

Title: Davies, Peter_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: Peter Davies, photography, Derek Evans,
oral history, heritage, PV,
participatory film-making, community
film, Herefordshire, Hop picking,
agriculture, hop research, dwarf hops,
hop diseases, NFU, Hop Marketing Board,
MBE, Hereford Football Club.

Identifier: Davies, Peter_Interview_Complete
Interview Date: November_17_2015
Location: Dormington, Herefordshire, UK
Source: Catcher Media Social CIC
Interviewee: Peter Davies (speaker, male)
Interviewer: Marsha O'Mahoney (speaker, female)
Camera & Sound: Richard Goldsmith (male)
Producer: Julia Goldsmith (female)
Language: English

Type: Video
Video Format: MPEG-4
Bit rate: 30.19 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: 8.98 GB
Duration: 46 min 53 seconds

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

File Size: 92.2 MB
Duration: 50 min 07 seconds

Original copyright: Catcher Media Social CIC CC BY-NC
Holder: Catcher Media Social CIC, Herefordshire
Libraries, Herefordshire Archive and
Records Centre

Transcript:

Rick:...camera's rolling.

Marsha: Peter? Peter?

Peter: yeah?

Marsha: Would you like to speak to me?

Peter: yeah.

Marsha: Ok, so I'm going to ask you some questions.

Peter: Yeah, no so that's alright so long as you speak up.

Marsha: I'll speak up - is this loud enough for you?

Peter: Yeah

(13 secs)

Marsha: OK so Perhaps first of all you can tell us your name and how old you are and erm that you were an ex hop farmer?

Peter: Yes I'm Philip Alfred Don Davies and I'm 92 and erm I used to farm at Claston as a hop farmer. And then when father died I took over his responsibilities because they (cough) persuaded him to take over the hop farms.

Rick: (inaudible) if we could just repeat it.. (inaudible)

[cuts out]

Marsha: That was fantastic (inaudible) Rick didn't quite hear enough so we're just gonna do it one more time.

Peter: yeah

Marsha: Is that OK?

Peter: What, from saying who I am?

Marsha: yeah

Peter: I'm Philip Alfred Dom David but I'm known as Peter - and erm I left school when I was 15 - at the beginning of the Second World War- and went to work on my father's farm, which w- (inaudible) was 178 acres but they (inaudible) said but would he take over the Bartestree(?) 140 acres there at five shillings an acre. So we did that. But I always remember when I had been home about three years - I thought well I shall never manage that! But anyway erm - I had to do it sooner than I thought because father was playing tennis and he fell over and he had a compound fracture of his leg -and erm he was in hospital a long time and it was (inaudible) harvest time and getting ready for hop picking - and so erm I had to sort that all out and er get the hop pickers fixed up - and then I used to go up in the kiln and get little pots of hops - because he was home then and had his bed in the lounge and get these little pots of hops to show him to see if they were ready to dry.

Marsha: So hop picking season was huge here wasn't it?

Peter: Yeah well it was all hand picking then, I mean we didn't have a picking machine until 1955 - and er we picked 600 pockets by hand but that was the best time of hops because the hop picking was well the atmosphere was fantastic cos we had two bus loads of welsh people living in the buildings and then we had several bus loads from Hereford and then you've got the local people and the the Travellers and they all got on well together and the singing was wonderful and ermI erm was working in the hop gardens then I think I was haul-ing the sacks and I did my first business transaction - one of the ice cream people came and said to me - will you stop anybody else coming to sell ice cream - i said yes I'll do that if I can have ice cream every day - and I did and that's what I did - I had ice cream every day for th-the hop picking!

Marsha:...very clever business man. When - how many hop pickers used to come here?

Peter: Well we had about 50 or 60 living in the buildings and then we had I think up to 5 busloads - 60 seater bus loads - come from Hereford every day - and then we had - oh i don't know - 20 locals and I can't remember how many Travellers there were but it was you know there were 5 or 6 caravans with there horses.

Marsha: Where would they stay - the Travellers?

Peter: They'd that in in one of the fields just by the farm.

Marsha: and the people from South Wales- what was their accommodation?

Peter: Oh they they lived in the buildings - I mean when f-f- first of all it was pretty primitive they were living in the cattle sheds - but then we converted the um - there was a new build-ing built by lady Emily (for?) it was going to be the new hop kilns and we converted that into barracks for them - that was fantastic - and then we as we increased we built underneath room for them as well.

Marsha: The... Did you ever have people from the Black Country here?

Peter: No - Dormington had had 'um from the Black Country - but we had them from South Wales - and they used to come by train - special train and you send a car to get their lug-gage and you wouldn't know how many you've got because they'd go to the Foley Arms and stagger back later on in the daytime. I remember one person who came was Mrs Reardon the mother of Ray Reardon the snooker player - and he was at Claston when he was a boy.

He was in hospital a long time and it was harvest time and getting ready for hop picking and so I had to sort that all out and er get the hop pickers fixed up and then I used to go up into the kiln and get little pots of hops cos he was home then and had his bed in the lounge, and get these little pots of hops to show him to see if they were ready to dry.

