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**Interview with Robert Martin, conducted by Peter Donovan at Adelaide Gaol on 31
May 1989**

TAPE 1 SIDE A

Rob, can we start by having you tell us how you arrived at the Gaol and why you were brought to it?

Well I would have arrived in a paddy wagon, or a maria or whatever it's called. I was brought here from the court where I was sentenced and delivered at the front door.

I was imprisoned as a conscientious non-complier with the National Service Act. That is, I was a draft resister, or an opponent of conscription. I had refused to register for the National Service Act. My first prison sentence was of one week, and that was because I refused to go to a medical test that was normal for persons conscripted into the Army at that time. And then I had a second, and a major sentence, for refusing to go to Keswick Barracks, because by then I had been deemed to be conscripted. This was automatic because of my prior refusal to collaborate with the normal procedures.

When you came to gaol, were there many others in the wagon with you, or were you on your own?

There were a number of other prisoners who had been sentenced on that particular day, yes. So a group of us would be brought from the courts to the front door.

What were the other prisoners in for? Any idea? Were you chatting on the way down on what you were in for and what you got?

I don't recall chatting with them on that specific occasion, but of course inside the gaol you might get talking about what people were in for, although I could remark that it was in a way an infringement of prison etiquette to directly ask a person what he was in for. If it came up naturally in conversation, or if people volunteered the information, fair enough, but it wasn't considered good manners to just ask a person straight out what they were in for.

Once you came through the door, what happened then?

Well, in the gatehouse I would have been processed into the gaol. I can't remember all the details, but a list had to be made of the property I brought with me of items that were going to be kept for me until I was released. And there were all kinds of forms to fill out. I'm afraid I can't remember all the

details. That took place in the rooms in the gatehouse immediately inside the main door.

Not being a professional prison inmate, what was it like, that first time coming in?

Well it was rather scary the first time, but that was for just one week, and as I was later facing an eighteen month sentence, I was later grateful for having had the earlier experience and finding that it wasn't too bad. So the prospect of the eighteen month stretch was not quite so frightening. But, certainly, the first time you come in, you have to be rather nervous, rather apprehensive. You're not sure what you're coming into.

A moment ago, Rob, you suggested that the gaol wasn't quite as bad as you had expected. What had you expected, or how did it differ from what you expected?

Well it's not a matter of what I expected. It was just the fear that it might be an utterly terrible place. In many ways it wasn't a happy experience, but it wasn't what you would call - or I would call - traumatic, hardly bearable. So that's why I was making the point that I was glad from that first sentence of one week to learn that I would probably be able to bear an eighteen month stretch.

Once you were processed in this little area here, where were you taken?

At the time it's all so unfamiliar and I'm not sure I could give precisely the details, but after going through the rooms in the gatehouse, I think I was taken to some room out towards the centre of the Gaol where I had to take off my civvy clothes and change into gaol costume. Complete transformation.

You're a reasonably big fellow. Did you have clothes that fitted?

Roughly. You were given a set that roughly fitted, but no one was particularly concerned that they be tailored. You just got something that was adequate and that it was the grey prison garb, so no one was concerned about it being a perfect fit, and it certainly didn't look anything but untidy.

We're now standing in the visiting area on the prisoner side. Rob, you had some visits whilst you were here. How frequently, who were they?

I was here in Adelaide Gaol quite a short time, but I did have visits from friends and family. I suppose I would have had two or three visits. I think you were allowed a visit once a week on the weekend.

You've suggested the visiting area when you were here was not quite the way it is at the moment?

As I remember it in 1971/72, it was not as covered in as it is now, although there were the booths, one for each prisoner. I don't think there was the roofing or the outer walling either at the back or at the front. There was just the system of booths to prevent you from having physical contact with your visitor. Also I remember the partition between the prisoner and the visitor as being a metal grille rather than glass as it is nowadays. There's a grille now at the bottom, but I remember it as being of a broader mesh and going all the way up. And I also remember that you could just touch fingertips through the grille. It's now much finer, so you wouldn't be able to do that.

You remember that. Was that important?

Yes. My girlfriend was visiting me so, yes, that was important.

Can you say much else, what it was like again that first week perhaps, when the whole of the prison was a strange experience?

Perhaps one of the reasons I have trouble remembering specific details of when and where about those early days is that it was all so new and bewildering, and you were getting used to the routines and still rather apprehensive about what it might be in the long term.

