

Title: Andrews, Graham_ Interview_Complete
Creators: Rick & Julia Goldsmith
Project: Herefordshire Life Through A Lens
Tagline: Films, stories and exhibitions inspired
by the photographic archive of the Derek
Evans Studio 1950s-80s
Subject: Autobiography, Hop Farming and Hop
Picking in Herefordshire, Heritage
Publisher: Catcher Media Social CIC
Tags: Hops, Derek Evans, oral history,
heritage, PV, participatory film-making,
community film, Herefordshire, Hop
picking, agriculture, craft brewing, Hop
Marketing Board, European Union

Identifier: Andrews, Graham_ Interview_Complete
Interview Date: September_07_2017
Location: Hereford, UK
Source: Catcher Media Social CIC
Interviewee: Graham Andrews (speaker, male)
Interviewer: Julia Goldsmith (speaker, female)
Camera & Sound: Richard Goldsmith (male)
Producer: Julia Goldsmith
Language: English

Type: Video
Video Format: MPEG-4
Bit rate: 25.92 mbits/s
Frame rate: 25 FPS
Aspect ratio: 16:9
Width: 1920 pixels
Height: 1080 pixels
Scan type: Progressive
Audio Format: AAC
Audio Sampling rate: 48000 Hz
Audio Bit rate: 192 kb/s
Stereo/Mono: Mono
File Size: 5.19 GB
Duration: 28 min 39 seconds

Type: Audio
Audio Format: MP3 audio
Audio Sampling rate: 44.100 kHz
Audio Bit rate: 256 kb/s
Stereo/Mono: Mono
File Size: 52.9 MB

Duration: 28 min 39 seconds

Original copyright: Catcher Media Social CIC CC BY-NC

Holder: Catcher Media Social CIC, Herefordshire
Libraries, Herefordshire Archive and
Records Centre

Abstract:

[00.00.00] Intro – early life and family history connected to hop growing

[00.02.20] remembers hand picking with local pickers, gypsy families and people from Bath – the mining village Peasdown – in pre war days they would pick up baggage and pickers from Colwall Station

[00.03.15] hand picking ended at this farm in 1951 when it became impossible to find the number of hand pickers needed due to the Education Act which meant families couldn't come and bring their children

[00.03.50] Detail on the 1940s Education Act's effect on hand picking hops

[00.04.35] leading to first hop picking machines made by Bruff's at Suckley.

[00.04.50] no reason to believe machines were cheaper than people – cost of Bruff and average wages

[00.06.50] farmers created their own problem over the years by underpaying pickers leading to labour shortage

[00.07.45] at the end of World War 2 Bosbury Parish had 19 Hop Farms – estimate population of Bosbury would increase by 3 or 4x in September with pickers from Black Country, Welsh Valleys and Gypsies – logistics of this – supplying coke for devils – no mains electricity on farms

[00.08.58] Pickers would stay in cattle sheds [00.09.15] Left school – job was to Bushel the hops – and took responsibility for pickers as well as best you could – generations of hop pickers – reasonably self-reliant

[00.09.00] poor families only holiday – education bill stopped that

[00.11.30] how he came to own a farm – land value dropped low for a while – hops were already there – other crops- farmed there for 50 years

[00.13.40] younger generation now don't have a formal education in this area – there is no experimental research into hop growing – some work on breeding new varieties of hops – no funds for a education system for aspiring hop growers

[00.14.30] Hop Picking highly complicated business – took me 20 years farming on my own to grow them and 30 to know how to sell them properly

[00.15.15] in the 1930s hop growers going bankrupt due to prohibition in America – lead to hop growers teaming up with government and creating the Hop Marketing Board – stabilised hop growing – lasted until early 1980s and by then under the control

of Brussels – environmental and Agricultural Committee where France has a strong influence – split up into smaller marketing groups but it was a semi-shambles

[00.18.18] English hop industry cannot produce competitively hops for lager – we can produce aroma hops suitable for craft brewing – revival of hop growing in last 5 years is influenced by the rise of the craft brewing industry in this country who are looking for a variety of English hops –

