

**CAMPBELLTOWN CITY COUNCIL ORAL HISTORY PROJECT**  
*Our Fruitful Record: A history of Market Gardening in Campbelltown*

**Oral history interview with Ilda Cavuoto**  
**recorded by Maria Crisci on 21<sup>st</sup> November 2017**  
**at Campbelltown, South Australia**

**Interview OH 1130/1**

**Also present is Ilda's daughter, Anna La Vista**

- OH: (Oral Historian) This interview forms part of the City of Campbelltown Council Oral History Project, A Fruitful Record-A History of Market Gardening in Campbelltown. Ilda?
- IC: (Ilda Cavuoto) Yes?
- OH: Thank you for agreeing to take part in this market gardening oral history project
- IC: Okay. Thank you, Okay, thank you.
- OH: Now Ilda, you were born in Cassano, Caudina, Provincia d'Avellino
- IC: Yes, yes.
- OH: What region of Italy is that?
- IC: Italia.
- OH: In Italy, yeah, what region?
- IC: A Napoli.
- OH: Near Naples?
- IC: Yes, near Naples.
- OH: How old are you?
- IC: Now, I am 86 years old.
- OH: *86 anni. E quante fratelli e sorelle n'hai?* How many brothers and sisters do you have?
- IC: Io, I have seven all together. *La prima e Nina, Lalina, Lina poi vengo io Ilda, Maria, Domenico e Nida.*<sup>1</sup>
- OH: Ok say you're the fourth, a quarta, the fourth in your family?
- IC: Siamo sei donne e un maschio.
- OH: Six boys ... six girls
- IC: Six girls e one boy ...
- OH: One boy.
- IC: One boy, yes.
- OH: What year did you come to Australia?
- IC: I come 1953...1953 ... on July 7 July ... I come in Australia ... start in Italy on 6 June e come in Australia 7 July ... 1 day on boat ... yeah
- OH: Do you remember the name of the ship?
- IC: Yeah, yeah ... Sorriento

---

<sup>1</sup> Italian words are seen here in italics. The first is Nina, Lalina. Lina, then I come next, Maria, Domenico and Nida.

OH: Sorriento

IC: Si, si. Sorriento. Era *bella nave* <sup>2</sup>...

OH: A nice boat

IC: A ... a ... beautiful boat. Big one [laughs] You know I never experience ... the go 'round in boat just stay ... you know ...

OH: For 31 days.

IC: (laugh) Yes 31 days ... stay all da time and another my friend, she have sick all a time, and I can ... I watch she's baby

OH: You looked after her baby?

IC: Yeah, yeah I looked after her baby.

OH: So did you come alone? You came by yourself?

IC: Yeah. Yeah, myself yeah. Yeah.

OH: Many Italians emigrated in the 50's. Why did you come to Australia?

IC: I come in Australia because my husband come before here ... I come in after...after him...him come in '51 ... I come in '53 ... yeah ... she's a ... non marry ... just sign in a office ... *ma* <sup>3</sup>married in Australia.

OH: Ok

IC: Yeah, yeah

OH: You did a proxy and then you married when you came here?

IC: Yes, yes ... I born 6 February '31...1931...yes, yes

OH: And did your brothers and sisters come too?

IC: Yeah, yeah ... comin' just two live in Italy – Nicolina e Italina ... the others come all away ... I gotta you know ... comin'... my mum my dad after ... the ... you know 8 years 8 many years...my dad my mum comin' us ... you know

OH: They came too...

IC: Yeah *ma* ... my sister Maria come and years after ... '53 ... '55 comin' my sister Nida and Lina and ... '50, '53 ... '55 comin' my brother too ... all one year [cough] ... yeah ... stay all one all together for us, yeah.

OH: So they lived with you when they came to Australia?

IC: Yeah, yeah live all together ... yeah because the house ... no finished yet *ma* still ... still stay all together

OH: Okay. Can you tell me what you remember most about your time when you lived in Campbelltown? Where did you live when you first came here where did you live?

IC: I'm live on Newton Road ... I think '54, yeah. '54, Newton Road for nearly three years because my husband have two brothers and buy the house and live all together for all ... you know.

OH: All together.

IC: Yeah, all together, yeah ... e *ma* after my sister Maria married too and live all together too, yeah.

OH: In the same house on Newton Road?

IC: Oh yeah because no house 'round before only three house on ... 'round the Campbelltown that's a big one [cough] Sorry ... have one, the Markwick another

---

<sup>2</sup> In English, a beautiful ship

<sup>3</sup> In English, "but"

the Jack ... the house, the old one and another one, my brother ... my husband brother buy.

OH: So there were three houses?

IC: Three houses, before have church...

OH: The church ...