We picked 600 pockets by hand, but that was the best time of hops because the hop picking, the atmosphere was fantastic. Cos we had 2 bus loads of Welsh people living in the buildings, and then we had several bus loads from Hereford, and then you'd got the local people, and the travellers, and they all got on well together and the singing was wonderful, and erm I erm I was working in the hop fields and I think I was hauling the sacks, and I did my first business transaction. One of the ice-cream people came and said to me, "Will you say..stop anybody else coming to sell ice-cream?". And I said, "Yes, I can do that if I can have ice-cream everyday!"

And they used to come by train, special train, and you'd send a car to get the luggage, and you wouldn't know how many you'd got because they'd go to the Foley Arms and stagger back later on in the day time. I remember one person who was Mrs Riardan, the mother of Ray Reardon the snooker player. And he was with Claston when he was a boy.

Marsha: Do you remember him?

Peter: Yes, and then I can remember there was another woman Mrs Vaughn, who'd had 19 children and 3 husbands and she'd reared 18 of them.

Marsha: She used to come here?

Peter: Yes. Several of the families had biggish numbers of children, but they were always good hop pickers. We never had

much trouble.

Father always talked to Mr Brown? Who lived next door, that was a big hop farmer, and they fixed the price they wanted to pay per bushel. And so they said, "We'll put it up a bit more so that..they're bound to go on strike", and he said, "well if we don't put it up they'll still go on strike". So they put it up and, of course, they went on strike and they dropped to what they were going to pay..there was no problem.

Marsha: So you when.. you would get the same families returning one generation after the other?

Peter: Yes Oh yes yes

Marsha: Could you tell us a bit about that?

Peter: Well, I mean I can't remember too much about it, remember its a long time ago. Yes, But um I mean they came - we always had Granny and Grandfather..we didn't have men..we didn't allow men to come, when we had so many, there were only a few, and I remember Granny and the daughter with their children, but it is a long time ago. I can't remember too much about it.

But we've got all account books from 1919 right through to when we stopped hop picking, yes.

Marsha: So, tell me about the.. Peter, can we just talk a bit about the account book you were describing out to me, can we just talk about it again?

Peter: Yeah well there were two account books actually, this is the one that was in the hop yard. um, So you know its all piece work and was picked by the bushel. So each time there was a bushel it was written in the book and the pickers had a card and then at the end of hop picking it was all totalled up how much they had earned and it would be down in there how much they'd drawn to live on (inaudible) and they'd be paid the difference. But its interesting - we've got all the names of these people, so thats what's so interesting.

Marsha and Rick: (inaudible)

Marsha: Peter?

Peter: Yeah

Marsha: Can we talk about the account books again please?

Peter: Um, well there's not much really I can say more than that (inaudible)

Marsha: Sorry Peter, just repeat what you said before

Peter: yeah

Marsha: Because Rick didn't quite catch it.

Peter:

Well every picker had a tally card and then there was the card you had that the lady write down with the Bushler to write it down and that's the books I've got from 1919 till I think it was 1943 and 44. But it's interesting in there because you've got all the names of the pickers and how much they earned and er and you've got them all not only just the Welsh people but the local people and the Hereford people and the Travellers – and er its er they're fas-cinating! It's a fascinating book. But if you want to borrow it – one – you can. I'll tell you where to get it.

Marsha: Thank you. Tell me about the shop on the farm. Because I imagine when people – their tally was knocked off their bill from the shop. Tell me about this shop.

Peter:

No they used to draw money and the – Mother had the shop in the house – there was a little little – part of the house that was big enough to have a shop. She sold most things. She didn't sell meat but the butcher used to come once a week – but shoe sound everything else you know: milk, butter, cheese – all the groceries that they wanted. And, erm – I re-member once there was a tap on the window and I went – Mother said "you go see what they want" and she said "I want three hay pence of stamps" – And I didn't know what it meant – went back and asked mother – "Oh" she said "they meant snuff!" (laughing) But um, no she did a tremendous trade. She used to buy the stuff wholesale. Did a tremendous trade with sweets.

Because for one busheller I took over as the 2nd busheller, that's the man who went with the basket and herbs. Well I didn't know what it meant. Went back and asked mother, "Oh", she said. "They meant snuff". But oh she did a tremendous trade. She used to buy the stuff wholesale. And a tremendous trade with sweets.

Marsha: Didn't you used to like working in the shop?

Peter: Well, I didn't do much in the shop, cos I'd always be working and in the evenings I'd be busy helping in the kilns.

Marsha: What were you doing then? Tell us about that.

Peter: Well, when I left school I started..I hauled the sacks home and then when we had too many cribs for one busheller, I took over as the second one, and I always remember the busheller said, "now if a person grumbles at you saying.."you're putting.." because it was a ten gallon basket and you have to put 8 gallons in. And she said "if they do, you tip the hops out

of the sack back into the crib and you say that will flatten them and you (inaudible) give her the basket and she won't get as many as you did." and I never had any trouble again.

Marsha: Tell me about the policeman.

Peter: Beg your pardon?

Marsha: The policeman? Was there a policeman during hop picking season?