We're now standing in No. 3 Yard in front of the induction centre. Rob, what do you remember about this area?

I was here only very briefly for the induction process, and after that I would never have seen this part of this Gaol again. Really all I remember is that at this spot I had to take off my everyday clothes and hand them over for safekeeping until the end of my term in prison, and then I had to put on the prison garb, as I mentioned before. It did seem a sort of transition area where you briefly were reduced to a naked human being, and then you emerged in your new role. So there was that transition from one world to another.

Again, were all of you who came in at the one time processed at the same time?

I think so, yes. You were brought in a batch in the wagon and processed through in a group.

Where were you told about the routine in this particular gaol?

I really can't remember whether I was given a specific talk about the routine. I think I was just introduced to it as whatever was required of me came up.

What was the prison routine as you remember it Rob, in that first time particularly?

You mean the daily routine? OK, well you're woken up by the intercom system. I can't even remember if there was an intercom system here. There certainly was one at Yatala where I was later. You know you have to be ready to come out of the cell at a certain time, so you have to tidy the cell up. The breakfast comes through the slot in the door. Then you come out and take the toilet bucket out for emptying, and after that you line up and get counted before you go off to your workplace for the day.

I was working in the garden during my first week in this gaol. It was quite a process getting out to the garden because of all the counting and lining up that had to go on. So the work day wasn't particularly long, and it certainly wasn't very hard either. It wasn't anybody's idea of hard labour.

Were you out there all day? For instance, there is a little dining room over there in the garden.

Yes, you were out there for all the working day, but that wasn't terribly long, because before it's too late you have to be back, counted up again, and given your evening meal and put into your cell. It's still only late afternoon.

How were you conscripted to go into the garden? Did you have a choice, or all these fellows were sent into the garden?

There was no choice about it. I was in for a short time, and that was where I was told I would be working. It was reasonably pleasant to be able to go out and work in a garden for a few hours.

We're now standing in the exercise yard near the New Building, which Rob was able to remember reasonably clearly.

This was the exercise yard for the week that I was in in late 1971, and I remember being impressed by the Victorian aspect of the buildings - the Dickensian aspect I suppose. It all seemed so antiquated and so unlike whatever I was used to. As now, it had asphalt, and my exercise was to walk up and down, usually in conversation with some other prisoner, and that was the exercise for a lot of blokes. But there were facilities for sport, for simple ball games and so on. Seemed to have a reasonable amount of time out here,

especially on the weekend. There's plenty of time for conversation with other prisoners, and plenty of time to get bored if you were going to be here for a long time.

What did you talk about with the other prisoners?

Well, the one I was most friendly with was another draft resistor called Ken Wycherley. I didn't know that he was in here, but a prisoner came up to me and said there was another chap in a similar situation to myself, so that's how we met, and I naturally spent most of my time with him. And I guess we talked about why we were in here and matters like that. With other prisoners it's hard to say what I specifically talked about here, but my memories of talking with prisoners in Yatala and Cadell, you range over enormous fields in the course of prolonged periods where you've got lots of spare time.

What other sorts of prisoners were here? Did any of them impress themselves upon you?

Well I got the impression that in this gaol they were mostly quite short term prisoners, and there were a lot of people working off small fines. And then there were a lot of older derelict prisoners who were in and out because of problems related to drinking. The big time crims that are more likely to impress themselves on my memory, they were for later at Yatala.

So before you went to the garden, presumably you were lined up in this area here to be counted, and whatever?

I'm not sure where we were lined up for the work detail, no.

How did you get out to the work detail? Were you marched out or did people just wander out?

Well at the appointed time you had to turn up at whatever spot you were required at to be counted. I remember this constant counting and recounting, and nothing could proceed until the numbers were exactly right. And then you'd be taken through the doors, and maybe counted again, and the prison officers were relaying numbers to each other. The arithmetic had to come out exactly right.

Were you ever aware of any problems in the arithmetic?

Yes, there'd be considerable delays sometimes - I'd be talking about Yatala now - when the numbers didn't come out right and they had to recount. They either had to establish that someone had done their arithmetic wrong, or of course they had to start searching for prisoners because there was a possibility someone had shot through. And it could be very annoying for everybody, this

waiting while the numbers were got right. It was very time-consuming. That's another of the reasons that the work day wasn't terribly long.

