

## **Roger Deadman Oral History Interview**

November 2018

- Interviewer: First question, the obvious things, where were you born?
- Roger Deadman: Buriton
- Interviewer: Oh, not Langrish?
- Roger Deadman: No. Mother went into a nursing home in Buriton and then came back to Langrish when I was 24 hours old.
- Interviewer: Which house in Langrish did you then live in?
- Roger Deadman: Number 5, Langrish Hill.
- Interviewer: Which is what today?
- Roger Deadman: Which is our kitchen, utility room, bedroom and bathroom.
- Interviewer: Of Ridge House?
- Roger Deadman: Of Ridge House, yes.
- Interviewer: So, you now live exactly where you started out. Well, almost.
- Roger Deadman: Yes.
- Interviewer: Down the hill a bit. (Laughter)
- Roger Deadman: Yes.
- Interviewer: That's a pretty good story. I like that. How long did you live there for?
- Roger Deadman: Until mother and father moved across to Yew Tree Farm when I was 18 months old.
- Interviewer: What year was that?
- Roger Deadman: 1944/1945.
- Interviewer: What did your parents do for a living?
- Roger Deadman: My father was a carpenter who worked for Canterburys in Petersfield, who are still there today, in Penns Road. My mother looked after me.
- Interviewer: She was a housewife.
- Roger Deadman: And the house.
- Interviewer: Where did you go to school?

Roger Deadman: Mrs Bush's Private Emporium.

Interviewer: You're making it up. (Laughter) Really?

Roger Deadman: Who was over what is today Greggs bakery in Lavant Street. No. Chapel Street.

Interviewer: Chapel Street in Petersfield, yes.

Roger Deadman: Then I went to the Secondary Modern in Petersfield.

Interviewer: Which is the basis of TPS today?

Roger Deadman: Who is now TPS, yes. Then to take my GCSEs I went to Cowplain Secondary Modern.

Interviewer: Right. How on earth did you get there?

Roger Deadman: By bus.

Interviewer: Oh, right. There was a bus?

Roger Deadman: Yes. The South Downs bus, which left every morning. I used to bike into Petersfield, leave my bike at Canterburys, and catch the South Downs bus there.

Interviewer: Was that a special school bus?

Roger Deadman: No. Just a normal service bus.

Interviewer: Did you have any brothers and sisters?

Roger Deadman: No. Oh, yes. I beg your pardon. No sisters. I have a brother, who is an afterthought. He was born in 1949. I was born in 1941. That's why he was an afterthought. I tell him that. He lives in Witney in Oxfordshire.

Interviewer: Did he go to school here?

Roger Deadman: Yes. He went to school at Stroud, and then to-

Interviewer: Was it Langrish School?

Roger Deadman: Yes, Langrish School. Then he went to the secondary modern in Petersfield. He took up farming.

Interviewer: In Langrish?

Roger Deadman: No. He went to Sparsholt.

Interviewer: Sparsholt College?

Roger Deadman: Yes. He got his degrees in farming there and then went to start a pig farm in Wiltshire.

Interviewer: Which he owned, or bought, or worked for?

Roger Deadman: No. He worked for somebody. They didn't have pigs, but he started with a pig, and they ended up with 2,000 sows.

Interviewer: After your GCSEs, what was your first job?

Roger Deadman: My first job was an apprentice at a company called BO Morris for engineering, in Portsmouth, in Commercial Road, now where the docks are.

Interviewer: I always assumed you worked at TPS. It seems obvious. You did engineering. There's TPS there. (Laughter)

Roger Deadman: No.

Interviewer: What sort of engineering was it?

Roger Deadman: Mechanical engineering.

Interviewer: Then what? Obviously, I know you ended up at IBM.

Roger Deadman: Well, in-between I tried farming for a year and a half, and I got bored.

Interviewer: Was that here?

Roger Deadman: Yes, for grandfather.

Interviewer: I presume you're talking about Home Farm.

Roger Deadman: Yes. Then I got bored. No. Have I got this the wrong way round? No, I haven't got it the wrong way around. I worked for BO Morris in Portsmouth, completed my apprenticeship. Then they threw me out, as they often did in those days. "Go out and get a job."

Interviewer: Absolutely, yes. When they have to pay you.

Roger Deadman: I then worked for Mr Talbot-Ponsonby. At the time we were designing the mould to make the Concorde nose cone. I helped plan the machinery to make the nose cone mould, which was 11 feet, 6 inches long.