IC: When I come in Australia the first Sunday start the church the new one [laughs] it's a beautiful, beautiful church we have ...

OH: So when you arrived what did you see when you came into Campbelltown?

IC: Oh ... you comin' see all garden all garden [laughs] ... I expect different little bit different otherwise I am happy too because my husband stay here and slowly, slowly work and you know I like I like very much in Australia too because you know work have a little bit money and ... more happy ... yes, yes.

OH: So you married in ...

IC: I married here *ma* just sign in Italy.

OH: So you were three years on Newton Road?

IC: Yes, yes.

OH: How long have you been in this house? When did you live in...?

IC: Campbelltown? Newton Road? Three years over there e after '61 here ...

OH: You built this house?

IC: Oh yeah, yeah ... in three years buy this house because buy the block make do the house, you know work very hard because do all the time by hand ... my husband hand ... everything just ... the both thing ... have two men you know put the brick on but the rest, all me and my husband do.

OH: You built this house?

IC: Yeah, yeah I got the baby... little one Pia ... and my sister live all together when I come here, *come si dice*?<sup>4</sup> – *schave fundazione*<sup>5</sup> (English: dig out the foundations)

OH: Dig out the foundation...

IC: Foundation. I put one big stake on Newton Road put the white ...

OH: Flag.

IC: Flags on top. When the my baby Pia she have wake up I see the *bandiera*<sup>6</sup>, you know ...

OH: The flag.

IC: The flag and go give my milk.

OH: Okay, so how? You were working in the garden at the time?

IC: I work when come in Australia I work one years for Luigi Palumbo on garden.

OH: And where was that garden?

IC: On Newton Road yeah, always over there ... I work one years ... after I got the baby and finish e after you know all time go other people, my sister look after my children my baby and I go ... you know ... you work all time for ... not all time every day *ma* some time when have busy I work to Mitolo.

OH: Mitolo.

---

<sup>4</sup> In English, "how do you say?"

<sup>5</sup> In English, "dig out the foundations"

<sup>6</sup> In English, "flag"

IC: Mitolo yeah. I gotta yeah Mitolo and yeah Domenico Mitolo *si chiama*<sup>7</sup>, you know  
 OH: And where was his land?  
 IC: Always in Newton.  
 OH: Newton?  
 IC: Yeah.  
 OH: On Graves Street?  
 IC: Graves Street yeah property Graves Street. After the other one ... *come si chiama*?<sup>8</sup>  
*'E ma fa piano piano se non...*<sup>9</sup> Vincenzo Calabro I do.  
 OH: Vincenzo Calabro?  
 IC: Yeah yea ... he have few land...no bigger, bigger *ma* ...  
 OH: Do you know how many acres?  
 IC: O I thinka maybe one two, two acres and I calla when have busy e go e after ... er ...  
 the other one Giorgio Belperio and the same have two acre [of] land e work  
 sometime. E after while work to Tom Fuggiero the other side the street ...  
 OH: Graves Street  
 IC: Graves Street *si*. E after go to Nicola Rascella, yeah, e after they gotta Pope – Pope  
 nice man, he's a beautiful man  
 OH: You worked with Mr Pope?  
 IC: Yeah Mr Pope have a lotta, lotta land, a lotta land.  
 OH: How much land?  
 IC: O I think seven, six, seven, like this ...  
 OH: Acres?  
 IC: Yeah acres e after Mr Phillip have a more same ... think seven ... lika this ... you  
 know ... others after another people they come pick 'em up for work in Virginia in  
 6 o'clock in morning (laugh)  
 OH: Oh so you worked at Virginia too?  
 IC: Yeah er work in Virginia too e go over there e you know ... work.  
 OH: Tell me tell me about your time working on the market garden with Mr Pope. What  
 was that like?  
 IC: Oh ... all bunch stuff.  
 OH: Bunch stuff?  
 IC: Bunch stuff – carrot, beetroots, onion, everything yeah, yeah, and that's how that's  
 how in this Street ... Graves Street.  
 OH: Graves Street...and when you went to Virginia, who was the family you worked for  
 there? Do you remember?  
 IC: Oh the family have the what do you calla...Domenica er Domenica?  
 OH: Canale ... was it Mr Canale?  
 IC: Canale, *si* yeah, yeah so many people.  
 OH: And why did you go and work at Virginia? Was there not enough work in  
 Campbelltown?  
 IC: *Non era non era*<sup>10</sup> enough work because I got the baby for my mum comin' and

---

<sup>7</sup> In English, “his name is”

<sup>8</sup> In English, “What is his name?”

<sup>9</sup> In English, “What's his name? We need to go slowly otherwise...”

look after the children e *e insomma*<sup>11</sup> e after go in factory at Glynde ... Magill Road ... pottery ... go over there e work on factory, the fruit factory in Montacute yeah.