Some people have suggested there was a certain level of violence in the Gaol. Did you see any of that?

Not in Adelaide Gaol. There were some instances up at Yatala, and you heard about it as well, yes.

We're now standing in a cell. Rob, can you remember where your cell was?

Well, we're in B top wing of the New Wing, and I think on the first floor on the left hand side, somewhere in the middle, is about where my cell was for that first week, but the exact number I can't remember.

Did you have the cell to yourself, or did you have to share it with another?

On one night I was sharing it with a young fellow who was in for a traffic offence, but otherwise no, I wasn't sharing.

So how long did you spend in here?

The nights of that one week.

But in terms of hours? From when till when?

Well, it must have been from roughly half past four in the afternoon till half past seven the next morning. It's a pretty long time, yes. It didn't worry me too much because I don't mind the solitude, but it always impressed me that a lot of prisoners found it very difficult to be alone for so much of each day, especially if they didn't have the resources to keep themselves occupied for such long periods.

Did you have any resources here in that first week?

I could read books, you see. So being locked up in a cell wasn't entirely unattractive to me. But a lot of people who didn't have interest in books, or hobbies to pursue or whatever, and who were more gregarious in their habits, did find it very trying.

Where did you get the books from? The library down in this wing, or were they some you were able to bring in from outside?

I had some of my own as well as access to the prison library's, yes.

Was there a particular routine for putting prisoners in the cells and then letting them out again? One of the interviewees has suggested that one always listened to the clank of keys because you knew where the prison officers were. Another one suggested you try not to get into a routine because prisoners knew exactly where you were, so you varied things. Was there a routine for getting you in and out?

I remember it as being a fairly humdrum routine, but the precise details now I'd be in difficulty trying to describe. But with the long term prison sentence in this and other gaols, the impression I got was of considerable monotony and lack of variation, so that eventually you lost a sense of the passing of time. Your whole sense of time changed from what it was outside. You started to forget what day of the week it was, and your sense of the way time moved was different, because of the sameness of each day.

You say week days were pretty much the same. Was a Sunday any different from an ordinary day, or a Tuesday?

Saturdays and Sundays were different because you weren't working and you got visits, so they were certainly different. But the working days were very, very much the same, and the monotony and boredom becomes a serious problem if you're in gaol for a long time.

You say you got visits on particular days. How were you told you had a visit? Would an officer just come up to you and say, "You've got a visitor out there," or did it only happen at particular times when numbers of prisoners might be detailed off to go and see their visitors?

Well you had to be specifically told someone had turned up at the front gate to see you, yes, and then you had to be taken out to the visiting area.

Was there a rigmarole to go through, travelling from one part of the gaol to another?

The endless rigmarole of going through main doors - opening, unlocking and relocking. And then of course, when you're having visits, there's the security checks to see that you haven't received any goods from outside.

Presumably you had to be accompanied by a prison officer between one part of the gaol and the other?

Yes. Yes, whenever you went from one major part to the other you were accompanied.

Pamela was asking whether Rob had been treated differently from other prisoners.

I asked not to be treated differently but in effect I was treated slightly better than most prisoners, because a lot of the prison officers accepted that I was not the ordinary kind of prisoner, and also I had the sympathy of the State Government at that time. I was imprisoned under Federal laws, but under those

laws I had to be held within a State prison system. But nevertheless the State Government - Dunstan's government - was sympathetic to me, and the prison administration was aware of that so I was treated somewhat better.

How was that better treatment manifest?

Things like when I first arrived at Yatala I got one of the larger cells on the ground floor of A Division, which in the normal system I should have earned as a privilege. It was commented on by other prisoners that I must have had friends somewhere or had been making somebody happy to get one of those special cells straight away.

So you came in as a status prisoner from the word go.

Yes, because of the State Government's sympathy with my position. So I was in a better situation than draft resisters in the eastern States where the State Government, like the Federal Government, was not sympathetic.

You were pointing out a few other things here, Rob.

Well, we're standing inside one of the cells. There was the double bunk bed as there is now, but it wasn't up against the window - it was down one of the side walls. There would have been slightly more furniture - a little cupboard in the corner. And I suppose the other notable feature of the prison furniture was the toilet bucket in the corner, which was always regarded as one of the major indignities. All prisoners regarded that as offensive that they had to use that. In discussion with prison officers, the argument was always put forward that it would be terribly expensive to put in proper toilets.