I finally got to ride on Concorde. I went up to the cockpit, when you could in those days, and sat with the pilot all the way through the flight.

Interviewer: Fantastic. Where did you fly to?

Roger Deadman: I flew from Washington to London Heathrow in three hours and ten minutes. One of the fastest crossings there has been.

Interviewer: Yes. I managed to get on Concorde once when my flight was cancelled. I was flying business class from Heathrow to Boston. They cancelled the flight because of fog, but the Concorde could still take off. So they took everyone in first class and all the members of the BA Executive Club. Flew us to JFK. Shuttled us down to La Guardia. A shuttle flight to Boston. And we still got in early. (Laughter) Superb, wasn't it ?

Roger Deadman: Yes, it was wonderful.

Interviewer: After that, then you had your spell at farming? After you had worked for?

Roger Deadman: After I was fired from Talbot-Ponsonby. Made redundant is the posh word.

Interviewer: Yes. Well, it's happened to us all.

Roger Deadman: Then I tried farming for 18 months. I got bored. IBM were moving into the area, so I applied for a job with IBM and got it, much to my surprise.

Interviewer: That was at North Harbour?

Roger Deadman: No, that was at Havant. They were just starting the manufacturing plant at Havant. I ended up as a buyer from Talbot-Ponsonby, as it was then; it then became Tooling Products during the time I stayed there.

Interviewer: Let's switch back to farming. I'm never sure at what stage the Talbot-Ponsonbys stopped owning the whole valley, and how your antecedents and other people like the Luffs came to own their own farms. Do you know the history of that? Without getting into something too libellous about this farmer's behaviour or whatever.

Roger Deadman: My grandfather?

Interviewer: No. Nigel's father.

Roger Deadman: Oh, Nigel's father? No, I wouldn't be rude, because it may be public. (Laughter)

Interviewer: We can suppress that bit. (Laughter)

Roger Deadman: What did you say?

Interviewer: There was a time when the Talbot-Ponsonbys owned Langrish.

Roger Deadman: Yes. In 1950, when I was nine years old, I used to help on the farm every Saturday, at Home Farm. And with Uncle Bill I used to go down to North Stroud Farm, because they had both farms then.

Interviewer: So, your grandfather farmed Home Farm?

Roger Deadman: Yes.

Interviewer: What was his name?

Roger Deadman: Jesse.

Interviewer: Jesse Deadman?

Roger Deadman: Jesse Deadman. He was the brother of my other grandfather.

Interviewer: Hence why I always find your family a touch confusing. (Laughter)

Roger Deadman: My mother's maiden name was Deadman, which is what the Foreign Office found really odd when I went there.

Interviewer: Yes. "It must be a mistake."

Roger Deadman: "It must be." He phoned me up and said, "What don't you understand?" I said, "What don't you understand? My mother and father were cousins." "Oh."

Interviewer: So, they were both tenants of those farms?

Roger Deadman: No. We, the Deadman family, owned North Stroud Farm.

Interviewer: But not Home Farm?

Roger Deadman: Not Home Farm. Home Farm was tenanted from Nigel's father. When I was nine onwards, nine until probably fifteen, I used to go down and help Uncle Bill at the farm at North Stroud. So I used to come down here, to Home Farm. We used to...

You will probably need to delete this. We then went by horse and cart down to North Stroud Farm, with two horses, one called Nigger and one called Prince. (Laughter) Nigger, I will let you guess what colour he was.

Interviewer: White, obviously. (Laughter)

Roger Deadman: Prince was white. Every day we used to go down by horse and cart, because we didn't have a tractor with rubber wheels.

Interviewer: That was down to Ramsdean and down North Stroud Lane?

Roger Deadman: No. Down to North Stroud Lane in Stroud and up the lane.

Interviewer: Oh, that way? The other way, yes.

What did the farms do? Were they mixed farms or were they always pastoral?

Roger Deadman: No, they were dairy farms. Both were dairy farms. A herd of Jerseys at North Stroud Farm.

Interviewer: Real Jerseys?

Roger Deadman: Real Jerseys. A genuine Jersey herd. And a mixed Shorthorn and Friesian herd at Home Farm.

Interviewer: Was it all milking? There was no beef?