OH: Hmm ...

IC: Yeah e after work on Rostrevor College for couple years e work all the time

OH: All the time...

IC: Yeah [laughs] Yeah.

OH: All right, so good. So we've got a good summary. So how many years did you work in the market gardening area total? From what year?

IC: I work in market garden start when one years before the baby born and after two three months go all the time you know because my sister look after my baby because she have the baby too e she look after. E all the time when Toro Dionno have the onions, clean 'em up the onions, take the baby in the pusher, put umbrella on the pusher, e go over there for couple hours e clean 'em up the onions... twenty cents the box. [laughs] Thirty kilo the box. Twenty cents.

OH: Hard work wasn't it?

IC: Yeah *ma* no but before you know have something. Yeah

OH: What did you find the hardest? What were some of the things that you found hard working in the market garden?

IC: Oh ... Just a same you know all da same all the same thing. Just work a little bit harder when have in wintertime because wintertime e very hard. Gotta boots and you know, all wet e plus otherwise.

OH: Because it was Bay of Biscay soil so it was thick and sticky?

IC: Yeah, sticky, yeah, one foot gone down and other take 'em off [laughs] yeah. When cold, sometime rain make wet. Summertime when too hot, no good too. Everything pass.

OH: So your mother looked after the children and your sister?

IC: Yes, mum and dad too, before my sister after mum and dad, work, look after.

OH: Who else worked on the land with you? Who else worked on the market garden with you?

IC: Many people, two or three people, I say , yeah, when you work on Luigi Palombo , have 4 people, three lady and one man. Because have big, big land he had 18, 1,8 acre of land.

OH: Wow, and they grew, what did they grow? What did Mr Palumbo?

IC: Oh yeah, grow, every, all the time, have bunch stuff but more, more have onions, lot, a lot of onions, but the bunch stuff, carrots, swedes, beetroot, everything this, but before not have the tractor, take on hand put on over there and have the horse.

OH: Oh, you had the horse?

IC: Yeah, gotta horse and put it on.

OH: On the cart, on the horse and cart?

IC: Put in the shed, big truck to go to the market.

OH: Who would go, you didn't go to the market?

---

<sup>10</sup> In English, "No, there wasn't"

<sup>11</sup> In English, "In summary." Or "And so."

IC: No.

OH: Mr Palumbo would go to the market, when did he take the vegetables to the market?

IC: Oh, him take on Monday and Wednesday and Friday.

OH: And do you know where the market was?

IC: In Adelaide in the front, same in the front of Royal [Adelaide] Hospital

OH: East Terrace?

IC: Yeah, East Terrace, long time the market, the big market over there.

OH: So, how many hours in a day would you work on the land?

IC : Eight hours, yeah a day, all good people, eight hours, start 7:00 am, half past seven in the morning and five o'clock go home, that's good.

OH: Do more work?

IC : Oh yeah, some time walk for the work, some time I got the bike, sometime the bike gone, [laughs] bike gone, all broken.

OH: So you used to ride your bike to work? Wow.

IC: Yes, yeah, I ride the bike but sometime I gone down

OH: You fell?

IC: [Laughs] Fell down, yeah because I can't say [ride] properly.

OH: And the people you worked with in the market garden did they all speak Italian? Or any Australian? Or Italians?

IC: Yeah, Australian just have Mr Pope and Mr Phillip but the others, all Italian,

OH: How did you communicate with Mr Pope?

IC: Oh, say, he show me everything and I understand, you know, just show and he a beautiful man, he show me everything, this one you do like this. And the other one like that.

OH: He showed you how to do the vegetables?

IC: Yeah, because not speak English

OH: Did you work in the market garden in Italy or not?

IC: Yeah, Yeah, yeah

OH: So you had experience, you knew what to do!

IC: Yeah, A different thing in Italy because have my land, mum and dad land, have a different, put the corn, put the beans, put the wheat, that's, had a lot of fruit too. I work in my land in Italy.

OH: Different vegetables?

IC: Yeah, different vegetables in Italy. Here, all different. When start from here, to Newton Road, that's all grapes, all grapes, nothing, no trees, nothing, just the grapes and that's it.

OH: So all of Campbelltown & Newton were vineyards, all grapes?

IC: From here on Newton Road After Newton Road all bunch stuff.

OH: Market gardening?

IC: Yeah, market garden, onions everything, cabbages, everything, you know, very good.

OH: What happened to the vineyards? How did that change?

IC: The vineyards, nobody picked them up, maybe the birds eat all of it, nobody take it, not body pick them up, not understand for do the wine, no.

OH: Did you make wine with the grapes?

IC: No, my husband not like much the wine, just him like some bottle of beer but no, not the wine.

