ventilation shaft) was 66 feet and it went straight down. They'd been down and knew it was there. They decided to put a tunnel down and open it up. Bogside was nearly finished and they wanted somewhere to send the men if they could. They sent Alan Miller, Roy Abraham and me over there and we started off the tunnel. Then you blokes came over and we got down far enough to connect with the air shaft to get ventilation.

I'd say we went over there 4 or 5 years before 1973. Alan Miller, Roy and I were there 18 months or more before anyone else went there because we were putting the tunnel down and the belt in.

*Interviewer: Bogside shut and you all went over. The timing worked well.*

That's the way they wanted it as long as they had connection to the air shaft they could work it. That is what they were trying to do.

*Interviewer: So they knew Bogside was coming to an end. It sounds like it should have shut earlier?*

*Frank Long: They should have shut it years before. They shouldn't have gone down there.*

*Interviewer: Did they get good coal out of it?*

*Frank Long: Yes plenty of coal. Beautiful coal. No stone.*

Very steep. It wasn't level everything was on a slant. Every place they broke off they had to put in a new line so you could work it. It was that steep and awkward. When you started you had to leave so much coal on the floor to level it.

*Frank Long: Some of them didn't.*

No I know. They had to pack it all up. Some were greedy.

*Frank Long: George and I made good money there. We were 30 or 40 ton very day. Jack was on the scraper loader. That is why they took us off it because we were filling more than they were getting.*

Jack and I were on the scraper loader and we couldn't get enough wagons. The old fellow wouldn't give us wagons. He bypassed us. We weren't on contract and you weren't. They gave the contractors the wagons and we had to wait. We didn't mind of course.

*Frank Long: Old Jack wasn't much good on a scraper loader.*

He was a shocker. I'd say "only a little bit Jack" and he'd come in with a full scoop and he'd let her fly up the bin. He used to drive me crazy some days.

He was a good bloke to work with.

*Frank Long: He was a good bloke. He'd be 23 or 24 stone.*

That's the good thing if you get a good workmate.

*Frank Long: I worked with a bloke who used to roll his dummies. In the finish he used newspaper and he'd go round and round and in the finish he had paper with no writing on it.*

*We had to buy our own gelly in those days and you could only fire one shot at a time.*

They were pretty strict those inspectors in the early stages when you were contracting. You hear stories that they are not as careful now.

*Frank Long: We used to have carbide lights. Shocking.*

They were a curse those carbide lights.

*Iris Long: They'd stink.*

Not only that you'd go through the brattis doors and they'd stop.

You didn't know where you were and you had to stop and re-light them. They were a curse. When we got the battery powered one it was great. Before my time they had tallow lamps. I never had those. I still have two carbine lights. When I retired they gave me my safety lamp as a memento.

*Frank Long: I didn't even get a shovel! I got a watch. It didn't last long. It broke down.*

*Interviewer: When you went to the new Haenke mine how many worked there?*

They only worked the one shift for a while. They kept developing it so they could get places for the men to work.

The other men went to other Haenke mines. They had Rhondda and another at the back of the Cooneana office, just past the railway bridge. Ask Hugh Taylor, he was the surveyor for all those pits.

*Frank Long: Hugh had to be right on the ball all the time. When the miners got buried Hugh would have to go through.*

He was right on the job. He'd go up the surface and measure up and then he'd go down below and do the same thing. He'd say we'll go in here and he'd be right on the mark.

*Frank Long: He used to come down and survey all the time. In the finish they had lasers.*

That was one of the best things they ever had – the laser beam. They had good things. I still prefer the old stage when I was the old miner. I was quite happy. You could start at your time and you could knock off. As long as you had your quota you could finish early.

In the finish they had the dags on. Early in the piece when I kicked off at Mountain View I could go for my life.

Frank Long: We could do 24 wagons. It was only a little wagon at the time.

Only a half 100 weight. At Bogside they were a ton.

A big aluminium wagon. If you fell off the rails with one of those you struggled to get it back on. The little ones weren't too bad. You could get them on pretty easily.

