Title:	Parker, Janet_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
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Interview Date:	October_18_2017
Location:	Bromyard, UK
Source:	Catcher Media Social CIC
Interviewee:	Janet Parker (speaker, female)
Interviewer:	Marsha O'Mahoney (speaker, female)
Camera & Sound:	Richard Goldsmith (male)
Producer:	Julia Goldsmith
Language:	English

Type:	Video
Video Format:	MPEG-4
Bit rate:	30.11 mbits/s
Frame rate:	25 FPS
Aspect ratio:	16:9
Width:	1920 pixels
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Scan type:	Progressive
Audio Format:	AAC
Audio Sampling rate:	48000 Hz
Audio Bit rate:	192 kb/s
Stereo/Mono:	Mono
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Duration:	32 min 34 seconds

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Audio Format:	MP3 audio
Audio Sampling rate:	44.100 kHz
Audio Bit rate:	256 kb/s
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Duration:	32 min 34 seconds

Transcript:
I'm Janet Ellen Parker, I was born on a hop farm at Fromes Hill, called The Sponend. And eventually got married and moved to Hopton Sollars, Stoke Lacey, and I'm now in a bungalow called Sollars Hill, and it's still in Stoke Lacey.

Well hop picking was the highlight of our year. My sister and I we used to look forward to the hop pickers coming from Worcester every year and meet up with the same families, and of course when they came we had to get ready for their blankets for them. And we also used to sew on the hessian for the cribs, with a long-pointed needle, which used to sew up the eventual pocket. Then the cribs were taken down into the hop yard, well before the first day. And then they were put into what we called a house. The house was decided by the poles in the hop yard really. Every two poles I think it was, was a house, and when they picked a house, they'd move onto another house, and so it went on until the hops were picked.

When they picked the hops into the crib. The cribs were sort of partitioned into two, one half for one person, the other half for the another. and when they were ready they'd been picked, the bushler came along and used this round basket and put the bushels into what they called the green sack. Two men, which was Cyril Goodchap, which came to us when he was 14, in fact he stayed with us all his working life. And he still lives in Bromyard now, he's 89. But anyway, him and Bill Davies, another workman of ours, they used to hold the green sack, no, Bill in fact used to do the bushelling. And I was the booker, or Mary or my mum, mum usually first I expect, and then Mary's turn and then my turn came. And we used to write down in the book, the hop measurer's book, the amount of bushels they'd had. And they also had a little book, a thinner book, and they kept their bushels in there so they'd knew how many bushels they had got and what price. Well of course, sometimes there used to be strikes, not very often, but I remember several strikes. If they got the idea that another farmer was paying more, that they would go on strike, and then dad would have to pay them a bit more. But anyway, that's how it went and they usually settled the strikes quite easily. And then the hops were taken up to the farm put on the green stage. And then they were waiting to go to the hop kilns. They were on the second storey the hop kilns.

Well Cyril Goodchap and Bill Davies they worked for us, well, as long as I can remember. Cyril in fact came to us when he was 14. He left school at 14 and came to work for us. He was a neighbouring farmer's son. And in fact, he lived at Woodcroft, the neighbouring farm but he worked at The Sponend all his

working life really. Bill Davies, he lived down, well, not far from us. Yes, he worked for us, I think he worked for us all his life, as long as I can remember anyway. And his wife, Mrs Davies, used to work in the house for mum. I didn't say about Cyril still working for us at 89. Anyway, he's still in Bromyard.

Well when Cyril came to us at 14, he worked for us all his working life. In fact, he used to visit my sister Mary, in fact he still does, on a Friday. Very often he goes up to see her now. He's 89 now and living in Bromyard.

Mrs Sutton was the ganger lady. I think her husband used to work on the little boats on the Severn, in Worcester, the River Severn? Anyway, she used to be the ganger lady, and she would negotiate with dad the amount of the price of the bushels for the year. She would get the people together and, well, find the pickers for us really, and she was in charge of the pickers. In fact, she was THE ganger lady. So, if there was any disputes or anything, they went to her. Her and dad usually discussed it and settled any dispute that there was.

They used to get together in the evenings. There was a contraption called a devil. And it was like a fire with coke or anthracite on, and they used to cook in the evenings you know, put everything in a big pot, and just have a good singsong. They really enjoyed their times out on the farms, yeah, they really did.