Peter: Oh yes there was a – Well – it was our local policeman really. He was a super chap. He was an ex-heavyweight champion of the Navy. Gunboat Smith. Oh he was a lovely fellow and er he used to stand there inside the door of the Trumpet with his truncheon and any nonsense: 'bong'! And they never had any trouble. I always remember I was coming back home with with a tractor and for some reason I hadn't got a number plate on it – there was one being made – and he didn't say anything, he just rubbed where it had-well – never said a word – and then the next time he saw me I'd got it on – he said "I'm glad you took notice" (laughing)

Marsha: Did the West – did the Black Country pickers and Welsh fight?

Marsha: Did you fight?

Peter: Well, not so much because our pickers used to go to the Foley and ?? the-they used to go the Yew Tree, but the children used to have fights because they used to come into the orchard to pinch apples and our Welsh people would fight the children from The Black Country because they used to say, "No, these are our chokers, not yours". Cos they called these little pears we had 'Chokers'.

Marsha: What about the nurse, was there a nurse at the hop farm?

Peter: Yes, there was a first aid van in the field in front of the church, and a church army van. She used to go to any troubles...

Rick:?

Marsha: Peter, about the nurse.

Peter: There was a district, not a district, a nurse..red cross van in the field in front of Dormington church and also a church army one and she used to do..you know come to each farm if there were any problems.

And then the church army one, they used to lead the singing in the hopyards, and on a erm..a Sunday I think it was,

they used to have a service in the hop yard and the singing was fantastic. And we resurrected that. We did it for about 4, 5 years. I know there weren't many people picking, but there were a few picking and then we had our own local vicar and we had a guest vicar. The Bishop of Ludlow was one who came and the agricultural chaplain?. I always remember when John Selby came, the bishop of Ludlow, he brought 2 bottles of beer, and he said, "One's for your vicar and one's for you". Because he said when I get invited out to dinner, I used to take 2 bottles of this erm what do they call it..I say it was..Bishop's Finger.. "and then you can say 2 fingers to the Bishop!" (laughing)

Very briefly, we had a confirmation in Dormington church, there were 5, and he came. We'd found that it was his birthday, and erm, and I also thought well I can't give him Bishop's Finger, but I'll give him 2 bottles of Speckled Hen. So when he came out, out of changing to talk to people, they gave him the birthday cake and I gave him these 2 bottles of Old Speckled Hen, and he cut the cake there and then and shared it.

Rick: ...Ok, Yeah? Good?

Marsha: Very good! Yeah?

Peter: I went into the kilns to have a look and the dryer said to father um, "who's drying these hops, is it Peter or is it me?" And father started telling me "don't you go in there again" but the next year I was doing the hop drying.

Marsha:can you describe what happened (AUDIBLE CUT)

Rick: ...everyone OK. Camera's rolling, thank you.

Marsha: Can you just describe, Peter, ah...

Rick: (inaudible).. it's alright

Marsha:..when the families would arrive from South Wales.

Peter: Uh, yup..

Marsha: Funny haircuts and very pale...

Peter: Yeah

Marsha: Could you describe that and what it was like at the end of hop picking season.

Peter: Well they all had what they called their hop picking haircut. It was all shaved up ex-cept a little fringe acr- and they were as white as ghosts and when they all went back they were as brown as a berry and their hair had grown quite a bit it was surprising how much they grown because hop picking lasted about 3 or 4 weeks. and um oh it did 'em power of good!

Marsha: What were the old miners like?

Peter: Beg your pardon?

Marsha: well – you said you used to listen to the old miners, telling stories #00:07:29-2#

Peter:
yeah #00:07:29-2#
#00:07:29-2#

Marsha: Can you tell us a bit more about that #00:07:32-8#

Peter:
Well I can't remember, they were all telling about life in the mines and what they did and the pit ponies and all that sort of thing. Have you not been down a mine?

Marsha: I have.

Peter: What, been down Big Pit?

Marsha: Yes. I didn't like it.

Peter: No, I didn't like it but it was an experience you should never forget.

Marsha: It must have been fascinating for a country boy, hearing those stories.

Peter: Yes, I can't remember much about it. But going on from then erm in 1948 father took on some more hops and I was made a partner and so I began to take more – you know – more management – and I was always interested in erm research and um I did some work for Eastmorling (?) and Rosemont to kill a – we had a very bad disease called Nettlehead – because hops are related to nettles – and anyway we tried all sorts of different chemicals and I did the trials and we found one that worked and it – when we replanted Nettlehead has never been seen since. But what I found was it was a chemical you had to use – so you took out the hops the year before and rested the land and then we ploughed the land about 6 inches deep and put a thing on there that this chemical could trickle into the furrow – and that worked – because the Nettlehead was spread by two things – one was an eel worm and the other was the Hop Damson Aphid.

Marsha: How amazing! Amazing. I wonder... (inaudible discussion with Rick) I wonder if you could describe what happened in – when people were picking hops. Did you have whole families having their own crib?

Peter: Yes

Marsha:I wonder if you could just describe that for us...