[00.19.30] there are some beautiful beers about nowadays to drink

[00.19.40] in the 80s controlled by 5 big brewery groups – did more harm to brewing industry than anything – low quality

[00.20.40] memories of hip picking – complicated with a lot to go wrong – on edge while hop picking is going on – enjoyed annual challenge

[00.21.43] conditions needed to grow hops – good soil, moisture

[00.22.32] wartime rationing and feeding pickers – his mother took charge of ration books – no mains electricity

[00.24.00] people cooked on devils – describing devils

[00.25.35] travellers were memorable – self reliant people – came from Black Horse Road, Manglesford, Bristol – took 4 days to travel up with their horses – strong characters – congregate at local pubs on Sundays horse dealing and getting drunk – made life complicated

[00.26.50] Bosbury and Bishops Frome had a full time policeman – Bosbury had an extra policeman sent up from the Welsh mining valleys who could speak Welsh and an extra policeman from the Black Country

[00.27.00] all those pickers had to be provided for – brought up with it.

Transcript:

Well my name is Graham Andrews. I was born at the Lodge Farm, Newlands, halfway between Malvern and Powick, and I was bought here to the Townend in 1932, when I was two. So I spent all my younger days brought up here and I moved from here in 1953 when I bought the farm down the road, when I was 23, it was called The Grange.

Barbara my wife, her family were hop growers. Her father was, her grandfather was and her great grandfather was a foreman on a hop farm in Bosbury. My mother was a Pudge, which was Bishops Frome and they were in hop growing in a big way fifty years ago. My father was born near Hereford on a farm, rented farm outside Hereford, which had been growing hops as well. So the whole family is steeped in hop growing.

I left school in 1947 and for the next five years we hand-picked hops here at the Townend, with some local pickers, some gypsy families and quite a lot of people from Bath or Peasdown, which

was a mining village between Bath and Badstock, which came up by coach or every year. I remember in the pre-war days they used to come by train to Colwell station and I remember then going there with the horses and wagons to pick the pickers and luggage and everything from Colwell station even. The railways got very busy in the Second World War and wouldn't transfer anybody like that so we had to send coaches and lorries down to Bath for them. But that ended, the hand picking ended here at this farm in 1951, when it became impossible to find a number of hand pickers. Government legislation I think, I think there was an Education Act about 1948/49, which made schooling compulsory and so the families couldn't come and bring their children.

In the late 1940s, as a result of a new education act passed through Parliament, it became very difficult for families to bring their children hop picking. And it not only this farm but the farms that were drawing their casual hop pickers from the Welsh mining valleys and the Black Country, just couldn't find the number of pickers to gather their crop. And really there was no answer but to mechanise the job by a hop picking machine, which the first hop picking machine arrived here in 1952, made by Broughs at Suckley.

I have no reason to believe it was any cheaper to pick hops by machine because the picking machines were a bit basic and the wastage of hops by the picking machines was quite enormous, but I don't think there was any financial gain in buying a hop picking machine, but if you wanted to gather the crop that you had grown, you got to get it harvested, so a machine became the only answer. I don't think it was done for financial reasons at all. The picking machine we had here was called a Brough, type B, was about £3,750 I think it was. From memory, I would think the farm wages were somewhere between £4 and £6 a week. The first week's wages I paid when I started farming in 1953, £5 -1-6 a week I know that, the first man the first week. I've got the diary of that now and can prove it. That was the farm wage. I really believe farmers created their own problems over the years by not paying their men sufficiently and therefore the more capable men left the land in the 1950s and 1960s and got higher paid jobs elsewhere. And as time went on we gradually developed a labour shortage on the land and I think it was the farmers own fault really. As I told you I had £1 -10 shillings a week here. I only had a £1 a week when I left school. I went away to college for nine months and I came back and got it increased to £1-10 shillings. That was the biggest wage I ever received from anyone else in my life.