OH: Anything else you want to say/ so, Do you know if the market gardeners owned their land or they leased it? Was it their property?

IC: Yes, their property, the people property, yeah.

IC: When come in Australia buy some land and work for self and when have busy, lot busy ask somebody for help.

OH: And how did you get work? Was it word of mouth? People tell you, how did you get your first job?

IC: Just for ask my auntie, ask somebody, Luigi Palumbo. She said “Do you want some girls for work? My nephew come.” Yeah Yeah, I want to try because if you understand the garden. Alright, I go. Him very happy. I go all the time. I go for one year.

OH: Did Alfredo work with you? Your husband?

IC: No, Alfredo work one year on the road, after eight years he work in the wool factory, three shifts, it was very hard.

OH: Which factory was that? The wool factory? Was it Michel’s wool factory?

IC: Yeah, yeah, the Michel’s, three shifts, yeah, and after a while go to Holden’s

OH: So, you had to cope with the children plus work on the land. What was it like?

IC: Oh, you know alright, when I got the children little, I say, *quiet, quiet* because daddy want to sleep because he go to work and everybody quiet, quiet. And that’s all. That’s the life (laughs) yeah, I’m happy for here, for Australia, for everything

OH: What did you do on the weekends? Did your husband work on the weekends?

IC: Sometimes, I had a little *giardino*.<sup>12</sup>

OH: Garden, your own garden?

IC: Look after the flowers.

OH: Was it a lot of land? Was it yours or did he work for someone else?

IC: No, he work for someone else. On the 17, my husband like the land, and all the time, he see on the paper, I like the fruit. But not buy because before not understand for the lease or the sale. Have a little bit of mistake and my husband say: “I think it for sale.” But that for lease, so you know, can’t buy the land.

OH: So you leased the land?

IC: Yeah, buy \$4,500 to buy the lease.

OH: Is that every year?

IC: Every year pay \$200 for the lease. And it was very hard work.

OH: And where was this land that you were leasing?

IC: At Norton Summit.

OH: Norton Summit.

IC: And make it for 32 years.

OH: How much land was it?

IC: Seven acres but just the apple and cherry. Not work on the land, just cut the weeds. Have a lot of work, cut the weeds, spray them up, everything.

---

<sup>12</sup> In English, “garden.”

OH: When did you have time to do that? When did you do that?  
IC: In the week, after you finish at the factory, we go there, work there, for long years  
OH: Wow many years did you do that?  
IC: 32 years for the land, after I got sick with my legs because I have a hip replace and I finish and leave the land.  
OH: So, what happened to your legs?  
IC: Hip, hip replacement.  
OH: So, hip replacement? so climbing up the hills was too hard?  
IC: Is too hard and I can't do anymore and stay home and help my children, the little one.  
OH: So when did you finish up?  
IC: I finish on 1992.  
OH: 1992?  
IC: No, no, start now.  
OH: Say it in Italian.  
IC: 2002.  
OH: Oh, 2002?  
IC: Yeah, 2002. *Si si*, I finish because I can't do it anymore.  
OH: How has market gardening affected you as a person? What did you learn from your experience? Working in the garden  
IC: Oh experience, straight away, I learned because I understand the land, you know. Straight away everything they show me, I do. Yeah, yeah!  
OH: Did you make friends, working on the land?  
IC: Yes, yeah  
OH: Do you still see them?  
IC: Si, Yes, friend, the people on the land work all together, all the time, say, talk, laugh, work, everything, that's all, it's beautiful, beautiful.

**After a pause, the interview continues**

IC: We didn't know English. Rent this land and work for myself, I knew the work, take the fruit, go to the market with my husband to the market with the cherries and sell the cherries and work all together. And the apple was nothing, because the apple, didn't cost nothing because it just for the family, yeah. Work all the time for myself, you know. After, every year pay \$200 for the rent and work myself, and happy because my husband like very much the fruit.  
OH: How many cherries did you used to sell?  
IC: Oh, I have a lot, lots of cherries, maybe 300, 400 box a year, so I had a lot.  
OH: And where did you sell it?  
IC: In the market  
OH: East End Market?  
IC: Yes, yes. Before they go on the market garden, the man have a truck and we take it to him but he take a lot. After my husband spoke to someone, said, *Come in the market, come on come and you see*. You know. He start to see the market, in the city there and it is very good.



OH: So you're saying that they take a lot. The man you used to sell it to took a lot of commission?

IC: Yeah.

OH: You didn't make much money?

IC: Yeah, a lot of commission and sometime throw them away because put all together on the top, and squash all of it and take it away and no good because work, work, for nothing and after my husband go on the market and sell, very good.

OH: Good

IC: Very good. Yeah. He happy, go all the time, you know, put ready when, in the night time put on the buckboard<sup>13</sup>. My husband got, him gone in the bed.