Peter: Some had whole cribs - uh - but most of them had half a crib - and then we used to bushel three times a day - and er you had to be very sensible when you were busheling cos the hops would vary a lot from big hops to little hops so that you didn't put quite so much in where there were little hops - but um, yo can never - you can't describe hop picking then.

Marsha: Did the local pickers and the Welsh pickers, did they all get on?

Peter: Got on like a house on fire. Oh, they all enjoyed it, they were um..and the local pickers didnt matter how much it was raining they'd always stay picking cos they reckoned to earn enough money in hop picking to clothe the family for a year.

Marsha: Can you describe the difference..during hop picking time very noisy, very busy..non hop picking time, quiet. Can you describe the atmosphere of hop picking season?

Peter: Well hop picking, I mean the whole place was alive. You noy only had the people living in the building, but you had the kilns working, you had the hum of the fans, the blackson? Engine driving them, and you had the smell of the anthracite beside the fire then. My sister and I when we were little we used to go out there and talk to the old Welsh miners, and they used to tell us all about the mines.

Marsha: Can we just ask you about that again cos was it at night time they would sit in the kiln or...?

Peter: Oh this would be in the evenings cos the Welsh miners used to come in, cos you dried 2 lots of hops in the daytime, and they used to come in to help er ..unloading and loading the kilns with the second load and they didnt want paying they just wanted some cider. They really enjoyed hop picking.

I was doing the bushelling. I went into the kilns to have a look and the dryer said to father, "Who was drying these hops? Is it Peter or is it me?" and father said..tell me, "Don't you go in there again", but the next year I was doing the hop drying.

Marsha: Can you just describe what happened..Can you just describe Peter, when the families, the children would arrive from South Wales, funny hair cuts and very pale. Can you describe that and what it was like at the end of the hop picking season?

Peter: Well they all had what they call their hop picking hair cut. Was all shaved off except a little fringe and they were as

white as ghosts and when they all went back they were as brown as a berry and the hair had grown quite a bit, it was surprising how much they grow because hop picking lasted about 3 or 4 weeks. And oh it did them the power of good.

Marsha: What were the old miners like? You said you used to listen to the old miners telling stories. Can you tell us a bit more about that?

Peter: Well I can't remember, they were all telling about life in the mines and what they did and the pit ponies and all that sort of thing. Have you not been down the mines?

Marsha: I have.

Peter: yes, went down a big pit?

Marsha: Yes I didn't like it.

Peter: No I didn't but it was an experience you should never forget.

Marsha: It must have been fascinating for a country boy hearing those stories?

Peter: Yes. I can't remember much about it.

But going on from then in 1948 father took on some more hops and I was made a partner. And so I began to take, you know, more management. And I was always interested in research and erm I did some work for east Morling? And Rosemond? to kill..we had a very bad disease called nettlehead, cos hops are allergic to nettles. Anyway we tried all sorts of different chemicals, I did the trials, and we found one that worked, and it..when we replanted nettlehead has never been seen since. But what I'd found was it was a chemical you had to use, so you took the hops out the year before and rested the land and then we ploughed the land about 6 inches deep, and put a thing on there so that this chemical could trickle into the furrow, and that worked. Because the nettlehead was spread by 2 things..1 was an eel worm and the other was the hops ...???...

Marsha: Amazing. I wonder if you can describe what happened in, when people were picking hops. Did you have whole families having their own crib?

Peter: Yes, some had a whole cribs but most of them had half a crib, and then we used to bushel 3 times a days. And you had to be very sensible when you were bushelling cos the hops would vary a lot from big hops to little hops, so that you didn't put quite so much in where there were little hops, you can't describe hop picking then.

But going back to doing that nettlehead thing. Because of that I was invited to join the Hereford and

Worcester..erm..Im not sure what it was called but it was hop growers and researchers, from Herefordshire and Worcester. We used to meet and talk and work out the program from Rosemont, it had only been about 2 meetings and they said that I must join the NFU hops committee. So I did that and erm.. you used to go to Wide Marsh street Widemarsh Street to the meetings and I'd only been to 2 or 3 and I was elected then to go to London to represent the hop growers. So I was erm..I was a member of the NFU hops committee in London to represent the hop growers. So I was um a member of the NFU Hops Committee in London. And I hadn't been there long when I was elected Vice-Chairman. And I was Vice-Chairman, the Chairman had been Chairman for 40 odd years.

Anyway, there was a public enquiry into the legality of the hops marketing board, and I was the only hop grower from Herefordshire that went. I'd had 4 hours in the witness box and the ..it was a top EC expert ...QC... questioned me. Anyway he beat me in the end, but he came across after and congratulated me on my performance. But the Chairman of the hops committee had made such a nonsense of it that he resigned and I became Chairman. And that lead on to being member of the Hop Industry Commitee which is a committee with all sides of the industry, brewers, big brewers, little brewers, scientists, everybody and erm..after serving on there for a fair time I was elected Chairman. And so I took that on, but we changed venue then, we'd use we reduced the side size of the committee and I was Chairman of the Hop Industry Commitee for a number of years.