You suggested on one occasion when you were here, you shared the cell on one night. Was that the first night?

No, it was in the middle of the period.

So what was it like? How do you think the other chappy felt if you were the person and he was sort of invading your little bit of privacy?

I don't think that was a worry. It was accepted that on some occasions you had to share the cell. Some prisoners didn't like it. They got very possessive about their cells, especially if they were in here a reasonable time and resented having to share it because they'd set up their own little world. But I guess it depends on the personalities. Some people would welcome having someone to talk to - having the company.

Did you have much control of what was in your cell? You remember the bed being against a different wall. Could you arrange things a little differently? Could you decorate things a little?

Well I didn't try to in the short time I was in Adelaide Gaol, but later in longer term up in Yatala, I saw that of course you could modify the interior of your cell to quite a remarkable extent if you were there a good time, and certainly, yes, decorate it and bring in all kinds of objects. Some people who had hobbies almost turned their cells into little craft shops and they made their own little home, trying to make themselves comfortable, which is only what you expect.

Did you have anything other than prison equipment or issue in here? I notice that there is room for a radio, but I know some people had their own pieces of electrical equipment.

Some people did. I didn't. I think all I had was some books. But certainly, again, I probably - - -. My memories are more of Yatala. you could bring in various items like radios and musical instruments and decorations for the walls.

You were in here for a week. Were you looking forward to getting out? How did it feel like when you had done time?

Well of course I was looking forward to getting out, and it was good to know that I was in here a brief time. It was a particularly good feeling walking out the front door in everyday clothes and being picked up by friends in a car out the front.

Had it changed your life at all? Did it give you new insights into things?

The one week sentence I wouldn't think - - -. I couldn't say that that had a great effect, but the longer sentence, which in effect was nearly ten months in the following year, 1972, yes, I think that changed me. Probably made me a stronger person. Also, I guess I'd had the kind of experience that I wouldn't have expected to have had, in a way - almost in a paradoxical way - an enriching experience, because ordinarily a person like me would not have seen the prison system.

Rob, you came back here a second time. What were the circumstances of the second visit?

The second time I was here, I arrived here on 25 February 1972, and then I had been sentenced to eighteen months in gaol for refusing to report at Keswick Barracks, so that was the major sentence for draft resistance. On that occasion I spent a number of days in what I believe was then called the remand yard. It's Yard No. 4. It's not the remand yard from the later years.

Do you have clearer recollections of this second visit?

I think they are clearer, yes. They get clearer as time progresses. I certainly remember being interviewed in a glass booth just inside the door of Yard 4. A friendly prison officer was filling out papers and just talking to me as I came into this yard and was making gentle fun of me being a draft resistor, asking me to make the peace sign and so forth. I looked more the part in those days because I had very long hair.

END OF TAPE 1 SIDE A: SIDE B

You just made a comment Rob about having long hair. Were you able to keep long hair whilst you were in gaol?

Yes. A short time before I came to Adelaide Gaol the regulations were changed so the prisoners could keep their long hair. That had been a matter of perhaps only months or a year or so before. So I and a lot of other prisoners had quite long hair.

So in your second visit you hadn't seen this particular yard before, so it was new territory.

Yes, it was another new territory. I think I should make the point that I only saw parts of this gaol and until I came back here last year in 1988 on one of the open days for the general public, I had never really seen the whole of the gaol and that would be the situation for most prisoners. They would get to know certain areas of the gaol but other territories they would never see no matter how long they were here.

How did this particular yard function.

A lot of the prisoners in this section were on remand waiting for their sentences. Others, like me, were just waiting to be transferred to Yatala. I was initially going to be here only a handful of days, but then there was a delay of a few days before I was taken away to Yatala. I would have had a week or ten days, I think here. One of the points about this yard was that people here didn't do any regular work. They weren't taken out on work details because they were either on remand and so couldn't be required to work, or they were waiting for a transfer to another prison. So it was pretty much a case of people just standing around in this yard all day and trying to amuse themselves.

You said in the New Building yard you sort of found a fellow traveller. Did you find anyone here that you found you were able to talk with a little more closely than others?