*Interviewer: Was that Henke mine mechanised from the start?*

Yes pretty well. They didn't have one of the new miners. They had one of the old ones. Not a Joy Miner. The joy miner had a big head and this one had a small one.

Frank Long: Ivan had to show us.

He used to drive it for a long time. They had it for a long time.

When Alan and I went over to connect up the air shaft we used to go over and shoot and get in all the muck there and Alan Hughes used to come down with his front end loader and pick up the muck until we broke through. He used to come down the tunnel. It got to the end that you couldn't breathe down there with the front end loader spewing out diesel fumes. We wouldn't go down until he cleaned it up. We couldn't breathe. He could do what he liked. You know how much natural ventilation we had.

*Frank Long: We used to have blowers at either end.*

To blow the air end and suck the fumes out sort of thing. It would sit on the surface and suck in the fresh air and blow it down the canvas tubes. Some had tubes made of tin. We only had canvas tubes.

They were just like a big fire hose. Those other tubes that they had for blowers later on were metal tubes. They were good.

*Interviewer: So you had a Joy Miner?*

We had two miners. We buried it.

*Frank Long: That was the first one.*

The first one came. A bloke from Joy came down and showed us how to do drive one.

He was the one that buried it that day. And thank God he did. There was a hell of a play over that. He was driving it at the time and he took too much out and there was no timber up and next moment down she came and buried her. We had to dig her out. We got it out.

*Interviewer: Did it still work?*

*Frank Long: It never burts them.*

There was one there that got buried from a fall about 30 feet high. It completely buried it. All you could see

was the miner cable. We dug her out. I think the tail was bent a bit. They were pretty sturdy things.

*Iris Long: They always said if there was fall stay in the machine.*

*Frank Long: They didn't have roofs at first.*

They were open deckers then. You could duck in under the tail and probably save yourself. It never flattened them. They were unbelievable.

*Frank Long: They had a few miners in our time. You and I used to take them down below.*

They built the tunnel so they could drive them up and down. It made it a lot easier to get them down there. Shuttle cars and everything like that.

*Interviewer: They had a Joy Miner. Did they replace it with anything else?*

No they were the best continuous miner that I've seen. They did a better job than the others.

*Frank Long: The first one was pretty ancient.*

That was an old one that they turned over from Rhondda. That was Rhondda's original. They brought it over to build the new tunnel – the supply road. Ivan Podley drove it.

*Frank Long: The Haenke mine was real gassy.*

In the finish they started to get a few falls. They had big monitors on the top. Monitoring it 24 a day. In Rosewood they didn't have problems with coal. In contract days you couldn't extract the coal quick enough to worry about gas. If you got 12 or 13 ton a day you were doing well.

*Frank Long: At Bellgowan they used to smoke down the pit. It was carbide lights so it didn't matter.*

They had carbide lights – it was a naked light. When I started at Rules the miners used to make tea and coffee down below with spirit fires. You brought your own bottle of metho and when it was smoko you could smell it. You didn't need to wear a watch because you could smell it, some had coffee some had tea. You could smell it all. There was never any gas. You couldn't extract the coal quick enough.

Interviewer: Who was your Manager at the Haenke mines?

There was quite a few. We got all these cadet managers. Steve Curry. Jack's son.

*Frank Long: All cadet managers. John Matthews.*

They came along and learnt their trade. Most of them were put with us to train them. They couldn't go down on their own so they sent them out with crews. They got the Manager's jobs in the finish. They had their own ideas too.

*Frank Long: John Matthews became a Superintendent.*

The Superintendent of Rhondda Collieries. All the old Managers had gone. Wally Ritchie was the superintendent for years and years.

*Iris Long: He used to come up to Bellgowan with Mr Haenke. Bill Godfrey was the Manager and they all had a cup of tea together.*

Interviewer: So you still had electricians, fitters and so on? How many men in the finish?

There would have been close to 80. A couple of shifts, dogwatch. Even the dogwatch had two crews plus all the extras, with eight to a crew.

