

Podcast 104 – Interviews with Australians – Ivan Robotham

Learn English while learning about daily life in Australia,
with Rob McCormack

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(Please Note: the English in this podcast is conversational and unscripted English. The speaking is faster than in my normal podcasts. You can use the speed button on your podcast player to slow down the speaking, if that helps you.)

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Hi,

Rob: Today I am interviewing an Australian – Ivan Robotham. Ivan is retired and came to Australia from England in 1964, when he was 22 years old. Ivan, thanks for agreeing to be interviewed for my Slow English podcast. Firstly where do you live and how long have you lived there?



Ivan Robotham

Ivan: Yes. Hi Rob. I'm very happy to be part of this podcast for English speaking people who are learning the language. I live in Kinglake which is approximately 50 km north of Melbourne and Kinglake is located on the Great Dividing Range. So we are at an elevation of 650m. Kinglake's claim to fame is that it's in the centre of three major National Parks which were declared by a person called Alexander Kinglake. So the strange thing is, although we say Kinglake, there's no water up here, there's no natural creeks and there's definitely no lakes. So my wife and I moved from Greensborough approximately 20 years ago and the reason we moved here was because it's clean, fresh air, wonderful views

in all directions. It's a quiet life, which means that, although we enjoy the city, we really enjoy the country and it's a lovely part of Australia to live in and that's why we live here.

Okay, so I'm retired and I retired approximately 10 years ago. My early life was spent in the United Kingdom because I am English. I was born in Leicestershire in 1942 so if you're good at mathematics you can quickly work out – gosh, this guy is retired and he's 76 – doesn't sound like a 76 year old. He sounds more like 90 (laughs). No, sorry about that. So, yes I was born in a place called Loughborough which is in Leistershire which is in the, sort of, home counties of the UK. So, and the reason I was born there was because my mother was evacuated from London during the war in 1942. And what was happening at that time, was anybody who didn't have to be in London was evacuated out and that's why I was born where I was. But post-war, after when the war finished, we moved back to London to an area in the postcode with SE16 which was sort of, not one of the more salubrious suburbs of London. It went by the name of Bermondsey and in fact it had quite (laughs), quite a low esteem (laughs), anywhere in London. But nevertheless, we enjoyed those early years there.

I was fortunate enough to get a scholarship to a grammar school which would never have happened in London, no way. So, and I was very lucky to receive a classical education. So the subjects we studied for example were, French, Latin, history, geography, maths, science and all those wonderful things.

Rob: So you came to Australia in 1964 when you were 22. Tell us about your profession and your work life.

Ivan: Profession? Okay, yes well when I left school I did have aspirations to go to university but unfortunately that didn't work out so I took on an engineering apprenticeship with British Aircraft Corporation, trained as an engineer, trained as a mechanical engineer and completed my studies at

the technical college, and came to Australia, got a job as an engineer at the Commonwealth Aircraft Factory, working on the Mirage jet fighters. So that was my first job in Australia. And then I changed direction and went into general manufacturing, always working as a mechanical engineer. Yeah. So I worked in the food industry, canning, canning industry. I worked in the timber industry for a while, just to see what that was like. Textiles, automotive, but mainly manufacturing. And when I finally finished in, about 10 years ago and then I wanted... I retired... but I didn't. I retired from engineering. I went and did a course to train as an ambulance driver and then I worked for 5 years (laughs) as an ambulance driver and emergency medical responder, which was totally different.

Rob: Tell us about your retirement and your hobbies.

Ivan: Hobbies, wow (laughs). Okay, so part of, one of my hobbies is the place I live in because I live on 15 acres of wonderful bushland and paddocks and one of my hobbies is looking after the property. So it's a constant cleaning up leaves and branches and cutting the grass, mending the fences, cutting firewood, yeah. It's wonderful because when you're working outside, you enjoy all the seasons. The winter is probably not so enjoyable but the summer is wonderful, really wonderful. So that's what I do. My other passion, my real passion, other than my marriage (laughs), is riding motorcycles and reading. I love to read and the reason I mentioned earlier, the classical education, it's there that I, at school, early school, that I developed a passion for good reading, Shakespeare and good quality novels. On a cold winter's evening, nothing gives me greater pleasure than to read. Music is important part of my life. Not pop music but what I'll call people music. I love that. I recently started playing the ukulele again and I like to accompany myself singing. I love singing and that's an English tradition and that's born out from early days, school days you

know. You are taught to sing and express yourself in music and it's good, yeah.

Rob: What do you enjoy most about living in Australia or this part of the world?

Ivan: What do I like? I like the openness. Australia is a very, very open and friendly country. The regard for restrictions and rules – yes everybody gets on well together.

But the friendship is outstanding and despite some individuals, and that happens in any group, most Australians are definitely very tolerant of other people's languages. They tend to use expressions about people from other parts of the world. They love tags. Australians just love to tag people. So, you know, I'm a POM, because I come from England.

Rob: What's your favourite place in Australia that you have visited? Tell me about it.

