

DERSINGHAM 2000 HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW 10

Date interview conducted: 3rd March 1998
Name: Roy William Hipkin

When did you first come to Dersingham?

I came to Dersingham when I was 11. I lived with my grandparents at Dodds Hill Dersingham. And that's over 50 years ago now.

Had your grandparents always lived in the village?

Yes, at Dodds Hill Dersingham and they worked for Mr. Dick Stanton the farmer. My grandfather was head team man on Stanton's farm. Their names were Mindham(?)

Do other members of your family live in Dersingham?

Yes, I have my daughter Diane who lives in Dersingham. My son Paul also lives in Dersingham. My son Peter lives in Shernborne, my son Colin lives in Dersingham also. And my daughter lives in Heacham.

What are your earliest memories of the village?

Well only as much when I started in business as a carpenter and joiner round the Old Hall Workshops which was in 1964.

What school? Did you go to Dersingham School?

Yes, and prior to that I went to Dersingham Modern Secondary School.

And that was when, - who was the head then?

Mr. Willis was headmaster then and the woodwork master there was Mr. Aubrey Bell. I used to get extra classes and extra time for doing carpentry and joinery because that was what I felt I was best at. I entered in an Exhibition in King's Lynn with a fire kerb which Mr. Aubrey Bell was organising and I got 98% with this particular project that I put in there.

Mr. Bell realised you had the potential to be a builder.

I won the woodwork award that they had at St. George's School at that particular time and that was really basically down to Mr. Bell.

So you went straight from school into an apprenticeship.

Yes, I went from school to F. W. Shanks which was at Hunstanton and which I served a five-year apprenticeship which started approximately in 1951. From there I served the five-year apprenticeship. I attended the Technical College in King's Lynn on basically day release. Then after finishing my apprenticeship I was then made general Foreman of the building firm which I stayed on for about another 10 years. Then in approximately 1964 I started my own business,

carpentry and joinery round at the Old Hall Dersingham; in the workshops round there. It was owned at that particular time by Mrs. Phyllis Jary who was quite a character in the village.

She's no longer with us.

No, her father was. She was the daughter of a well known businessman in this area, Mr. Kirkland who had Kirkland's shop at Kings Lynn. Then from doing general woodwork and building work, conservatories and small extensions and so forth in 1975 I was doing a job for Mrs. Holland-Green(?) doing a bathroom conversion and she told me they were selling 15 acres of land down Station Road Dersingham which she thought had potential for building and development. So I purchased this land off Mrs. Balding.

This was behind Station Road.

That is correct, on the brow of the hill on Station Road.

And this was after Mr. Massen's development was finished.

No, Mr. Massen's development was progressing at the Old Hall development at the time and then I applied for planning permission in 1975, or round about 75 or 76 for 11 dwellings which were refused. Then we went to appeal and we won the permission on appeal for the 11 properties. Whilst we was building the 11 properties at Station Road Dersingham a condition of the planning permission was that we erected traffic lights at the junction with the A149.

They were concerned weren't they that there would be too much traffic?

Several people have talked about the awful problem before the By-pass of getting through this village, particularly on a Sunday.

But we had already in our programme indicated that we were going to come out with a second access at the Dun Cow corner. Because I own the cottages the other side the road there which a certain amount of the land would need to be taken off to widen the A149 route. So we knew we could actually do that. Subsequently we sold the houses down on the first phase of the development and I supplied the traffic lights at a cost of £20,000 which was quite a substantial amount at that time. I know it helped me get my development started but it also helped all the people down Valley Rise as well. As someone who's lived there all the time it's been wonderful. The problem of getting out on that corner, it made it so easy and I always felt we were very lucky to have those traffic lights.

Dersingham is basically a category one village. That means you got all the amenities within the village like, schools, bakers, butchers, fish and chip shop, surgeries, libraries etc; that's why it's a category one village. We progressed with the Mountbatten development and then subsequently we applied for more planning permission which we called the second phase. We obtained the planning permission for the second phase of the development and we obviously

progressed down on the site. In the mean time we found we need a new pumping station. So I provided the land for the AWA which they supplied the pumping station which actually took all the foul sewerage for all Dersingham. After that with the AWA forming a new pumping station they allowed us to continue phase two of the development down Mountbatten Road. Then we progressed and sold those houses. We applied for phase 3.