Roger Deadman: Yes, all milking. I can't remember the yield that we used to get, because I never thought I would be asked a question about it. (Laughter)

Interviewer: So that carried on, both of the milking farms, until... Well, not modern times but recent times. There's never been anything else effectively.

Roger Deadman: No. When grandfather died...

Interviewer: Which was roughly when?

Roger Deadman: I can't tell you. I don't know. I didn't even bother to look it up before I came down here.

But before that he had this philosophy that he didn't borrow money to do anything, to buy machinery or anything like that. He had to have the cash first. Then he bought the machinery.

He did have a mortgage though, when he bought the land from Talbot-Ponsonby. I can't remember what date what was, but I can find that out because I've got a book.

Interviewer: If you let me know afterwards then that will be fine.

Roger Deadman: I think it was 1948, because I've got the sale documents from the sale of Home Farm.

Interviewer: I would love to have a look at those sometime, if I could.

Basically your grandfather then bought Home Farm?

Roger Deadman: Yes.

Interviewer: So, the Deadman family owned North Stroud Farm and...

Roger Deadman: And Home Farm. And that's when Langrish had George Baggs where Alison lives.

Interviewer: Church Farm?

Roger Deadman: Church Farm. Mr and Mrs Dingle and their three sons at Pitts Farm. Lamberts was never part of the Talbot-Ponsonby estate.

Interviewer: No, that was always the Nicholson estate, wasn't it?

Roger Deadman: Yes. That was always Nicholson. And Luffs bought theirs roughly at the same time.

Interviewer: That was Tom Luff?

Roger Deadman: That was Tom Luff, yes. His brother, Dick, owned the Queens Head at Sheet.

Interviewer: Oh, really? There are quite a lot of Luffs around, aren't there, in various instantiations. From work I've seen from they're not part of the East Meon Luffs. They're part of the Luffs from over in Sussex somewhere. I don't know how it all came to be.

Roger Deadman: Yes, that's right.

Interviewer: So, your grandfather died. What happened to the farm after that then?

Roger Deadman: Uncle Jim and Uncle Bill ran it between them until Bill died and Jim died. Then my brother thought about coming back but didn't.

I don't know really what happened then, because I was out of it totally. I was in IBM, and I was rather busy at that time running various taskforces, etc. So I didn't have much contact with either Jim or Bill.

Then all of a sudden Philip came down and joined the throng.

Interviewer: Well, he's told us in the past he came down for six months to help out and never left. It wasn't his intention to farm either. (Laughter)

Roger Deadman: That just about sums it up.

Interviewer: So, it still was milking on both farms?

Roger Deadman: Yes.

Interviewer: One question I should have asked way back was how many people worked on the farm? I should have gone back and asked that ages ago.

Roger Deadman: No, that's right. The Carter family, who lived in Laundry Cottage. There was old Mr Carter, one of his sons, Tom Carter, I think, and another son, who eventually lived in the first cottage up the Ramsdean Road on the left-hand side, which the Luffs own today.

Because when the Deadman dynasty started coming into this location our first farm was at Ramsdean, opposite the Luffs, where... What actor has just died? I told you about. George Cooper. That's where we started in Hampshire.

Interviewer: Which farm is that?

Roger Deadman: Flint Farm.

Interviewer: Flint Farm? All these little farms were independent, weren't they?

Roger Deadman: Yes. And I think that was part of the Talbot-Ponsonby dynasty as well.

Interviewer: Yes, I think it was, from the maps I've seen.

Roger Deadman: Because where the Luffs now own the land up to Barrow Hill, I think we had that to start with, including Barrow Hill.

Interviewer: How many people would work on the farm in those days? It must have been quite a lot.

Roger Deadman: Three plus two sons.

Interviewer: How did that change over the years? Did they just have less cows? How did Philip end up doing it all on his own?

Roger Deadman: It changed because you couldn't afford to do it. When I started and I learnt to drive, when I was 10 years old, a tractor, or a van when we bought one, the tractor's top speed was 3mph. Now, today's engines, you can buy a 20, 30 or 40mph engine. It's just amazing.

The pace of life was so much different. When we used to cut the park, which was a 20 acre field, it used to take me three days to do that. You can now do it in two and a half hours.

In the 1960s, when we had the massive snow, 1962, I used to take the milk into the Petersfield milk depot. A tractor and trailer or tractor and a hoist on the back. That's the only thing that could get the milk there.

