

Dosh Stoneman transcript

2 December 2015

Interviewer: If we start right at the beginning, you were born in Ramsdean.

Respondent: Yes, what do they call it now? It was the cottage by the triangle, as if you are going to the Seven Stars it is a cottage on the left (Fir Tree Cottage.) I was born there in 1923, but then we moved when I was tiny. We moved to Flints Farm opposite Barrow Hill Farm.

Interviewer: Oh, I know.

Respondent: We lived there and I went down to Langrish, as they call it, school.

Interviewer: Right, so it had already moved to Stroud when you to school, the Langrish School?

Respondent: Yes, we used to walk with the Carter girls and boys down to the school each morning.

Interviewer: Really and then back in the evening?

Respondent: Yes.

Interviewer: You didn't have to come back at lunchtime?

Respondent: No, we took sandwiches.

Interviewer: But that was still quite a walk.

Respondent: Yes, it was.

Interviewer: It must be about a mile and a half at least, probably two miles.

Respondent: Yes.

Interviewer: My goodness Dosh and you did that in all weathers?

Respondent: Yes, sometimes if it was very wet Mr Luff that lived opposite, Graham's grandfather, he had got a car so he might take us down or bring us home. Normally you just put your wellies and your mac on and that was it. We had a pair of shoes to change into at school.

Interviewer: Yes, I expect the roads were not as good as they are now, not that they are great anymore.

Respondent: No, we were there until I was getting on for 15.

Interviewer: It took you from the age of 5 right through to 15, there wasn't a secondary school?

Respondent: At 11 we had to leave to the school down there and go to East Meon School, which was the old one.

Interviewer: Yes, that is now the two houses?

Respondent: Yes.

Interviewer: You were in Stroud from 5 to 11 and then you had to go to East Meon?

Respondent: Yes.

Interviewer: You had to walk there presumably?

Respondent: Well there was a bus, but normally we walked unless it was wet and then we used to have a penny to get on the bus. (Laughter) That was with the Carters who lived in Rose Cottage, they worked for Mr Luff. It was a long trek each day.

Interviewer: Yes, well and back.

Respondent: Then when I was between 14 and 15 Dad said, "I have got a job for you." Not, "Do you want it?" I said, "Oh?" He said, "It is at Timothy Whites." So I started Timothy Whites as a junior, as a stock room girl.

Interviewer: In Petersfield?

Respondent: In Petersfield in Chapel Street. It is where the video shop is and then there is an alleyway that goes to the carpark.

Interviewer: I know, yes.

Respondent: I said to my son Phillip when we were in the carpark one day, "You see all of those iron steps up to that flat?" He said, "Yes." I said, "We used to go up and down there on a Saturday." It was stockroom day; all the stock came in and we had to carry up in baskets.

Interviewer: Oh my goodness. Yes, I know where you mean, goodness gracious.

Respondent: Of course I was there right up until the war started and that was it.

Interviewer: So your dad farmed in Ramsdean did he?

Respondent: Yes, it was a little farm then he had cows and chickens.

Interviewer: Dairy cows?

Respondent: Yes, he used to supply milk around the village and he also made butter, well Mum made the butter. In the summer when it was very hot the well was in the scullery and they used to lower the butter down into the well just to keep it cool.

Interviewer: That is incredible isn't it, it worked presumably?

Respondent: Yes, then Dad would wrap it up in big cabbage leaves, put it in a basket on his bicycle and then go and deliver it into Petersfield.

Interviewer: That is incredible.

Respondent: Yes, it was hard work when you look back.

Interviewer: Yes, I was going to say.

Respondent: It was hard for work for Mum because all she had all the ordinary jobs to do.

Interviewer: Yes, how many of you were there? How many brothers and sisters did you have?

Respondent: My eldest sister was already in service, she started at the... What was his name? Canon Masters in Petersfield at St Peters. Then he was moved to Portsmouth and she went down there to work as well and stayed there, that was Roger's mum.