I certainly didn't find another draft resistor, but there were always a number of prisoners I could talk to. I didn't make any friends in this area. I did later in Yatala, but there were plenty I could have conversation with. I wouldn't say I

got close to any of the prisoners in Adelaide Gaol. I made some friendships in Yatala. They didn't last afterwards, possibly because we came from such different backgrounds.

So what did you do, just stand around. There are a few sort of sporty courts here. Did you get involved in any of those?

I didn't take part in any of the sports but, again, as with the New Wing, I just walked up and down on the asphalt to get exercise. The problem of finding things to do was more serious for the people kept in this yard because they didn't have regular work. On a couple of occasions I was detailed to do some cleaning in the showers, and when I did get to Yatala I had various kinds of work to do during the working week, but in the time I was here, very little.

Was the yard as you remember it pretty well as it is at the moment?

The main buildings with the colonnades, yes, they don't seem to have changed, but the smaller buildings - - -. I'd be hard put to say what the exact changes are, but that transportable building on the far side, on the far wall from the gate, that's new. I think down on the right wall as you come in there was a different arrangement of buildings, but I couldn't specifically say. The little old buildings on the left, I don't think they've changed. That was a commonroom included a little library.

We're now standing in what's probably a recreation room in 4 Yard. Do you remember this at all?

I remember it, but I don't know that I can say much of interest about what I saw here at that time. What I can comment on though is prompted by the artwork that we can see here now, I don't think it was there then, but I could make the comment that it seemed a lot of prisoners had artistic talent and they had the time to develop it while they were in prison. I got to meet a number of people painting or drawing, or following up some craft.

What was this area used for when you were here?

I think it was just a - - -. I'm not sure. I think one of the rooms along here was just a sort of commonroom for chatting and sitting down. There might have been a shower block on this side as well as on the other, but I'm not sure.

You mentioned earlier you were detailed off to clean the showers on one occasion. Where were they?

I think they were over on the right wall, and we're on the left at present.

So they've been removed as far as you believe?

Well if my memory's right, yes, they must have been removed since then.

We're now standing in Cell 17, which is on the right hand block when you're facing with back to the entrance. It was round about here that Rob believes he had a cell when he was here.

This is the right hand block as you look from the gate. Somewhere on the ground floor in about the middle I had a cell, and I had it to myself. All I particularly remember is the vaulted ceiling, if that's the word. That's not a particularly shattering detail but it certainly impressed itself on my memory. I don't think the colour scheme has changed - this dreadful green. So I would have been here a week or so.

When you came in that first time, you knew you were only here for a week and you believed you could do time without too much trouble. What was it like the second time?

Well I was looking towards a much longer sentence. It was eighteen months but I expected it to be shorter with remissions, but I certainly expected to do more than a year. So although I had the foretaste a few months before with one week in gaol, I still wasn't sure how I would go with a much longer sentence. And of course there was also the fact that I had only seen Adelaide Gaol. I was looking to going to Yatala and perhaps that was going to be much more fearsome. After all, that was where the long term prisoners went and the major offenders.

So how did you prepare yourself for that?

The whole business of refusing to comply with the National Service Act I had simply, as it were, gritted my teeth and decided to put up with what the consequences were. So the preparation consisted largely of that - trying to be able to take whatever came and hoping that it wasn't too bad.

You suggested earlier that the fact that you were here as a conscientious objector and the fact that the State Government was in effect sympathetic to your cause, gave you a few sorts of privileges as far as the officers were concerned. How did that react on the other prisoners?

No one ever expressed resentment at small signs of favouritism, like that better cell that I mentioned up at Yatala. There were just some jokes made about it. A lot of the prison officers, and a lot of the prisoners were sympathetic to my position and said so. Some prison officers and some

prisoners were not sympathetic. Most of them confined themselves to making remarks behind my back. A few did say to me with varying degrees of vehemence that they didn't like me or my position, but I never suffered anything more than a very brief bit of verbal abuse. I was certainly never physically ill treated. But as numbers went, more of the prison officers and more of the prisoners would have been sympathetic than not.

Why were you sent to Yatala rather than Cadell? Because you would have hardly been considered to have been a dangerous prisoner I would have thought.

Although I was given favoured treatment in small ways, the general idea was that I should go through the normal sequence, so the normal sequence would be, after a very brief time in Adelaide, to go to Yatala for the start of a long term, and then for reasons of good behaviour and so on, to go on to Cadell. I did spend the last three or four months in Cadell.