Interviewer: So, it would take you a couple of hours?

Roger Deadman: Yes.

Interviewer: So that was the market? The milk went to a depot in Petersfield?

Roger Deadman: Yes. Normally they came around and picked it up.

Interviewer: That was a local company or part of a massive...?

Roger Deadman: No, it was a local company. I can't remember the name. It was part of the Milk Marketing Board, but then sublet out to individual companies.

Interviewer: So, you got a guaranteed price because it was the Milk Marketing Board?

Roger Deadman: Yes, exactly.

Interviewer: So gradually the bottom dropped out of the milk market?

Roger Deadman: Yes, absolutely.

Interviewer: Nowadays it's because of supermarkets. Presumably there was some other reason. Or why did the bottom drop out of the milk market? Why did the price go down?

Roger Deadman: Because supermarkets came along. In those days we had no supermarkets. We had a Post Office in Langrish and a small shop which serviced the local community. Then supermarkets came along and just the bottom dropped out of the milk.

Interviewer: The shop was where your house is, Ridge House?

Roger Deadman: No. Yew Tree.

Interviewer: Was it?

Roger Deadman: Oh, you're right. The original shop, when I was very small, was at Ridge House, the front room of Ridge House. After that closed, when Mr and Mrs Blackmore died, a lady called Mrs Eddlecombe opened a shop in Ridge House, in the front room, and a Post Office. Then it moved down to... That was after the Carters died, my auntie.

Interviewer: I will just pick up on that. When did the shop finally pack up? Do you know?

Roger Deadman: No.

Interviewer: It would be interesting to dig that date out, wouldn't it?  
Then the Post Office also ceased to exist at the same time?

Roger Deadman: Yes.

Interviewer: There are obviously those lovely shots of the retiring post lady in all the archives we've got.

Roger Deadman: Yes. Ethel Carter and her sister Mabel.

Interviewer: Were they the last post ladies?

Roger Deadman: No. Mrs Hickman was the last post lady.

Interviewer: Oh, really?

Roger Deadman: Yes. She lived in Reeds Meadow.

Interviewer: We've talked about animals. Gradually milking ceased to be profitable. What happened then? Did the herds just instantly go over to beef or what?

Roger Deadman: Yes. Cows were then out, and when Philip took over Home Farm, and/or Stroud Farm, he just had beef cattle.

Interviewer: But not sheep?

Roger Deadman: No sheep. No, the Snows 0:23:13 were the first to bring sheep to the village.

Interviewer: That's funny, because of course in the old days all this area was sheep, in the very old days.

Roger Deadman: I didn't know that.

Interviewer: Oh, yes, absolutely. The local economy was all sheep initially. The Downs even down as far as here.

The research into the Stroud Villa seems to point out that it had not enough room for except 0:23:38] crops. It was just part of a big sheep farm, which went all the way up the hill to Ramsdean. Because there's not enough storage space to do anything else. Not enough room to bring animals in. So it must have sheep to leave them out. No room to store corn or anything.

Obviously, Home Farm gradually reduced its flock. Presumably just because it's one person trying to run it and that's very tough.

Roger Deadman: Hmm.

Interviewer: Is effectively North Stroud Farm hardly used now?

Roger Deadman: No, it's lived in by Philip, who has got a cottage down there. No electricity.

Interviewer: He has got a generator.

Roger Deadman: No drainage. But he has got a generator, and he also runs off the tractor.

Interviewer: What's your speculation about what happens in the future with the farms? I know from talking to the Luffs that they don't feel it's sustainable unless they go into the tourist business and everything else.

Roger Deadman: As has been proved by their development, which I think is superb.

Interviewer: Yes. Debbie said, that the only way they can ever get the two sons involved is to have one doing the farm and one doing the money from the accommodation.

So Home Farm converts the barn?

Roger Deadman: Well, Philip won't allow the land to be sold, either at Langrish or Stroud. He says he's only the custodian of it.

Interviewer: That barn would be lovely for a conversion.

Roger Deadman: Oh, yes, it would.

Interviewer: I've viewed some of the stuff I've looked at with Michael Blakstad recently and some of the barn conversions were nothing like as good as that when they started.

Is there anything else we could discuss about farming? It's basically pretty stable at the moment, isn't it? The Luffs are still running a mixed farm.

Roger Deadman: Yes. They don't milk though, do they?