Well, at the end of the Second World War, Bosbury parish had nineteen hop farms and I would estimate the population of Bosbury for people either travellers or people from the Black Country or maybe the Welsh valleys, I would think the population of Bosbury would increase by three or four times for the month of September and all these people had got to be fed. They needed

milk, they needed bread, they needed fish, they needed this, they needed the doctor regularly, and they all got to be catered for. Well, they looked after themselves really. We provided coke for their devils. We got no mains electricity on the farms you see, so we had to provide them with their basic necessities as best we could. They would stay in the buildings; the cattle sheds were cleaned out.

Well my job when I left school was to bushel the hops, that was a job of measuring their day's work and as a result of that you seemed to take responsibility for them as well as best you could. They'd been hop picking before, they'd sons and daughters of those that had been hop picking over the years and so they came reasonably self-reliant, they knew what they were coming to. And just remember, they were families from the least favoured families in their town, least well off perhaps, and this was their only holiday. There was no way they could afford to go to the seaside and this is the only chance the children could have a chance to get away from their terraced homes in these big towns. You don't realise how poor these people were in the towns in those days. You can't get through to this modern generation what poverty is really. But they came they wanted to work, they needed the money to buy the coal for winter, they needed the money to buy some Christmas presents, and they needed the money to get through winter.

The wages here were such that I couldn't see any point in continuing to work here so I spent from the age of about 20 I was looking for a farm somewhere around. I must have looked at dozen or fifteen farms and the first one I could see my chance at earning a living at and paying my way, was the one next door, The Grange. And so there didn't seem to be any other takers soland had been going downhill, land had been losing money since 1947, '49, '53, '55 was about the bottom, and then land turned and started to increase in value again. So I really bought it at a favourable time. Hops were already there. I've got a diary of the Grange from 1869 and were hops there then. And there were cider apples there, growing wheat and keeping beef cattle. So what did you grow on the farm? I could see the most popular thing was likely to be hops, so I put my major effort in to hop growing, but we kept beef cattle and we kept sheep and we grew some wheat and some barley. We had a proper mixed farm. I farmed there for 50 years.

Well, the younger generation here, look here, that young lad is going to have to learn about hop growing and there is no college or anywhere to send him to get a scientific background of what's going on. And there is now no experimental farm doing any research work into the problems of the hop growing. There is a certain amount of work breeding new varieties of hops, which is essential. But I think the industry's got that small, the industry couldn't afford on its own, without government help, to fund an educational system for aspiring hop growers.

Hop growing itself, to be successful, is a highly complicated business to be part of. We had a 60th wedding party about a month ago and one of the things I said was it took me twenty years farming on my own to learn how to grow them and I'm sure it took me thirty years to learn how to sell them properly. It's one thing producing them it's another thing getting them sold properly.

Hop growing is always very cyclical and the time I was born in 1930 hop growers were going bankrupt left, right and centre. Why? Because America had declared two or three years before had declared prohibition and so the production of anything alcoholic was banned and they had a big acreage of hops being grown in America and they swamped the world with them. And so it depressed the prices to really uneconomic levels. Everything was so desperate that in 1932 or 1933, the hop growers, with the Government's help, all got together to form a hop marketing scheme and it ended up in 1934 with the Hop Marketing Board, which controlled the supply and growing of hops, or the marketing of hops, and the supplies to the breweries, and that stabilised hop growing all together. That lasted until about 1981 about then, and then by then we were under the control of Brussels and Brussels had broken up the Pig Marketing Board, the Milk Marketing Board, the Potato Marketing Board and the Hops Marketing Board, were all declared illegal. I say it's because the farming activity at Brussels is decided by the Environment and Agriculture committee and France has a big say in that, France has been a big say in the agriculture policy and they didn't like the way our marketing was organised so it had to be disbanded. Well, we all split up into about four marketing groups organised by the growers but it was a semi shambles the whole lot of it. One of the groups was run from that desk there. I could say a lot about it but I wouldn't want it to go to public. I think too many mistakes were made by growers I think, but it's easy to look back in hindsight, isn't it?