You were only here in this cell for a week or so in the second instance. What was it like when you had to clear out again and move over to Yatala? How did you feel moving out of the gates this time, not to freedom, but to another place that perhaps gave different impressions?

Well as I mentioned, I was still worried that Yatala was going to be a more fearsome place than Adelaide Gaol. As it turned out, in many ways it was a better place to stay. The facilities were better. But, again, there was that nervousness about what was coming because of the move to Yatala which had the worst reputation I suppose of the South Australian gaols.

What did you travel with? They'd taken all your private possessions. Did you get back into you civilian clothes to go to Yatala or did you go in your prison garb and have a little bag, or what?

I was simply taken in the prison garb. That was the one occasion I was handcuffed. I was handcuffed to another prisoner for the transfer to Yatala. We were taken up there in a paddy wagon.

What happened with your other personal possessions that were here. Did they follow you or go with you?

They must have been sent with me, because ultimately I got them back when I got out of Cadell. So they'd follow the prisoner around, yes.

Rob, you were just mentioning something about the food. Can you elaborate a little bit on that? What was the food like? I presume it was wholesome. Was there much variety?

I remember gaol food as being - - -. You couldn't complain about the quantities - there was plenty of it. If you were a gourmet you wouldn't be terribly happy but I for one am not. I can eat just about anything, so I found that there was no

lack of food and I was satisfied by it. But it was basic food. The vegetables were overcooked. It was institution food. There was a reasonable variety around the week. I remember being amused by the published gaol menus, because they apparently had been written by someone with a fair knowledge of food and a fair wit as well, because they were given French names.

What do you mean, published prison menus?

They put up a list of what was coming up. So you had phrases like "au gratin" - someone who knew the restaurant business. But of course what you were getting was basic cooking.

On##ing stuff like bromide into it, but I think that was just a gaol rumour. [laughs] Something had to account for the strange taste.

You were suggesting this was primarily only breakfast and dinner in here, that lunch was elsewhere.

Yes, lunch would have been in a lunch room out at work, while I was working in the garden in that week, late in '71. I'm not quite sure how we got our lunch here, but we wouldn't have had to come into our cells to eat it. Up at Yatala there was a large dining room - well a large cafeteria sort of room where you had your lunch.

When you were here on remand in this yard here, was it reasonably full, or how many other people would there have been here?

I remember a fair number of blokes here. There seemed to be quite a lot. I couldn't give you the exact numbers, but there seemed quite a few. It was fairly noisy and there was quite a lot going on with the sports and games, and guys walking up and down for exercise and some people having a bit of work to do. Little groups chatting away.

Was there any difference between people on remand in here who had yet to go to the courts, and those who had come from the courts and were going elsewhere?

Well I don't suppose I could generalise about differences in their character or anything, but their position was certainly different. The people on remand were playing this waiting game, which could be very long, and they were often bored and frustrated and suffering a lot of worry about the life they'd been forced to leave outside. Everything's pending this court case that's coming up. They're not necessarily coming up in a great hurry, either.

Did that manifest itself in what was happening outside there? Were those people more worried, more introverted, as distinct from those who knew their fate and might have been getting on with life?

The others here were mostly in my position, that they were just waiting here a few days before they went on to another prison, so they couldn't get very committed to any kind of life in this particular part of the gaol either. This area was very much a limbo really, where you're waiting for a more definite style of life.

What can you remember of the weather? I gather weather must have meant a lot when you were here, if you were either in your cell or you were out in the open. Can you remember if it was bright sunny, or was it dark and dull and wet?

For the brief time I was in Adelaide Gaol I certainly cannot remember details of the weather, but I do remember from staying in Adelaide Gaol and Yatala, how important the sky was, because that's the only part of the outside world you could see. In Yatala I almost lost the sense of Adelaide's existence because I was surrounded with high walls. It was as though I was in an enclosed - - -. It was a principality almost, because of the way it was run - this hierarchy of prison officers and so on. You heard reports of the outside world, and you got a visit once every week or every fortnight or every month. But you couldn't see that the city of Adelaide was just over the wall, and you couldn't see from here in Adelaide, although for the first week I was out in the garden of course.

So the sky and the weather were important, yes. You got more and more interested in small ways of making yourself comfortable, so sunshine was important, and your cup of Milo at night was important, and all kinds of little things. And other prisoners too looked to their little comforts, little ways of cheering themselves up.