Interviewer: No, they don't milk. No-one milks. Manor Farm stopped milking.

Roger Deadman: Manor Farm stopped milking. Everything is beef now.

Interviewer: Which is kind of sad.

Anything else on farming we could talk about?

Roger Deadman: The first tractor the Deadmans had was a spade lug tractor.

Interviewer: A spade lug? I thought everything was Ferguson.

Roger Deadman: No. It was a Fordson Spade Lug. Now what's a spade lug? It's got big wedges instead of wheels.

Interviewer: Really?

Roger Deadman: Yes. And you could only take it on the farm. You couldn't take it on the road.

Interviewer: The wheels weren't round?

Roger Deadman: They were big round wheels, but instead of tyres there were lugs.

Interviewer: Oh, I see. That was an English?

Roger Deadman: That was Fordson English Spade Lug, yes.

Interviewer: I will have to look that up.

Roger Deadman: There you are. And the second tractor we had was a Ferguson.

Interviewer: That then could take all the implements, because it was that system?

Roger Deadman: That had hydraulics, yes. Ask me where that is and I will tell you. It's still in Langrish.

Interviewer: Really?

Roger Deadman: Yes.

Interviewer: Whereabouts?

Roger Deadman: Under the granary, which fell down. (Laughter)

Interviewer: Of course, Denys Ryder, or Rosemary Ryder now, have still got one.

Roger Deadman: Yes. Wonderful.

Interviewer: I once made the mistake of asking Denys about it when I went to see him, and I had to have a conducted tour. (Laughter) It took about half an hour.

Roger Deadman: Exactly. He used to mow the cricket pitch and the football pitch. He used to do all the mowing and all the orchard mowing. It was a wonderful tractor. He even put lights on it.

Interviewer: Are they worth money now then?

Roger Deadman: Yes. The Deadman Ferguson they forgot to put antifreeze in it one year and the block split, which is typical of the Deadman farming.

Interviewer: Full of accidents?

Roger Deadman: Yes.

Interviewer: That one little photograph we've got in front of Home Farm, with people on the hay wagon, who's is in that photograph?

Roger Deadman: Well, I think I am, and I think the Merritts are, from Australia.

Interviewer: I will look the photograph out.

Roger Deadman: Do you know the story of our country cousins in Australia?

Interviewer: No.

Roger Deadman: Well, my grandfather went to school in East Meon, and a friend of his was called Merritt. They were good buddies, and they used to farm in East Meon, just East of Oxenbourne, where there's a farm where a judge now lives.

Interviewer: Lythe Hill?

Respondent: Sorry?

Interviewer: Lythe?

Roger Deadman: A live judge, yes.

Interviewer: No, is it Lythe? Not Lythe Farm?

Roger Deadman: No. It's between Oxenbourne and East Meon.

Interviewer: Frogmore?

Roger Deadman: Yes. If you go on a bit from Frogmore it's there. I can't remember the name of the farm now.

Anyhow, they were best of buddies. In 1924 he emigrated to Australia with his wife, three sons and a daughter. They landed in Adelaide, and they set up business in Adelaide. They had a tractor business. His son had a tractor business.

And his grandson is a multimillionaire, because his scrub farm in Australia had water, and it was right in the middle of a very famous vineyard. They offered him \$20m for his farm. So he said, "Alright. If you insist."

Interviewer: To get at the water?

Roger Deadman: Just to get the water. That's all, yes.

Interviewer: Incredible, isn't it?

Roger Deadman: Yes. All the generations of Deadmans have stayed friends with them. They came to our wedding.

Interviewer: Going back in time, I think I pulled your leg about it before, when we had the Swing Riots one of the people who was convicted for being part of it in the Winchester Assizes was a Deadman. Is that still the same Deadman family?

Roger Deadman: I don't know. I haven't the faintest. I've not heard of that.

Interviewer: Oh, yes. I've pulled your leg about it before.

Roger Deadman: No.

Interviewer: I will show you the files. We've got them on the website somewhere. Because I thought the name has been around for a long time.

Roger Deadman: Yes. Apparently the name started in a place called Debenham in Essex. And Debenham means deep hole.

Interviewer: Right. So that's way, way back?

Roger Deadman: Yes. That was in 1700, I think, when we moved from there to here.

Interviewer: Well, I will dig out the file on the Swing Riots.

Well, thanks very much, Roger.

Roger Deadman: That's alright.