OH: A ute, yeah

IC: I put everything on the car, in the car. My husband, 4 o'clock [in the morning], get up and go to the market, after the market, go the factory, on Holden's.

OH: How many times a week did he used to go to the market?

IC: Oh, He go three time, three time yeah, three time because have spare time on Tuesday, Thursday and Sunday, because the other days no, not really because have the man to pay \$2000. My husband pay on the morning \$25, and go in the market for sell.

OH: You had to pay a commission of \$2000?

IC: Yes, the other people.

OH: The merchants, the merchants?

IC: Yes, because other people have the *posto*<sup>14</sup> all the time.

OH: A stand at the market?

IC: Yes, the Stand. No good, no, no have a room for go, yeah, different price

OH: And so your husband would pay \$25?

IC: In the morning, yeah.

OH: So it was worthwhile?

IC: Yeah.

OH: It was good?

IC: Oh, very good because we work, take the fruit, pick them up, nice and fresh, go over there, a lot of people like when see my husband on market, say, *Come, come and alright I give one, two, three boxes*, you know. And at 7 o'clock all thing are ready and [he] got to work on the factory, Holden's factory.

OH: What a hard life, wasn't it?

IC: Yeah, very hard (ma) but otherwise, like it. [laughs]

OH: Tell me, is there anything else that you would like to add about your experiences on the market gardens, market gardening?

IC: I got experience because in Italy I got a lot of fruit and the same pick them up and go on market too and have a lot of experience. *Si, si*. Otherwise, here, is a different thing, a different way.

OH: Tell me, tell me more.

---

<sup>13</sup> Buckboard, known also as a ute

<sup>14</sup> In English, "a stand"

- IC: Yeah, different because in Italy carried on my head, you walk 20 mile in the morning sometime, in here have the car, you know, the car he go straight away, coming in the market, more easy, yeah, more easy, lot easy *qua*<sup>15</sup> here but otherwise, everything lot of work, lot of work, but I like it, I like it. My husband like it too, you know, but ... that's, that's the life, Maria.
- OH: That you chose?
- IC: Yeah, when you come in Australia, very hard, very, very hard, first time I leave my Mum and after, everybody ... otherwise when come here, everything good, started work, and we had a family, stay very good. [Ilda expresses feelings of sadness]
- OH: Yes.
- IC: Yeah.
- OH: You had a ... it's hard to leave your family behind.
- IC: Yeah.
- OH: And come to Australia and see, like you said, see vineyards, and start working on the land?
- IC: I say, maybe in Australia, you know, everybody say in Italy, *Australia*, *Australia*, maybe Australia beautiful city, a nice city. When you come in here, this day I come because I leave Melbourne, I come on the train for Adelaide, rain all the time, all night it rain, very wet, very cold, and when I come in here I say, *Oh dear, that's Australia*. [laughs] You know, but, slowly, slowly, everything, I start to like, start the work, and everything come happy, I have a friend, after my hubby, after I got my children, my children grow up, you know, After my mum and my sister and my brother come too. And ... different thing.
- OH: Did your, did your family help you on the garden, in the market garden?
- IC: Yes, sometime, when I busy working, yeah, yeah, not all the time. Pia when I have the market, cherries, one, Pia, make stay on, put all the ticket on the boxes.
- OH: Pia, your daughter, yes?
- IC: Yeah, my daughter Pia. She write the ticket because put the number, how much kilo in the box, who want to sell, and the same the cherry, call the name of the cherries.
- OH: The type of cherry?
- IC: Yes, and a lot of work, you know, everybody helps me too, my sister, my brother, my children, you know, yeah. In the summertime when come from school, I put ready for dinner. She finishes dinner, they take the dinner and eat it at Norton Summit. The children after, make do the dishes and me and my husband work.
- OH: The orchard, on the orchard?
- IC: Yeah, yeah, because when the cherries all ready, you know, work or take, because otherwise all no good. When they ready, pick them up.
- OH: And how many months would that be, or weeks?
- IC: Oh, three, or four months, yeah, yes. Start in October, finish in January, yeah.
- OH: And what time would you get home from Norton Summit?

---

<sup>15</sup> In English, "here"

IC: Oh, nearly every day, nearly every day, my children not, because, you know, after, no have time for it, but me and my husband would go over there. When, lot, lot busy, work, after come home, and that's all but summertime we stay all the time over there, you know, yeah.

OH: So, you finished in 2002?

IC: Yeah, finish in 2002.

OH: And you had sore hips, hip replacement?

IC: Yeah, yeah.

OH: So you couldn't do ... Do you miss all that?

IC: Yeah, yeah, I miss a lot [laughs]

OH: What do you miss, what do you miss about the garden?