Interviewer: Oh right, Gladys. I didn't ever meet her because we only came to Langrish eight years ago. I am not sure whether she was still alive, but they were living down in Petersfield by then weren't they?

Respondent: Yes, Gladys they lived in a flat down there. Then of course the war came and that was me up to Oxford.

Interviewer: Did you have any brothers?

Respondent: Yes and I had another sister, Kitty. She died when she was 50-ish, she had a heart complaint. She was married and had a family. Her daughter Cath she usually rings me up on a Wednesday afternoon now and again about once a month to see how I am getting on. She comes up now and again to see me.

Interviewer: Where does she live now?

Respondent: She is in Tunbridge.

Interviewer: That is quite a journey.

Respondent: Yes and there was my brother Jim, he was in the desert during the war and he was a prisoner of war in Austria for a long time. He came back home and he worked on the farm with Dad. My younger brother Bill wasn't old enough to join the army or anything and he worked on the farm.

Interviewer: This was in Ramsdean still?

Respondent: No, this was after we moved down here.

Interviewer: When did you move down to Home Farm?

Respondent: I suppose I was about 14 or 15 because the farm at Ramsdean it all belonged to Talbot-Ponsonby's estate. When the Home Farm, this one, they decided to give it up and the manager moved. Nigel's, I don't know if it was his father or his grandfather now, his grandfather I suppose it is, asked if Dad would like to take over this farm so we moved down here.

Interviewer: So you all moved to Langrish?

Respondent: Yes.

Interviewer: So when you went off to Oxford your brothers were here still on the farm with your dad?

Respondent: Yes, Jim had already joined the army. Bill was here and he carried on with the farm. Both Dad and Bill were in the Dad's Army thing.

Interviewer: Oh really?

Respondent: Yes, so they were doing their bit and I was up in Oxford.

Interviewer: So you were all busy, you were up in Oxford doing your bit there.

Respondent: Yes.

Interviewer: When did you leave Petersfield and go up to Oxford?

Respondent: It was soon after the war started, I suppose it was about 1940.

Interviewer: It is surprising they didn't use you as a land girl or you didn't want to?

Respondent: Dad wouldn't let me do that, he thought it was far too heavy work.

Interviewer: Were land girls used in the area, did they bring people in?

Respondent: They were, yes. Gladys lived up where Charles and Jane live now and she had a land girl there, her name was Nelly and she worked on different farms I think. It was something to do with the forestry.

Interviewer: Oh yes because there was Sir William's Hill.

Respondent: Yes, because they took all the...

Interviewer: Took all those trees. In fact where our house is now it was the saw mill.

Respondent: Yes, that is right.

Interviewer: Someone showed us some photographs of it as a saw mill. He promised us that he would send us some copies but we never have had them, which is a shame.

Respondent: Yes, then of course the Canadian soldiers who ran the saw mill they lived up at Langrish House and they had Nissen huts in the grounds. That was Nigel's father then.

Interviewer: Yes, it would be. It has always been mainly dairy cows initially was it?

Respondent: Yes, right up until my brother died. Then Phillip decided he couldn't manage the milking twice a day on his own, so he sold the milking herd and then gradually grew this one up as he has got it now. My brother was never in very good health, he went into hospital what is QA now. They said he'd need a heart monitor put in. He had it done and I rang up first thing in the morning to ask how he was. This man, whoever

it was, whether he was a male nurse said, "Yes, he is alright. He has had a cup of tea." I said, "Alright, tell him I will be down later to see him." The next thing I knew they rang up and said he was dead.

Interviewer: What a shock.

Respondent: We went down and I said, "But somebody said he was sat up drinking tea." They said, "No, he has been very ill."

Interviewer: Oh Dosh, that must have been such a shock.

Respondent: Yes, he was only in his 70s. Then of course Jim my elder brother he lived down at North Stroud with Milly, him and his wife. He was in his 80s when he died.

Interviewer: So Phillip suddenly had it all to do on his own.