Marsha: So how many (AUDIBLE CUT)

Peter: By this time I'd been - I was farming - father had been and asked to join - to farm the Dormington hop...the Ledbury hop farmers and when he died, they said would I take it over, so then when I was doing all this work in London, I was farming 13 hundred acres. There was Claston that Philip was farming, Dormington was 125 acres, Pomona was 133 acres and the new farm we bought at Briarley was 250 acres. But you know, I became..I wasn't a farmer really I was a business man because we had all the managers, but it was very interesting.

Marsha: So um (AUDIBLE CUT)

Peter Oooh...Probably - well when we finished (inaudible) then there'd be a couple of hundred, maybe more. But of course I wasn't involved with it all so much then.

Marsha: So when the gypsies, the travellers arrived, did they mix with the other people?

Peter: No, not a lot. The travellers stayed with themselves. The only time they mixed was when they were in the hop yard picking.

Marsha: And when they were in the hop yard, what sort of time

would they stop/start - what time did they start in the morning?

Peter: They could start any time after 7 o'clock. And they finished about 5. But you didn't worry about that as long as you, we hadn't got too many hops picked. Because if the hops were big, the conditions were right, we had to stop them earlier probably. Well, I know once or twice they couldn't...wouldn't bushel all the hops, we had to leave them till the next day. But it all worked very well.

Marsha: And what did the children do?

Peter: Well, they all used to help pick. Picking umbrellas and little boxes, and then they used to go and play.

Marsha: Where did they cook and eat and wash?

Peter: Well, we had a cook house, where they had fires and then we had some irons?? where they could cook as well. And eventually we built a proper toilet with showers and that, but that was at the end.

Marsha: So when you say they arrived by train, were there special trains?

Peter: Yes special hop picking trains.

Marsha: Where to?

Peter: Well, from South Wales, to Stoke Edith Station, and from the Midlands, well they stopped at Ashburton Ashperton and Stoke Edith.

Marsha: Can we just do that bit again, Peter. So where did they arrive from train?

Peter: They arrived by train at Stoke Edith Station, on special hop picking trains, steam driven cos this is going back, you're talking about the 40's/30's And - and um then we used to send a wagon to collect the luggage and then they used to walk back to Claston, but they used to call at the Foley Arms so you never knew how many we were going to get 'til to the next morning.

(CUT)..when I was Chairman of the Hop Industry Committee -um - was to organise a prize giving which was held at Eardisland - and I had to find a guest speaker -and er (inaudible) - oh it was a fantastic do and it was lucky i got um Winston Churchill's son - um - well I forget now which one now - the one that was a politician - he was one I got and the ex Bank of England Chaiman was another -and er Lady Cotterall was another - there were four I had I cant remember what the other one was. But they were all so interesting to talk to.

Marsha: In the evenings, did the hop pickers have parties and dancing?

Peter: Not really no. By the time they'd finished picking and cooked their evening meal they were ready for bed.

Marsha: Was there any romance?

Peter: Well I don't...there must have been. There must have been. But I don't know, I wasn't out mixing with them. Cos I was in the kilns working until the hop picking machines came.

Marsha: So what were you doing in the kilns Peter?

Peter: Well, I was a hop dryer. Loading and unloading the kilns, and in the end we had 7 kilns so we were drying 1100 sacks a day.

Marsha: So is that that sort of job..you didn't give the hop pickers those sorts of jobs?

Peter: No no

Marsha: That was left to you and your regular farm workers?

Peter: Yes thats right. Well some of them used to help to do the pressing. Some of them helping to load and unload the kiln. Some of the Welsh came to do that. They were very good at that.

Marsha: What about outside of hop picking season? What about the stringing and the wiring?

Peter: Well, our own people used to do the stringing, I mean before chemicals came we used to earth the hops out up in the late Spring and then in the Autumn you ploughed the middle of the rows and then in the Spring you ploughed that furrow away and then you had to cut those roots off at ground level and those roots, those species would grow.

Marsha: Do you like beer Peter?

Peter: Yes. I'm not a great beer drinker but I am very fond of beer. I nice glassful - there's some fabulous beers now. Absolutely fabulous.

Marsha: I think we might get (inaudible)

Rick: OK, brilliant.

Peter: ...I sold the farm, I built a new set of kilns, completely automated so when the hops came out of the hop picking machine they went onto conveyors to the kilns, and we could pick 2 varieties and they were dried by gas and there was a little

motor to unload 4 kilns - you set it to whichever one you were unloading and then there was a big central conveyor, and then we had a bailer, which bailed..every bail was the same weight. And when you connected it all up on the electrical box, when you wanted to press, you started the bailer, and that would start it..the sequence to get the hops to the bailer and you had 7 presses in a bail so that when there were so many kilos in it would stop and press, stop everything and press and automatically then it would pick it up and do it again till it was full.

Marsha: Very very different.

Peter: Yes..well we used to have 14 men in the kilns and with the press you wanted 4.

Marsha: Was there somebody who's responsibility is was to keep the fire going, the anthracite?? fire..

Peter: Well yes one of the men in the kilns used to do that.

Rick: OK Marsha?

Marsha: yeah

Rick: OK P- (CUT)

Peter: And I was er-

Marsha: Can we start that again?

Peter: I beg your pardon?