IC: I miss the high area, I miss the fruit, I miss the little sheep, because got to sheep, clean them up. The little sheep.

OH: The sheep, the sheep?

IC: Yeah, the little sheep

***In the last part of the interview Maria speaks in Italia. Maria Crisci has translated it.***

IC: ... *Parlo italiano*<sup>16</sup> When we got this land up there at Norton Summit, we were responsible for the land. We leased the land - \$200 per year – and were in charge of the land. Sometimes we went in the morning, before sunrise, we would go there and work and when it got hot, we'd stop and we'd return home. It was very convenient because we didn't employ anyone, we were independent. We could come home and sometime the tractor wouldn't work and we had to carry the boxes on our heads up to the shed because the land was steep. It was difficult to descend and the tractor wouldn't make it up the slope and so we had to carry the boxes by hand, sharing the load between me and Alfredo. I started at the bottom of the slope and he would go ahead of me and bring the boxes and take them to the garage and load the buckboard and then we'd go home. But we were on our own terms, we could come home early or late – whatever hour we wanted to go home. There was no-one to control us – what hours we did

OH: You were your own bosses?

IC: Yes, we were our own bosses, not having to answer to anyone. The actual landowner was an elderly Englishman who had bought over 100 acres of land which he leased, to people. But it was a nice piece of land. It was appreciated and beautiful because the air was pure and clean, and we had sheep that cleared the land. And we'd go up there and call them "brrp ... brrp ... brrp" and as we called them, they would come and surround us.

OH: How many?

IC: Not many...about twelve or thirteen.

OH: Thirteen sheep?

---

<sup>16</sup> In English, "Can I speak Italian?"

- IC: Yeah, yeah ... and when they got bigger we had to take them to the market because they would jump the fence. One day they jumped so high they reached the cool room which was three or four kilometres away. So anyway Mr Playford a very good man telephoned us and said, *Alfredo come, come quickly the sheep have gone onto the cool room...I'll help you...* So we went there and we took them back to our land and he, Mr Playford, drove our car there. And me and my husband brought them you know, on and we said to them, *Come on ... let's go ... come on ... let's go...* And the sheep remembered where they had to go and where they had been and we took them down to where they had to go
- OH: How old was Mr Playford?
- IC: He was...he was about 50 years old...he was a good man, neither old nor young. He greeted us always – he was on the boundary. He couldn't remember my name being Ilda so instead he called me, *Alfreda ... Alfreda!* [laughs] Then he learned how to say my name. *My name is Ilda*, I said to him. He would call us all the time because he was on the boundary and we were almost always working together because we had fruit at the same time. He had cherries too but he was a very, very good man. If there was anything we didn't understand, he would teach us, he would help us and tell us, *You need to do it this way*. He was a good man but we were good to him too. We were happy to stay there, this way but then I couldn't walk anymore so we had to leave the land and I felt bad.
- OH: After thirty years ... it seemed?
- IC: Eh but I couldn't do it any more, we couldn't do it anymore.
- OH: Well, if you had to compare ... Comparing the market garden to working at Norton Summit, in comparison, which did you prefer?
- IC: It was different.
- OH: In what way did it differ, how did it differ?
- IC: It was different because in the market garden I had to kneel down on the earth and with a short handle hoe and you had to always bend down doing bunch stuff, always weeding, always tying bunches, taking the bunches out, it was hard work. It was heavy work but for us it was a necessity, we needed to earn money, we worked and we forced ourselves to do the work in many ways but slowly, slowly we got used to it. But the fruit was different, you'd put a bucket in front of you and you would collect the fruit and put it into a box and the tractor would transport it, sometimes it worked well and sometimes it didn't work so well. It was a sacrifice but we were happier than doing the bunch stuff in the garden
- OH: And you were working for others?
- IC: And yes we worked with other people and we had to start at a set time and in the morning I needed to feed the children otherwise they wouldn't have eaten and so I first had to get breakfast for them and then off to work. We were always in a hurry on my bike and sometimes I missed the pedal and I didn't know how to ride it properly and sometimes I'd fall off but we made it through [laughs] but in any case ...
- OH: But did you ride your bike on the road?
- IC: On the road yes, yes, always on the road otherwise how could we do it? When we walked we didn't ride the bike. We would walk through the vineyard and it was

different but with the bike you always had to travel on the road, yeah.

OH: And did you go to work there alone?