They had greasers going around greasing the machines for the morning. Plus the fitters and electricians - they had quite a crew there.

Interviewer: During the day, how many crews were on?

Two or three.

*Frank Long: Three crews. It would have been 80 men.*

Easy. Three were three crews through the day plus the blokes taking supplies down. Plus the blokes on the surface.

*Frank Long: They were only getting about \$18 a ton then. Now they get \$200.*

We tried to get a bonus scheme going and what did we get? Nothing. You had to get so much clean, washed coal and you'd get nothing. They get huge bonuses now. When we went there the union let us work 7 hour shifts and one hour overtime. If you worked that one hour overtime, that was five hours a week, so you couldn't work a Saturday morning. But if you worked one hour less you could.

### **Tape 3**

The Union wouldn't allow it. It was too long to be working in those conditions. But now they work 12 hour shifts. Up north they work doublers. One 12 hour shift and then another.

We only got meals that we brought from home. And if you brought raspberry jam bad luck. No you got what you took from home. Early in the piece you took your own water. You never got showers. You went home black.

*Interviewer: Did Haenke's have showers?*

Yes but we had showers at Rosewood in the finish. At Tallegalla they had showers. The first one – daylight Mine – we went home black.

Maddox and I used to ride our bikes home and on the way home we'd strip off and swim in the old 7 Mile. We'd wash the dirt off. You didn't want to go home like that. We'd strip off, clean off, have a splash around and put on

clean clothes. Away we'd go. There was nothing on the road like it is today. It quiet, very little traffic around. It was good. In the early days things were tough.

When we went up they didn't have pneumatic picks. They had hand borers.

Set the machine off and bore away. If she was a dummy chuck you'd set her up again. You never missed too many. Crikey. You had to provide your own tools. The pick, shovel and maul you had to buy it.

*Interviewer: Was that the same at the end?*

No everything was supplied. You were working for a wage but then you were on contract.

*Interviewer: On wages they provided more?*

They gave you a ration of clothes once a year– two pairs of pants, shirts, shoes (a good pair of working boots).

You bought your own helmet and your belt.

*Interviewer: What about the funny stories.*

I'm no good at the funny stories. A couple of blokes there they were troopers?

*Frank Long: What about Ray Markroad. He came out to the pit one day for a job and Livermore was there. He told him "there's no*

*job here". Next day he turned up for work and started himself.*

Old Livermore laughed. He knew him. He'd worked for him before.

He put him on as a miner driver. I told him he wasn't worth a spit. I told him he couldn't get coal out of a wagon. He didn't like it either.

*Frank Long: He was supposed to be a big gun driver. He took him off in the finish and he refused to work with us.*

He was deaf and dumb before he was 10 years old. He wasn't right.

Mal Trigger was a funny bloke. He never brought sugar or tea or anything like that. When you were working he'd go and pinch yours. Everyone had their own jars with tea or whatever. You boil up your billy and have tea or whatever. You'd have to bring it down in jars or the rats would eat it. Old Mal would go and help himself. You knew he was getting it but you couldn't do anything about it.

There were some big rats down there. You'd be sitting at lunch and they'd be running around between your legs. And possums.

*Interviewer: Would they come underground?*

Yes they'd be running around helping themselves to scraps.

*Frank Long: Often there were snakes down the pit.*

There was plenty of vermin around. I doubt there is much of that now. There's that much movement down there it probably scared them away.

*Frank Long: We used to drink a lot of water at Bogside. I'd take two gallons down, drink it and immediately send up for another two gallons. I sweated that much.*

A lot of blokes sweated so much they had to take salt tablets. Otherwise they got too weak.

*Frank Long: I used to take salt tablets. You couldn't have it with tea.*

A lot of fellows used to bring cold tea with them. Boil it up at home and bring it with them. I didn't like it much. The unions made them put tea urns down there. It was good. After that blokes used to bring saveloys and put it in the tea water! Instead of coming out white it would come out red! It was terrible.

Those were the days Frank. We won't see them again.