The hop kilns. The hops were taken up and put on the green stage. The next stage they were loaded onto the kilns. They were done about every….I think it took about eight hours to dry a load of hops. They usually had to be 140 degrees. The fire had to be stoked, well, first of all they loaded the kilns, and they lit sulphur underneath. That was a very dangerous job, lighting the sulphur. They put the sulphur in the pan, and they put it underneath the hops, at a lower level. And then they put methylated spirits on and they lit it with a match. Well, unfortunately, a friend of ours, quite a younger friend actually, he though…. the sulphur used to take quite a long time to light, and this one time he thought it hadn't lit so he went to put some more methylated spirits on and it blew back at the bottle, and he was very badly burnt. And in fact, he died after three weeks. So, it really was a very precarious job for the hop drier.

But anyway, back to the hops. They were on the kiln for about eight hours and they would be unloaded then into another room, where they cooled down before they were eventually put into a pocket. Well, a bagger was a person who put the hops into the pocket. And it was his job to get as near to one and a half hundred weight as he could, because that's what you should have in a hop pocket. And then they were lowered down then, and they

farmer's names put on, they were sewed up, with the same needle we used to put on with the cribs, the hessian onto the cribs. And the farmer's name was put on with the date and the number of the hop pocket, so that was all the information they wanted on the pocket. And that was stored then until they were taken away to the brewery, well to the hop factors, who then sampled the pockets. We used to have to go up to London and see the samples very often and the hop factors then told you how much you had for your pockets and that was it.

The kiln bed, well you see, my father, they didn't use to go to bed at all during the three weeks or a month when they were hop picking or hop drying, but they had a bed made ourt of hop pockets really and they had this bed which he used to lie on and have a nap. And of course, Mary and I, we absolutely loved going to the kiln bed. We used to roast potatoes and things like that, them in the ashes, Yes, it was quite exciting.

Well, this is the hop measurer's book for the Sponend. This is 1947, this is my mother's handwriting. And I think we worked out they were one and tuppence a bushel. I'm looking through, I can see a lot of these names. Mrs Sutton there, she was the ganger lady. Joan Goodchap, she was Cyril's sister actually. She used to walk across from their farm. And in fact, a lot of these, there's another Mrs Goodchap, I think that was Ruth, Mrs Pattinson, these are all people from Fromes Hill that used to come down. But most of these, well a lot of them, were from Worcester. These were the ones that used to stay on the farm.

Well these are some of hop measuring books that we had, that's 1955. This is a hop measuring book from The Sponend. This is Mrs Sutton who was our ganger lady, Joan Good Chap, she was Cyril's sister actually, from our neighbouring farm, and there's Miss Goodchap, that was Ruth, an older sister. These are people actually from Fromes Hill. But there were people from Worcester, Bob Hustle, in fact he used to live in the buildings all year round, just to do odd jobs on the farm like they used to. There's Mary Davies again, she was from Fromes Hill.

Well this is Bob Hustle, now this is September 4th. Well in the morning, when they busheled in the morning about 12 O'clock, Bill Davies would come around and say, 'clear them up, clear them up.' and they'd pick all the leaves out then, because you didn't want any leaves in the samples, and so he had three then. So, the crib would be empty so they'd start again. They'd come around about 4 O'clock or 5 O'clock, well 5 o'clock really, and then he'd have four bushels, so he wasn't what you'd call a really good picker. See there's one here, Doris Teale, she was a neighbour of ours. On a Saturday morning, she probably had a visitor you see, so she's got 11 there, which is unusual because on the 4th and the 5th she had six and on the 8th and 9th she had six and seven, so I would imagine probably her mother or her sister came.

Yes, this is another book, for instance. This is Mrs Southall, she was from Fromes Hill, but it looks here that they picked up to the 9th and then they decided that wasn't enough money. Well we work out here, I worked out actually, that it was one pence a bushel because it was 12 pennies to a shilling, 20 shillings to the pound. Yeah, the picked obviously from the 6th to the 10th and they were one and tuppence a bushel we worked out. And then they must have gone on strike, whether that was a Saturday or they didn't pick that day I can't remember. But would obviously have more, they would be offered more, so it was probably one and th'pence I would think. Yeah you can see here they picked up until the 10th and they had 59 bushels. Well obviously, they must have got together with other pickers from other farms and found out that we weren't paying enough. So, Mrs Sutton would have come to dad, and said, look, this isn't paying enough and I shall probably go back to Worcester if you can't pay us more. So, I expect after a lot of hassle, he would probably up the price a bit. What it is about it, to be quite honest, I can't quite work out at the moment, but that's what happened. They would argue with him and he would probably ring round and find from other farmers how much they were paying and pay the same.