Marsha: about you being a councillor and church warden...

Peter: I was church warden for 50 years, but it was very simple then, you didnt have much to do, not like they do now. And then I was a member of the parish council. I did..I had..20 years on the parish council and I was chairman twice. And then I was chairman of association of South Herefordshire parish and town councils.

Marsha: is now a good moment just to talk about football?

Rick: Ready to roll.

Marsha: Peter tell us about your involvement with Hereford football club.

Peter: Well I went to see.. my father took me for the first time in 1933 to see a friendly against Tottenham Hotspur the schools all half day. And then when I had time..we had time..father and I used to go in the old stands sitting on a wooden bench and we

used to supply bales so when there were matches..so they could have more people to sit..and then when the news stand was built, I took a team of men and we put all the seats in, and then we did the Len Weston stand aswell. We fixed all the seats.

And then as I was saying I was the vice president and there used to be a lot of work to do and there would be so many of you on duty and you had to make sure that you welcomed the presidents, the chairman of any visiting football clubs and things like that. It was very interesting. You met a lot of very interesting people.

Marsha: You were telling me before... Let me go and find the story..

Peter: The day after when we beat Newcastle, I shall never forget Ronnie Radford's score. They'd agreed, that we should..that they would sell tickets to play..cos they were playing West Ham on the Wednesday. So we went in, I took my secretary with me and they...it was about half past ten and they were queued 6 deep all the way round the ground. And they actually sold 15,000 tickets that morning. It was amazing. But I used to do other things with the ground, we used to spread the fertiliser on it and harrow it and do various things.

Marsha: Tell me about the goal. Ronnie Radford's goal. You were in the stands?

Peter: Yes I was sitting in the stands. It was interesting really because McDonald was playing for England it was playing and he'd scored a goal in the first half, because Hereford centre half had broken his leg. And he didnt realise that until he couldnt get as high as McDonald. So he had to go off. And then when the second half came Hereford were fitter, they were more up for it. Always remember Tyler was playing, and who went on to play for West Ham for years and he gave a lovely pass to Radford, and he just strolled on as if it was just right, and he hit it perfectly. And you could see the goalkeeper was never going to stop it. We still show it lots of times on television.
And then the other one I remember..

Marsha: Can you talk about the atmosphere in the grounds?

Peter: Oh it was electric, absolutely electric. Cos the ground was packed. And then the second goal, the winning goal was scored by...I cant think of his name now, but he got the ball nearest the corner flag and he managed to go all the way along the goal line until he was about 5 or 6 yards from the goal and they didnt stop him, and he just came out about 5 or 6 yards and plonked it in the net. Well of course the whole place erupted.

Marsha: So you were vice president during the football club's hay day?

Peter: Yes, yes

Marsha: What was that like?

Peter: Oh it was wonderful because you met so many people. It was a lot of work to do. Lot of work to do. But it was interesting. But..because you were dealing with ?? and things like that. But it was the directors were the problem. They had some dreadful directors who appointed some awful managers. But we went into that...

(Laughter)

Rick: Still the same nowadays isn't it

Marsha: ..Nothings changed.

Rick: Not in Hereford but...

Peter: Now its different..the team they've got now, they've got a marvellous manager. Well, he was manager before of the youth team and he was in the youth cup and he actually had to go and play Manchester City in the semi final and he lost that 2-1 with a penalty. But Peter Beedle now is..the players all want to play for him. And the manager..they're all united, all working together, that's the great thing.

Marsha: Did any of your hop pickers go and see Hereford play?

Peter: I dont know. I dont expect so. No because we'd be picking in the morning..but erm..I dont think I went in hop picking.

Rick: Bit busy isn't it, yeah...

Marsha: Did you ever meet Derek Evans the photographer?

Peter: Beg your pardon?

Marsha: Did you meet Derek Evens the photographer?

Peter: Derek?

Marsha: Evans.

Peter: Yes, I knew him well. And Jim Finney.

Marsha: Tell me about Derek.

Peter: Well, I mean I didnt know him that well. He used to come taking photographs and he came out to Claston a lot of times, took a lot of photographs of hops. And erm..I saw him..I joined the Fownhope history club ...I went there and he was there and we had a chat. Because you knew I'd written a book? Yes

Marsha: A very good book.

Peter: Do you have one?

Marsha: I've read it. I think I borrowed one from Bromyard history society.

Peter: Did you find it interesting?

Marsha: Fascinating...(CUT)second Peter..that is quite something...

Rick: Gold dust.

Marsha: That's gold dust..

Peter: Beg your pardon?

Marsha: If you say I was the biggest hop grower in Europe ..just a second...when youre ready

Peter: What was that?

Marsha: I'll show you that in a minute, but ..if you can say to me 'I was the biggest hop grower in Europe'

Peter: I forget who told me that. I didnt realise it, but I wasn't interested anyway.

Marsha: If you could just say it though

Peter: I was told when we had all the hops at Briarley, 600 acres, that I was the biggest hop grower in Europe. Cos most of them in Germany you see would only be a few acres.

Marsha: I mean - What was your day like? You must have been a very very busy man?