Respondent: They had just made him a partner, so there was no fuss or anything it automatically came to Phillip.

Interviewer: Except all the work as well.

Respondent: He feels sometimes that he was just dropped into it. He only just came down to help out and he stopped here.

Interviewer: So when did you move back here from Oxford?

Respondent: Phillip came down in the early '70s and I came down afterwards, I was living in Kidlington then.

Interviewer: Very nice.

Respondent: Mum was still alive then, so I used to look after her.

Interviewer: She lived over in North Stroud Lane.

Respondent: No, she was in this farmhouse.

Interviewer: Oh right your mum, sorry.

Respondent: Yes, Gladys used to come down and see they were all alright. Then when Phillip moved down here, I decided I might as well come down as well. I lived in the farmhouse for a while until I had this bungalow built, so I have moved about a little bit.

Interviewer: You have Dosh, you have. How old was Phillip then when he had the whole farm to suddenly look after, quite young presumably?

Respondent: Yes, he was. I am no good at dates, so I can't remember when Bill died. Bill was four years younger than me, so he was in his 70s. What was I 34 when I had Phillip, Cliff was 1950 and Phillip was 1957.

Interviewer: So he is 10 years younger than me, I was born in 1947.

Respondent: Were you?

Interviewer: Yes, he got rid of the dairy cattle then when he was just on his own?

Respondent: Yes, he didn't want to get rid of them really. As he said he had to work the way that he could.

Interviewer: Yes, to do all of that himself.

Respondent: The Lamberts bought one or two of the milking cows. There was an old blue one and she lived for ages.

Interviewer: Really?

Respondent: Yes, Nick used to say, "Have we still got Blue-y?" Eventually she got too old, so that was it.

Interviewer: I bet you have seen a lot of changes. Although you had the break living in Oxford when you think back to when you were Ramsdean I bet there are a lot of changes happened in that time.

Respondent: Yes.

Interviewer: I guess compared with lots of parts of the country similarly there are still lots the same. There is still a very similar amount of farming land, that hasn't changed much has it?

Respondent: No, it hasn't.

Interviewer: It hasn't got built up or anything.

Respondent: There are still the Luffs; they have altered their farming like Phillip has. They had milking cows and they have gone.

Interviewer: Yes, I remember when we first moved here, they still had a milking herd, so that was quite recent really. But Phillip has never done any arable farming at Home Farm?

Respondent: No, he worked on a farm before he came here at... What was it called? I can't remember the names of the villages around Kidlington now.

Interviewer: You have got a fantastic memory, much better than mine. The grass is so good here that it is ideal for the beef cattle.

Respondent: He worked hard to get it all going and keep it going. Sometimes he gets fed up and I say to him, "Phillip if you feel you have had enough just sell up. It is your life it won't make any difference to me, so you do what you want." "I don't want to give up." "Oh, well alright."

Interviewer: He has got a lot to look after; there is the North Stroud land down there as well.

Respondent: Yes.

Interviewer: He goes backwards and forwards I see. Not this time of the year, but in the summer, I walk over Ham Lane and down North Stroud Lane, I walk down there. Quite often Phillip goes past and waves. (Laughter) He does, he works hard.

Respondent: He has just inherited a cat.

Interviewer: Has he?

Respondent: Yes.

Interviewer: What it just turned up?

Respondent: A friend of his got this cat. She rang him up and said, "I have got a cat for you." He said, "I didn't say I wanted a cat." She said, "This lady was desperate to find a home for it because it had been used to the country and they had just moved to Basingstoke and she didn't think the cat would settle down." She saw it online or something, so she went up to Basingstoke and got this cat.

Interviewer: Oh my goodness.

Respondent: She said to Phillip, "I thought you would like it." He said, "Well seeing that you have got it for me I suppose I had better have it." He went and got the cat from Jane's place. He said it had settled in well and it does like the countryside. Angie rang up and she said, "I do miss that cat." He said, "Do you want it back?" "No, no." He said, "There is no pleasing you."