Well pay day was quite a big day really because it was a matter of going to get the money from the bank and getting it back without anybody seeing it and father would be in the front room and count it all out and see, you know, that it was all correct. A lot of them during the season would sub. And that means they would take the money and go up the pub of a night time and uh. Some wouldn't have much money at the end of the season, but others would have quite a bit. Oh, it was great excitement. On the actual finish when we finished picking, all the men and the boys, used to crib the girls and try and get them in the cribs. And dad used to think, oh goodness me, I hope they're not going to try and break too many cribs this year because it means mending them for next. We had a lot of fun. A lot of drink was consumed, a lot of drink, it was great fun actually. And of course, after they'd gone, the hop pickers, it was very quiet. And Bill Davies one year, he, well he always did, grow marrows on a muck tump. And one year, the day after they'd gone, all his marrows had gone too. Well of course they thought they were ours really and when they came the next year they said what did the boss say about the marrows, and Bill wasn't very pleased. Well he said, they weren't his they were mine. So, it was quite hilarious really.

Well hop picking, which every farmer in Herefordshire had a few hops and it was more like a closed shop because It was such a full-on job that people would take their holidays for three weeks and come and work in the hops. And unless you were actually in the kilns you wouldn't realise, people who hadn't have hops, wouldn't realise what was going on, unless they visited just to have a look. Which really you didn't want

visitors at that time of year, except perhaps in the kilns at night, which was quite fun actually.

We didn't have holidays like they do nowadays. I mean a day out at the seaside was quite a big thing. I mean my grandchildren, they've been all over. In fact, my father he never came on holiday with us. I don't ever remember him coming on holiday with us. His holiday was the Trumpet really, he lived for the Trumpet, the ploughing, because he was a ploughman. They used to go and mark out the ground on the Tuesday, and sort of get ready a bit more on the Wednesday, and on the Thursday the Trumpet ploughing match took place. Well then, he would go with a friend and they would walk every acre of ploughing just to compare it with how they judged it, because he never judged there because he was the local. He wasn't allowed to judge.

Well the Trumpet ploughing match is a very well-known ploughing match, really I should imagine second after the National. There was such a competition between the hops, where …. I mean there weren't so many varieties in those days but there was more entries. Oh yeah it was a great thing to have a prize there, it was quite a big thing really. My dad just loved ploughing, he absolutely loved ploughing, it was his life really.

When we were at the Hill the Dixons used to come with their Romany caravan, it was very ornate, and they had beautiful china and very polished brasses. And it used to be towed by a brown and white horse. But the Dixons they never sort of mixed with the other pickers in the evenings, they always kept to thereselves.

When we were little we used to look forward to the families, the same families, coming every year. I mean sometimes they'd have another baby or somebody got a different boyfriend. There weren't so many couples really in them days. I think a lot of the local lads used to fancy a lot of the girls that used to come.

I married a hop farmer in 1957, John Parker, my sister was my bridesmaid and John's brother was his best man. And when we come off honeymoon, they had started going out together and they married the next year in April.

We used to have a lovely ice-cream people used to come. They were called the Cotswold dairies and they were the most beautiful ice-cream, I don't think I've ever tasted such nice ice-cream since. Mrs Brace used to come with her fish. I remember we had a cocker spaniel and she held up a fish one day and he grabbed it and it went down his throat and she pulled back out and put it back on the slab, or the back of the van. We used to have Jehovah Witnesses and lots of visitors, yeah, great fun actually.

I remember the Cotswold dairy ice-cream, they used into come to the hop yard quite a lot. In fact, they were the most beautiful ice cream, I don't think I've tasted such nice ice-creams as those. Mrs Brace used to come with the fish van. She held up a fish one day and our cocker spaniel, Rusty, he jumped up and grabbed it, it went half way down his throat. But anyway, she pulled back out and put it back on the slab and nobody was any the wiser so I expect she sold it. We used to get Jehovah witnesses and lots of visitors in the afternoons to come and help pick.