IC: No I went there alone and we'd met up with the others there in the soil in the garden. There would be two or three of us, depending on how many labourers the landlord needed. He would always ask for me he'd say, *Come, come, come ...* But sometimes I couldn't go to work but he would still ask me to go there because he needed the work done, and we'd go. Naturally we could do this because mum was here with us and she could look after the children otherwise how could we do it. Naturally we couldn't abandon them, you know. This was our life at that time but when I first came to Australia, I worked yes but it was all ... the land was bare, it had nothing. They needed to build a factory, a fruit factory in this location. And so they didn't go ahead with this because it wasn't convenient and they changed and partitioned the land into blocks and built a road and one day, my husband's uncle we'd say to him, *Uncle when you see a good and beautiful location let us know because we need to build a house.* So he saw where they'd constructed this road and there were blocks of land and he told us and other compatriots and one day we all bought these blocks of land.

OH: What year was this?

IC: This was about 1954, yes. We had saved £400 and each block cost £200 each. So we bought two blocks, others bought another two and so on, and we Italians bought a whole street of land [laughs]. We were almost all family that bought these blocks and also people from the same area of Italy.

OH: A community of Italians?

IC: Yes, we were all Italians who had bought these blocks of land and we have all remained here. We were happy here because it was close of the bus although before it was the tram.

OH: So the tram passed nearby?

IC: Yes, yes the tram passed near here and the tram would come every half hour. Then the trams were taken away and replaced with buses. They also came every half hour. But when I went to work at Magill, in the morning I'd take the bus because I used to go with the bike but I fell off the bike and I said to myself what am I going to do? The children are at home, my husband works, if I get run over by a bus what will we do? Nothing so I used to go with the bus in the morning, I stopped cycling, and at night this man a very good man – he wasn't very old probably around 50 – he would drive us to Glynde.

OH: Was he Italian?

IC: He was Italian yes, yes. Giro Candone – I don't know if you know him or of him. Well, he used to take us, there were six of us women who used to go to the factory.

OH: Six?

IC: Yes, six.

OH: All from this area?

IC: Yes, but, I was from here but the others were from Glynde. He collected the others from there, but I used to go there by bus. In the evening, however, I would walk home because the bus would only come every half hour and I would get home

before the bus. Well, every evening I'd walk on foot from Glynde to here. From here ...

OH: Well, the buses stopped ... When did the trams cease to run?

IC: The trams? I don't remember exactly when they finished but it was a while ago, maybe in 1958, maybe in '58 but I can't remember exactly when. Most likely it was then, but I always walked home.

OH: You didn't drive a car?

IC: No, no, I have always been scared to drive a car. [laughs] No I was scared and in any case my husband drove so there was no need but if I had learned to drive it would've been good. But since I hadn't learned I would walk and get off at Glynde, near the Glynde Hotel, Hotel Glynde is where Giro Candone would drop us off but most of the other women would get dropped off at their homes because he'd go past their homes but not me, I'd get dropped off there because I had to go there. This is life, Maria.

OH: Well, all the changes you have seen in your life, how have these things seemed to you?

IC: Well changes, really the changes here have been very much different to those in Italy. Because the impression that I had, as I said earlier, the impression that I had that I would arrive here that I'd find another kind of nation. Another ... different thing. But instead it wasn't like that. But I was only 21 when I arrived and I embraced all that could be done you know so ... I started to work, then we grew our family. And then we bought another house, we made a bit of money ... some money ... we bought another house then we sold it and then we bought some land at Elizabeth and on that land we made nothing. We paid all the taxes for nothing, because it never went anywhere and so we sold there and we bought another house. So, we sold. And then when our children were getting married, we sold to help our children, gifts and wedding costs and all other things but life was happy because we were all one big family almost all of us here in Australia. That was lovely, yes, yes. And in this way when I'd finished work I tried to help my children bring up their children. Whatever I could do whatever I could do because Anna has always worked as a hairdresser and has always worked and the children were young and needed help to give her a hand in all sorts of ways

OH: Like your mother Laura did for you?

IC: Yes, my mother did for us and she helped us the same and so we were happy with everything. We got used to it here and so here was our day, here was our state. In any case what could we do but we did travel to Italy, I took my children to meet their aunts & uncles, we took them to visit the cities and we spent two weeks on tour from Venice throughout Italy, you know ...

OH: Were you happy to have come to Australia?