Ivan: Favourite Place? Well, if I have to be perfectly honest, I've got to say I live in the favourite place (laughs). For example, some of my friends, who I ride motorcycles with, go overseas and they... I say why are you going overseas? I've gotta see this. I've got to see that. I want to do this tour. I want to ride the Route 66 etcetera, etcetera. But do you know, whenever they come back to Australia and I say, how was the trip? What they tell me is – well, I did enjoy the trip, but nothing quite stacks up to what we've got here. And where I live in Kinglake and the rides we go on and, I might add that we ride at least twice a week sometimes only a short distance like in the winter time – a bit cool – other times further distances, but all, almost all of the rides we do, and we ride twice a week every week of the year – all of those rides are just spectacular and it's an absolute joy to be here. So, yeah so what's my favourite place to visit? Right here. (Laughs)

Rob: Lastly, what are your plans for the future?

Ivan: Plans for the future. Stay healthy. Stay vertical. Stay above ground (laughs) – in that order. Keep enjoying things that I enjoy and that includes a certain amount of physical work. I think that's very important. Maintain a good body weight. Maintain fitness level by exercise and any other means that you're capable of. I think there are all absolutely vitally important. And maintain a positive attitude and that's probably the most important thing of all, even when things go pear shaped. That's Australian for not going too well (laughs). Then if you, if you maintain a positive attitude then you can get through it. There's always a way of getting through everything. And there's nothing you can't do if you set your mind to it. Yeah, so yeah, that's my view for the future.

Rob: Great.

Ivan: And long may it continue.

Rob: Indeed, I agree. Well, thank you very much Ivan. It's been a wonderful discussion. All the best for the future.

Ivan: Thank you Rob. It's been a pleasure to be part of this and I hope it is successful for your students.

Rob: Thank you.

If you have a question or a comment to make, please leave it in the comments box at the bottom of this page. Or, you can send me an email at rob@slowenglish.info. I would love to hear from you. Tell me where you live, a little bit about yourself and what you think of my Slow English podcast. I will write back to you, in English of course. If you would like to take a short quiz to see if you have understood this podcast, you will also find it on my website. Goodbye until next time.

Rob

Podcast 104 Quiz - Did you understand the podcast?

You can take the quiz as many times as you like.

Start quiz

Vocabulary

absolute = (here) complete, total

accompany = (here) to sing while you play a musical instrument

ambulance driver = someone who drives a special car which takes sick or injured people to hospital

apprenticeship = when you are learning a job or profession

approximately = not exactly, when you guess a number

aspirations = what you aim to do in the future

automotive = to do with cars, engines, trucks etc

born out = come from

bushland = an area with forest or bush

canning = to put food into a metal can

claim to fame = the reason that someone or something is famous

classical education = to study traditional subjects at school

conversational = informal speaking which is not prepared beforehand

creeks = small rivers

declared = (here) announced

definitely = when you are certain about something

despite = without being affected by

directions = east, west, north, south, up down, left, right

early life = that part of your life when you were a child

elevation = how high above sea level

emergency medical responder = someone who goes to an accident to help the injured

engineering = a person who uses their knowledge of science and mathematics to design and build things

etcetera = and so on

evacuated = when you are sent away from danger

express = to show how you feel

expressions = a word or group of words to describe something

fortunate = lucky

gosh = an expression which means you are surprised

gotta = slang for got to

grammar school = a type of school in England,, generally for brighter students

Great Dividing Range = A mountain range near Melbourne, where Kinglake is located

Greensborough = a suburb of Melbourne

home counties = the areas around London

individuals = single people

interviewed = to be asked questions by someone

lakes = a large area of water on the land

Leicestershire = an area of England

located = where something is found

Loughborough = a town in England

low esteem = (here) something that is not very good

maintain = to keep in good condition, to keep healthy

major = (here) large

manufacturing = to make things

mechanical engineer = an engineer who designs and builds things from metal, wood and plastic

mending = fixing, repairing

Mirage Jet Fighter = a type of fighter aircraft designed in France

nevertheless = despite that

novels = long story books, where the story is not true

outstanding = very, very good

paddocks = fields, where farm animals are kept or crops are grown

passion = how you feel when you really love doing something

physical = when you move your body or parts of your body

POM = someone from England who has migrated to Australia

pop = short for popular

positive attitude = to think good thoughts, to think that you can be successful

postcode = a number used by the Post Office for an area in a country

post-war = after the war (in this case, the Second World War)

profession = describes your job

property = the land and the buildings

regard = (here) to respect something

restrictions = rules

retired = when you are older and no longer working

Route 66 = a highway in the USA

salubrious = something that is good for you, healthy

scholarship = when you receive an amount of money to help with going to school

SE16 = an example of a postcode

Shakespeare = a great English writer

spectacular = when something is very exciting to look at

spent = when you do something for a period of time

stacks up = measures up, compares to

subjects = the topics you study at school, college or university

suburbs = an area of a city where people live

tags = a way to describe something in a single word

technical college = a type of school where you learn how to do special types of work

textiles = cloth

timber = wood used to build things

tolerant = when you show respect for the ideas or ways of others

tradition = something which has been done a long time

ukulele = a small guitar with 4 strings

unfortunately = when you have bad luck or things don't go as planned

unscripted = not written down beforehand

vertical = pointing up. Here, it is a joke meaning you are still alive and standing

vitally = very important