Our lives were shattered really in 1953, when mum's sister, Annie Elizabeth Clewes, she died of cancer in the infirmary in Worcester, The Royal Infirmary. And so Mum and I moved down to The Hill because at that time her dad had retired and had come to live with her and also she had prisoners of war, at that time she had a German living in called Otto Berlin. So, we immediately went down to live at the Hill with Grandad, and Mary and Dad stayed at the Sponend until after hop picking and then they moved down to the Hill and we let the Sponend farmhouse.

When mum and I moved down to The Hill, because my grandad had already moved in with my aunt. And she also had prisoners of war. She had an Italian prisoner of war if I remember rightly, and then she had this German living in They worked on the farm, I should say that, shouldn't I? Yes, the prisoners of war they worked on the farm, they were farm workers, in fact they used to come, well, he lived at the Hill, I don't know where he came from, Ledbury I suppose.

Bill Davies used to do the stringing. There was a hook in the middle of the hop root on the floor, and the wire work was about 12-foot-high, and there was a hook-on top of the wire work, and he would put two strings up to the wire work and back down to the ground. And then along the top and then down again, until he got to the end of the row. And then we used to tie the hops then, two or three to a string. Oh, before we tied, actually, we'd braced, and that was tying two strings together. And then when they grew about a foot high, we'd tie them around the string. And they incidentally only go one way. Opposite way to a kidney bean. They used to grow clockwise, and this next job then was leafing. When they got to the top we'd strip the leaves, from the bracing strings down to the bottom, which was a very rough job on your hands, so we always wore gloves for that.

In the summer really, to keep all the bugs and whatever off the hops, because the farmers practically lived in the hop yard to see if there was any disease coming on then, the sulphur used to be the main thing. Which was, you'd put sulphur in a contraption behind a tractor. He used to get up about half past two, three in the morning to see if the aspen trees were still. If they were he'd sulphur, and if they weren't, and very rarely they were still, he'd go up to the hop yard and spray them with

sulphur. Because that seemed to be the only thing really to kill bugs in those days.

I've recorded this story because I think it's quite interesting. I think my grandchildren they haven't got a clue how we lived in those days. We rarely went to the seaside, we were happy at home. It's a totally different world really. I met Marsha at the Bromyard hop festival this year she showed me this photograph, in fact it was John Pudge, my nephew, on the film. Do you want to do that? So, I said no, no way! But anyway, when I came home I thought, oh, that's a good idea, I might write up my history of growing up on a hop farm. For the future generations, really because I don't think they've got a clue of how we lived or how we work.

I decided after I met Marsha, that I would write a history of growing up on a hop farm in Herefordshire. Anyway, we moved onto the Hill, Stanley Hill, Bosbury, when my auntie died in 1953. The Hill included four and three quarters acres of hops, but it was a pole yard, which meant poles were put in the ground each year and the hops were tied to the poles with raffia. This was extremely hard work. And following a bitter cold winter we put wire work up in the hop yard. It was my job to fix the hooks onto the top of the wirework on a contraption on top of a trailer.

Well of course, children they came along as well, people used to bring prams as well. Children were expected to sit in the prams all day and they were quite happy in their prams. Sometimes these to 8 to 12 years olds, they'd go off picking nuts and blackberries and things, from the hedgerows, or very often they'd pick into an umbrella at the side of the crib and then tip the hops into the crib to help the parents. But years later you'd get children picking for their own shoes and things like, their clothes. Where today it's just expected, it's just there, isn't it?

The Wheatsheaf at Fromes Hill. That was kept by Oliver Howe. He had a petrol pump and a shop. Oh, the shop was dreadful and Mary wouldn't go in it because by the side of the cheese he had a mouse trap. She was terrified of mice. It was a one off to be quite honest.
The Wheatsheaf at Fromes Hill, which was only a couple of hundred yards from our back door really. And the hop pickers used to go up there of a nighttime, nearly always on the weekends coming back singing. Oliver Howe who kept the Wheatsheaf, he had a petrol pump and a shop. The shop well, Mary wouldn't go in it because he used to keep a mousetrap right beside the cheese. She was terrified of mice, would never go in the shop.

After I married John parker we were actually at Hopton Sollars for 38 very happy years. Unfortunately, the ???? wilt finished

us in hop picking, in hops, so we started to doing apples, and we grow apples for Bulmer’s now. And and our son, Farmer, and his wife Catherine and their two boys, John and Alex live at Hopton Sollars and I live in a bungalow, which we call Sollars Hill. My daughter married a hop farmer at Dilwyn, Edward Lewis and so I go over there every year just to have my fill, well my fix really of hops, I love the smell of hops.