Where does phase 3 go to?

Phase 3 goes and comes out at the Dun Cow corner; that's the final phase. In that phase I suggested to the Borough Council that we could do with some old people's bungalows within this development as it was such a large development. They agreed to purchase land off me for 36 old people's bungalows. With the finance then I was able to put the Dun Cow corner in which gave us access onto the A149. We actually continued building there and it's been going on, the on-going development for about 20 years; the Mountbatten development. And in that time I've also supplied land for a church which is now St. Cecilia's. We then also got 3 shops passed. I also supplied some of the drainage for the new Budgen's which was the former Dun Cow land. As I say the development came to a close, well not to a close completely as there is another extension which is called Sandringham View which Mr. Suiter is now doing. I had the opportunity to buy it but I felt the finances and what one had to come up with to do that development was going to be way beyond me. And after 20 years on that site I was getting a bit tired.

So basically you have provided the village with an awful lot of the houses.

Oh yes, we had at least 300 on that development.

A lot of people I've interviewed said that we have nearly finished now in this village. Once that last section is finished apart from odd in-fills there really is no more land. Everybody says they like the village as it is.

I believe Mr. Suiter's got planning permission down there on the Sandringham View development for 368 houses. I would think he's done about 100 houses at the moment and as you say there is no more land left in the village.

Do you think living here that that is as big as you would like to see the village get?

Yes otherwise we'll be coming to basically a small town. I think we've 4500 people and that will probably go up to 6000 by the time Mr. Suiter's done. But because Mr. Suiter was building this large development on four and a half acres of land just beyond Dersingham Station I then went to English Estates Development because I thought that we would need to create a bit of employment in Dersingham. English Estates agreed with me and so did the Borough Council and we then provided land to build four workshop units at the

bottom of Dersingham Station. Hopefully, and I've put all the drains and sewers in that land to take up anything else that's required in the future like commercial say if the village expands which it will do we might need a new site for a new Sports Hall. Or there was talk at one stage because the fire station where it's situated now is a dreadful place up Dodds Hill, Dersingham. The Norfolk County Council owns the old station yard and it would come across my land for a new Fire Station which would give it complete access to the new by-pass which would be convenient for Sandringham or whatever to serve all Dersingham. *And certainly much quicker.* If it came about the new station would be down toward Wolferton further. Not touching the existing access onto Station Road at all. That would come two thirds of the way on the by-pass, very near the amenity area which has been supplied by the Norfolk County Council, which is based on the by-pass.

Have you belonged to any clubs or organisations in the village?

Going on I believe you've represented many of the clubs and organisations.

I've been President of the Dersingham Football Club for 25 years. During that time I've seen lots of changes, with sponsorship from various people and all this that and the other. We've got one of the best grounds on West Norfolk. Now instead of having a first team and a second X1 they've actually got four teams. They might even have five now. I mean, as I retired as President of the football club, I'm now an Honorary Life Member, I attend functions but I don't attend the matches; only cup finals and so forth. I was also made President of the North West Norfolk Football League for the whole of the North West Norfolk area.

I am also President of the Albert Victor Bowls Club which I provided the material and built the place for the Albert Victor Bowls Club. Basically I'm still the President of the Albert Victor Bowls Club. *Is that where the Albert Victor Pub used to be?* No, it's on the opposite side of the road in Mr. Tuck's garden which used to be a garden centre years and years ago. It's a little lane that goes at the back onto a big piece of ground at the back which is now the Albert Victor Bowls Club. We built that club and it's quite successful now.

As you know regarding -- I don't know whether to come in at this time with the Parish Council (*Yes*). As you know I've been a member of the Dersingham Parish Council for well over 20 years which I still am a member. Of course that's grown and got really more professional, taking on far more at Parish Council level than we ever did like street lighting, various things in the village. Still the roads and paths that come under Norfolk County Council but we're actually taking on more and more and it seems the Borough would like us to take on more like recreation grounds and sports fields. Certainly they've taken on litter bins, dog fouling bins and all sorts.