We're now standing in the garden and Rob has a few little things he would like to tell us about that.

This is where I worked during that week of my first experience of gaol life in late 1971. So I guess I came out here on five working days. We were brought out in a group. After we'd been through all the doors - all the unlocking and locking of doors and all the counting - we were brought down here in a group. I remember that the prison officer in charge of a work gang was dressed in khaki, rather than the darker uniform of the usual run of warders. I think he also had a different style of hat - more like a digger's hat rather than a prison warder's cap.

We did a little bit of work in the vegetable garden here. It certainly wasn't hard and it wasn't lengthy, and there were smokos and there was the lunch

break. It was all very easy indeed. I can't remember whether technically I was sentenced to hard labour, but at no stage in my time in gaol was I doing genuinely hard labour. Work was a matter of a few hours a day and it wasn't terribly demanding.

It was good to be out here in the open air and to be able to see the city and to have the trains going past, and to not feel so cut off from normal life.

How did you feel out here working with the trains going? You said from your point of view you enjoyed it. Did you feel yourself you were - - -. You know, a little thing of exhibition or fun or curiosity from the people in the train going past?

Well I suppose there must have been all those things. They did look at you as they went past in the train. It wasn't just unmixed enjoyment to be out in the open air. There was still the sense that you were cut off. You had the fence with the barbed wire and the knowledge that you could look at the normal world, but you couldn't be part of it.

How many would have been working out here at any one time? Are we talking in terms of fifteen, or a hundred and fifteen or what?

Perhaps fifteen or twenty people. So, because of that number and the comparative smallness of this garden, again, it wasn't a very demanding form of work and there was plenty of time to idle around and have a smoke and a chat. The work consisted - - -. All I remember is just the very basic business of weeding up and down the rows, and not being required to move particularly fast.

There's a whole host of little sheds here, and some have got names such as dining rooms. You obviously had your meal out here. Were there tables and chairs, and how did the meal get out here?

I'm sorry, I can't remember the precise details of how the meal was brought here. I suppose it was brought out in some kind of trolley. It would have been brought out with metal plates covered over with a metal cover to keep it hot, and there would have been the usual buckets of coffee and tea. There were benches around the edges, I think, of this dining room, but I can't remember tables. Again, I'm not at all helpful on the material details.

I remember the prison officer in charge of this working group as being quite an affable bloke and a kind hearted fellow. There was one Aboriginal prisoner who was very tiny and who was deformed really, and he couldn't walk very fast and he couldn't keep up with the work gang as it walked down from the Gaol, or as it returned, and he was simply allowed to make his own way as best he could. The prison officer was quite kind hearted to him.

A lot of the officers took the attitude that if they could get on reasonably well with the prisoners, and the prisoners were willing to get through the day without trouble, everybody would be happy if the whole show could be as little a matter of stress as possible. That was an attitude of a lot of the prisoners as well. If they could get through the day without any serious miseries, fair enough. So it could work well for both the warders and the prisoners. But there was, of course, constant sources of stress on both sides.

Another memory I have of this garden is that a pair of wild ducks were nesting in the garden, and so their flights back and forth were a subject of constant interest. There was Aboriginal prisoners commenting on that, talking about how the male duck had brought the female home on one of his flights. I don't know why that stuck in my memory. Perhaps it's because it was the natural world coming into this place which was a gaol.

Rob, if we can just elaborate on communication with the outside. You were presumably allowed to write letters, allowed to receive letters. Now I guess all these were scrutinised by prison officers and people like that. Did you find that a bugbear? How did you cope with that?

I was allowed to write, I think it was one letter a week out, while I was in Adelaide and Yatala. When I got to Cadell the number of letters was unlimited, so I started writing heaps of letters. I received lots of letters from family and friends. All the letters were scrutinised, yes, there was a censorship. I understood that I should be somewhat guarded about what I said in letters going out. As I found out afterwards, some of the letters sent into me never reached me because they were hostile letters. Because I was taking a political stance some abusive letters were coming. Well, they never got to me. I know they were coming in because some went to my home address and some went to my parents. Knowing the letters were censored, I suppose it caused a slight embarrassment when you're writing and receiving letters from family and friends, and also it makes you a bit guarded in what you write. It's just another of the restrictions that are so much a part of what gaol's about anyway.