Peter: Oh it was -There weren't many spare moments. Well that It depends, I mean when I was going down to Kent or..and of course I used to go down the erm...what do they call it..there's a conference every year and I used to go to those. That took me different places..Yugoslavia, when Tito was alive, oh it was marvellous. Absolutely fabulous. And then I went to Germany a couple of times, well I went to Germany lots of times on business. I went to Germany and I went to Belgium, Australia, Tasmania, and America and ?? in Yakima.

Marsha: So is it ok to call you describe you as King of the hops?

Peter: No!! (laughter) No I'm just an ordinary hop grower.

Marsha: Or Lord of the hops...

Peter: Hmm?

Marsha: Lord of the Hops! (laughter) (CUT) Just say I got an MBE for..when youre ready..

Peter: Yeah ..you ready now?

Marsha: Yeah

Rick: Ready!

Peter: If it hadnt been for me the hedge row hops would have failed because when we were in America we discovered the Americans were trying to grow hedgerow hops and Dr Neeval? was head of Wye breeding program?? said, " Well in my work I've been throwing plants away with dwarfing habits" and I said, " Well when you find them I want to be the first to have some".

And that was in..about ..late 90's and then about 3 years later in April I had a message, 'I've got 200 plants of 3 varieties for you to plant'. So we dug up the wheat, and propogated some more in mispropogation? to have enough, so we had 3 rows of each in 93. We had a funny old machine to pick them. And then we had a few more in 94 and then in 95 we had a hop picking machine from Eastern Europe, that broke down before we started.

Anyway, and then in 96 we plated a lot and had our own mobile hop picking machine that was the first in this country. Because I was the first to have one it only cost me 76 thousand, the others were 80 something. And that machine is still working today absolutely perfectly. But the man who designed it Robin Pierce, its called The Robin, did a lot of the work on the Concord, drawing - doing designing the models.

Marsha: So Did you get an award for this?

Peter: I don't - no I don't think so.

Marsha: Did you and an- (CUT?)

Peter: But for all the work I did with the hedgerow hops I got an MBE. That was a wonderful day. My sister and Pam, we went to London, stayed at the Farmer's Club cos I was a member of the Farmer's Club, and then in the evening we went to see Chitty Bang bang. And then the next morning, we got ready to go to the palace, and we had to be there by half past ten, and then it was given to me by the Queen. And I also remember it, they told you what you had to do..going so far and bow, going so and bow..but what I was amazed, that when she shook hands she hadn't got gloves on. But oh it was a wonder..I mean all over in literally minutes, but you never forget.

Marsha: A very proud moment.

Peter: Yes

Masha: Very proud moment

Peter: And Pam and my sister they were told to get in there early and they were in the 4th row and could see everything.

Marsha: Aw! how wonderful!

Peter: I have a film all about it.

Marsha: Oh I think we're gonna have to see that Peter!

Rick: We'll have to see that! Right, i'm gonna (CUT)

Marsha: -might want to talk about them if you recognise anything from them. And these were all taken here were they Rick?

Rick: Some of them were. Peter's seen them before I think.

Marsha: Have you seen-?

Rick: ...some of them before...

Peter: Oh I can't remember

Marsha: (laughing) We'll just go through them.

Peter: Oh I can't remember Mrs Smith. I can remember her. She was a marvellous (inaudible) she used to work for us regularly hop tying and all sorts of things - but she was a marvellous hop picker.

Marsha: Where was she from?

Peter: Er she lived in - well they used to live in a caravan, then they were giving in Tarring-ton.

Marsha: is that her daughter?

Peter: Must be. i can't remember. But I know that was Mrs Smith.

Marsha: What makes somebody a good hop picker - just very quick?

Peter: Yes. They've got the knack.

Rick: Ok. Sorry - let me - sorry - Let me just grab that (inaudible)

Marsha: Was it piecework then Peter?

Peter: All piece work

Marsha: Yeah, so the quicker they worked – the more money they got

Peter: That's right yes, that's what that book w– that reminds me if you want that 1919 book if you want to borrow it...

Marsha: I'd love to. Love to!

Peter: You'll have to get the key to the office and its on the shelf on the left hand side its the first one

Marsha: That's very very kind of you.

Rick: OK Marsha

Peter: Are there any more of those?

Marsha: Did you – did you have people in the hop fields who were star pickers?

Peter: Yeah

Marsha: Did you have someone who was like – every year earned more than anyone else?

Peter: Yes

Marsha: Was Mrs Smith one of those?

Peter: Oh yes

Marsha: Now who's this man with the basket then?

Peter: I don't recognise him

Marsha: But what was he doing?

Peter: But he's the man with the basket and he's the one holding the sack and there's that lady doing the booking.

Marsha: Ah...

Peter: But I don't think that's at Claston.

Marsha: Don't you?

Peter: No I'm sure it isn't.. No...

Marsha: So you...

Peter: But its exactly the same we did at Claston

Marsha: So they were counting how - this is a bushel is it?

Peter: Yeah yeah

Marsha: And then - so they would get paid per bushel?