IC: Yes, I was happy to be here yes yes [laughs] because Italy is beautiful but in Italy there wasn't much work so people were not able to do what they wanted and couldn't make ends – they couldn't go beyond where they were you know. Whereas here in Australia, there was ... if you want to work and know how to save money, knows what needs to be done, it's a completely different life, a different thing. You can do it because you work, you save some money, when you

- needed to, you spend money and everything works out
- OH: Ok, thank you Ilda for contributing to the Campbelltown Council Market Garden Oral History Project, and for providing such interesting detail in this interview, *grazie*<sup>17</sup>
- IC: Thank you to you. Sorry if I missed out many things but many I can't remember but the most necessary are these that I've said to you.
- OH: Lovely, I didn't ask about your time at Virginia, while you worked for the Canale, how long did you work there?
- IC: There...not too long, not too long...they only picked us up when they were busy. We were five women there, five women.
- OH: How many years did you work there?
- IC: About two years and then I started working at the factory as it was more convenient.
- OH: Was there a difference in the soil?
- IC: The soil was very good, very good. It was sandy and when we had to do bunch stuff like carrots and you'd easily turn your hand like this, and the carrots would be tied. I had been shown how to thread the string. I put it between my fingers and I simply pulled on the string like this and the carrots would be tied. Very easy. We were two women that Mr Canale asked to do bunch stuff but he didn't know how capable we were to makes these bunches. And so we had to do 60,000 ... yeah 60,000 carrots and he gave us a deadline of one day to do it because he went to a place where there were ...t here were five of us women, two did the bunches of carrots, tied them up, and the others picked peas, picked other stuff that was there to do. There was this woman, not very jovial she wasn't ... and she wanted to make us look like fools so I said to my co-worker who went with me, her name was Lina. I said Lina, *I'll show you how to apply the string*, because I knew how to do it which I did at Palumbo's and everyone at Graves Street. So, I said, *I'll teach you how to do it and we have to do it as quickly as we can*. And so, *Okay*, said Lina, *You teach me and I'll do it*. By 11 am, Maria, we had tied 60 dozen bunches of carrots. Then Domenic arrived and asked us, *Girls, when, what time will you be able to finish, so I can load them?* And we said, *We have already finished*. *Oh!* he said, *You have finished, but how is it possible?* He had counted the strings and knew how many we had used and how many bunches we had done. Well, I told him, *We have finished!* And he said, *Mamma Mia, you have finished making 60 dozen by 11am*. I said, *Yes, we have*. He said, *Oh mamma mia, what an amazing achievement, amazing!* So okay, we were happy too. So we went to the other girls as we had finished around midday and they asked, *What was it like? Have you finished?* We said, *Yes, yes*. And Domenic said, *They've done a lot they've finished all of it, they've already finished everything!* So he allowed us to finish work early .
- OH: Oh, that was good of him.
- IC: Oh no, yes he was a good man, he let us leave early.
- OH: Did he pay you enough?

---

<sup>17</sup> In English, "Thank you."

IC: Yes, oh yes, normal like all the others. When we left to come home we stopped at a hotel, near Virginia and he bought a coca cola [laughs] on our return journey and we were happy.

OH: How much did you earn per day?

IC: Well, \$2.00 a day or \$2.50

OH: And did he pay you daily or weekly?

IC: At the end of the week, they only paid weekly. They paid for the days we worked. That's how much they'd pay us, no set wage. It wasn't that this was a full week and next it wasn't, it was how much we worked that's how much we were paid. We were happy, very happy. This woman was disappointed. How was it possible? Because Domenic would always get us two (Lina and me) to do the carrots. This woman whom we disliked, complained about us, that we were chosen to do the carrots and said, *Why can't we do the carrots, we know how to do them?* And Domenic said, *Another time.*

(OH: You were two champions...)

Another time, another time, but another time never arrived [laughs] because he was happy with the two of us. We were all happy but there was always a disgruntled person who wasn't very nice. She thought, *I wonder what's going on?* She was very upset that he chose us to work. But she used to work for him almost all the time. And she made us work so hard. You couldn't even stand up to straighten your back. It was terrible, terrible. We'd say, *Is it possible to start at 7am in the morning and finish at midday?* And always hoeing, hoeing ... we couldn't stand up once in that time. And so that's how it was. Then she wanted to go to the market and Domenic said, *Another time, another time, you can come.* [Laughs] What could you do, what could you do Maria? That's life!

OH: All is history now, lovely history.

IC: All history and all lovely memories but for me, I've been happy here, I've been happy with everything. Then my family came and we were happy and we have lots of relatives, lots. But we have settled in this area, in this nation and we are happy with our lot. Italy is beautiful, Italy is beautiful, of course because I was born there, I grew up there, so it's beautiful. Even though our family was big, there were nine in total, seven of us children and also mum and dad and so we were confined and restricted and couldn't do what we wanted to do but we overcame this. We didn't go without but we were okay. But here we are better off, yeah, yeah. I've always liked it, I've been always happy, but in the beginning it was ... I don't know ...

OH: Difficult

IC: Yes, it was a little difficult, it was difficult in the beginning because I left everything behind. My friends used to say, *Don't go, why are you going there? Stay here in Italy.* But it was impossible because my husband, we'd been engaged for four years and he had emigrated here after two years. So two years later I came here too. But we have been happy. We've been happy with everything.

OH: Thank you, thank you for this interview

IC: That's alright, thank you