The English hop industry cannot produce competitively hops for lager – the lager production is in the hand of the big brewers, and we cannot compete with the Americans in particular producing hops suitable for lager. What we can produce is what we call aroma hops that are suitable for these craft brewers and their cask condition beers. And the revival of hop growing these last five years is tied up with the influence by the rise of the craft brewing industry in this country, the majority of whom are looking for English hops and different types of English hops. A craft brewer can only exist providing he's got something different. We are being served more efficiently by these small brewers I think than we've ever been. There are some beautiful beers about nowadays to drink. Well before then, in the 1980s shall we say, we were in the control of five big brewery groups. Do you remember Watney's, Red Barrel, Whitbread, Tankers and all sorts of carbonated dishwater that these big breweries were

serving up that they did more harm to the brewing industry than anything. They thought they could sell beer by advertising but it won't very good quality stuff. I suppose I'm biased I suppose.

Hop picking is a complicated thing and a lot can go wrong, can't it? so we're on edge all the time when hop picking's on. you can't relax at all. I enjoyed it, it was an annual challenge. To grow a big crop of hops, and get your quality right, really is quite an achievement. We all attempt to achieve that we don't always succeed. You need a deep soil. Bosbury is fortunate to have a heavy type of soil which has got moisture at depth of plant that grows up 15-18 feet and it needs to go down 15-18 feet. The hop plant is unusual that it does the majority of its growing in July and early August. At that time some years we have the least rainfall. But to grow a successful crop you've got to have moisture there, and somehow irrigation doesn't work somehow. In the war time food and every food product was rationed and all these people had to be supplied with food because they got no fridges to keep anything so they got to be supplied daily almost or every other day with their food supply. My mother was a bit impatient with about it all where she used to rip the pages out of their ration books at the beginning of hop picking and dole the food out by the number of children they'd got and that was it. I mean the rest of the year when we went to the butcher we had to give the ration book in. If we had some petrol we had to give a ration ticket, if we wanted some butter, all this. It didn't work at the Townend anyway. It was a complicated job feeding all those people. You got to remember, no electricity mind. Mains electricity didn't come here 'til four years after I started farming. We had DC lighting plants but they gave a very poor, I've forgotten what the wattage was, but you could hardly read with them and you certainly no fridges or anything electrical really. People cooked on devils. They were things about this long and about this deep, on legs, which they and a daily ration of coke to heat their kettles and saucepans and whatever they got to heat. And they'd got to be put out before dark in September, it was the times of the blackout and so no fires could be outside. You think of the complications of that. This was in the war years. We had to stop picking in the hop yard early didn't they and get their fires lit. Somebody would be sent up early to get it lit. I expect there were fifteen devils around here various families were cooking on. You imagine the job, because in the war we would have had a railway load truck for the hop pickers to burn and we would have had a railway truck load of coke to heat the heaters for the hops as well, a different type of coke, yeah.

I think you remember the travellers more than any because they were a sort of self-reliant sort of people, weren't they? Most of our travelling families came up from Bristol, Black Horse Road, Mangotsfield, Bristol, and they'd take four days to travel up with their horses. And by the nature of them they had

to look after themselves and they were self-reliant. There were some pretty strong characters amongst them. God help them. And every Sunday morning these travellers would congregate at the local pubs around here, the Bell at Bosbury, The Oak at Stapelow, Ashburton, Bishops Frome, because they would go horse dealing on a Sunday morning and they'd get boozed up and one thing and another. It made life very complicated I can assure you. At Bosbury, we had a full-time policeman in Bosbury and Bishops Frome, well most of the parishes around here had their own policeman, but Bosbury got sent an extra policeman up from the mining valleys who could speak the Welsh language and an extra policeman from the Black Country to help the locals out to deal with them, because there were some shenanigans and things going on around the pubs in the district in those days. When the Welsh people were about they suddenly couldn't speak English, they'd only speak Welsh.

You think what you needed to live. Well it all had to be provided, all had to come in. I suppose the grocers in Ledbury helped, the butchers, what was that fishmonger? She used to come once a week, dairy farm up the road used to come bring milk at half past twelve down the hop yard when they were picking hops and have a boil up there. But all these things had to be bought in. I suppose I was bought up with it and didn't know any different did I.