Peter: Per bushel yes

Marsha: Mmm

Peter: But he looks to have got a lot in the cos its - it was a ten gallon bushel-

Marsha: ten gallons!

Peter: - and you had to put 8 gallons in it

Marsha: Did you?

Peter: Yeah

Marsha: How long would it take to fill a bushel?

Peter: Well it depended on the picker. I mean some of them only picked two or three in a day.

Marsha: A day!

Peter: Yeah some of them were a dreadful waste of time!

Marsha: (laughing) Would they come back the next year?

Peter: Yes!

Marsha: (laughing) There's another little boy again.

Peter: Yeah i don't know who that is.

Marsha: No - looks like he's having a good time though doesn't he? It looks like he... Now what's this? this is a caravan.

Peter: Yes

Marsha: Do you think these are Travellers?

Peter: Yes those would be Travellers, yes.

Marsha: Mmm

Peter: Of course I mean I can't say who they are.

Marsha: Oh no, of course you can't. This is a sort of family group you would have at your farm?

Peter: Yes, yes.

Marsha: And they would cook over an open fire?

Peter: Yes. But they would have their own fire.

Marsha: they wouldn't share it with people from South Wales?

Peter: No

Marsha: No. Its a fantastic photograph – was it pulled by a horse then?

Peter: Yes

Marsha: Really?

Peter: Yes

Marsha: So it must have been very colourful when the Travellers were arriving.

Peter: I mean in the later years they had the Travellers proper caravans and er pulled by the car.

Marsha: Mmmm

Peter: And the china they used to have was wonderful.

Marsha: Was it really?

Peter: Yeah

Marsha: Their caravans were absolutely spotless too aren't they?

Peter: Yes. Yes thats the same as our Travellers – around the fire.

Marsha: ...round the fire...

Peter: I'll always remember father had an Austin Princess with a Rolls Royce engine in it and he wanted to sell it and one of the hop pickers said "well I'll buy that from you" so he agreed a deal and he came down to pay father and he said "are you sure that's enough? I've got plenty more money in the bag!" (laughing)

Marsha: And there were all these prams. You see these prams so often in these hop picking photos don't you?

Peter: yeah

Marsha: And the kettle. What always strikes me is they always look rather smart in their coats and their dresses and their hats don't they?

Peter: Oh the Travellers weren't badly dressed!

Marsha: No! And hop pickers in general always seemed to be...

Peter: No that is um... one of the people from - we had some from down in the South West.

Marsha: Of England?

Peter: Yes.

Marsha: really?

Peter: No it isn't - I'm telling you wrong! That's a Hoskins. Father Hoskins.

Marsha: Father Hoskins?

Peter: Yes

Marsha: Where's he from?

Peter: Yes - they they used to - the family used to live at The Hyde at mother's old farm but then they came to Claston - well Jack Hoskins and um his brother worked for us.

Marsha: Really? But they were locals?

Peter: Yes.

Marsha: So what do you remember about him?

Peter: Hm?

Marsha: What do you remember about him?

Peter: - don't remember too much. You must remember this is all a long time ago!

Marsha: It is a long time ago!

Peter: Yeah

Marsha: I think he looks like quite a character. Doesn't he?

Peter: Yeah? Oh yes they were.

Marsha: Yeah

Rick: Can I grab...

Marsha: I kinda like his waistcoat and his hands look like he's worked hard for a liking doesn't it?

Peter: Yeah

Marsha: Yeah... OK Rick?... (laughing) You don't see children with dirty faces like that much anymore, do you.

Peter: No, no... no... that's in the hop pi- hop period somewhere.

Marsha: And you were saying by the time they left they looked a picture of health with - you know - they got the sun on their faces and their hair had grown...

Peter: Yeah. they looked different altogether

Marsha: It must have been great having so many children around.

Peter: Yeah

Marsha: What's this in the background then, Peter?

Peter: I don't know what that is... Oh it's part of a hop yard!

Marsha: Ah, right. And that's another child..

Peter: Yes

Marsha: Not looking very happy there!

Peter: No, no!

Marsha: Looks like their hair's grown a little bit too.

Peter: That isn't a Welsh boy. It was only the Welsh boys that had their hair cut.

Marsha: Was it?

Peter: Yeah.

Marsha: Yeah...So they look like young teenagers, don't they.

Peter: Yeah yeah

Marsha: - young teenagers

Peter: Yeah

Marsha: – having a sneaky fag!

Peter: yeah

Marsha: Yes well I suppose everyone smoked in those days didn't they?

Peter: Yeah.

Marsha: So you were saying that somebody came into your shop asking for?...

Peter: three (hay? bits?) of stamps.

Marsha: Stamps?

Peter: Yes

Marsha: So that's snuff?

Peter: yes it was snuff!

Marsha: (laughing)

So people still took snuff in those days?

Peter: Yes

Marsha: And did the shop sell cigarettes too and tobacco.

Peter: Oh yes. Well you could still buy snuff!

Marsha: (laughing) Yes!

Peter: I don't know who that is.

Marsha: No. I just love the big safety pin.

Peter: Yeah.

To watch the complete interview and others, please visit:
www.herefordshirelifethroughalens.org.uk/video-gallery