And you will have quite a bit of input for the ideas that are working for the millennium?

Oh yes, I would have thought that the Parish Council will soon have to come on board with the Millennium Committee to see what is available regarding grants for them or whatever they want to do. At this particular stage I don't think the Parish Council is that involved at the moment.

What was the most important day you have ever spent in the village?

Yes, when I came to Dersingham as the Deputy Mayor to present the prizes for various functions that they had on the recreation ground for like a sports day. You know to be here as a boy and then to come back here as the Deputy Mayor. I was elected Deputy Mayor in 1990, and which I served in 1991 on the Borough Council of King's Lynn of which I've been a member for six years. I'd served Dersingham as a member of the Borough Council and subsequently I was also Vice Chairman of ----- estates (?) for those five or six years and as I say I was made Deputy Mayor for which I served in 1991. It was quite nice to come to the sports field and lots of the people who played football and were involved in sports, I knew them all and to come there in your chain of office, in a chauffeur driven car it was quite you know. From when we first started and I was a "Hold ye " boy up on Stanton's farm with my uncle.

What was the worst time you remember?

As a young boy I can remember one instance, the floods. The first floods were in somewhere about 1955, as a young lad I went down to Dersingham Station and Mr. Cliff Riches, who was then the postman at the time, the water was right up to the old Dersingham Station, and I and several other people and a policeman all went across the marshes and we found a lady that had been missing, drowned, in a dyke there and I helped to carry her. She was subsequently put in the Drill Hall at Dersingham where, unfortunately, all the people who had been drowned were put; that was really horrible, horrible. And living at Dodds Hill Dersingham at the time I never really forgot it because every time I used to walk past I always thought of that.

We are in a different position now are we not? We could not have that flooding now?

No after that flooding, the NRE, the National Rivers Authority, they built a bank all the way along Snettisham Beach, all the way I think to Wolferton so the chance of that happening, of coming all the way up to Dersingham Station, are quite remote.

I went down there that day and the water was up to Dersingham Station. As it receded they were looking for the people who were drowned, missing. As a young lad I went down there that day and I can remember it.

What are the biggest changes you have seen in the village?

*Most people talk of the building---*Which I've been responsible for. From the Parish Council's point of view with all the trouble now with people being mugged and all the crime etc., it's very good that Dersingham has supplied all the street lighting in Dersingham. I think that Dersingham has been really lit up. Some people don't like it but it's certainly safe for people to walk about at night. And I think generally overall like Dersingham's got the best recreation ground and sports field reputed within West Norfolk.

We have a community policeman who comes to our Parish Council meetings. We keep quite close contact. So I think that the village had progressed. I know that the building for which I have basically been responsible for. But then it's given us money with more income from rates to do these things because if you live in a smaller village they can't do these, the street lighting because they haven't got the income to come from the borough to do all these things. By getting an influx of population here it's given us more income.

I think there is virtually everything in Dersingham.

The one thing people object to is not having a bank.

I tried Natwest; I tried Barclays' because Barclays' were in Dersingham, and they said it didn't pay. My argument was when they were in Dersingham before there was probably about 1800 residents. Now there's four and a half thousand, likely to be 6000 plus. I think the Bank would go and I think the best place for the Bank would be in the region of where the new Budgen's is. I haven't tried lately ; I think I might probably have another go at them.

What would you like to see happen in the future?

I feel I'm thinking as a builder now, as a developer, which was a long term thing, if we have a lot of youngsters like which are being built on the Sandringham View site you got to try and have some employment. These four units at Dersingham seem to take a long time to start up but they are all full now employing about 24 people and I feel we could do with another four in the future or, and then we'd probably need some sports facilities or something for them. And that's why I've supplied the ground down near Dersingham Station with all the facilities like the drains, sewers, water etc., because I cannot see any other land in Dersingham where they could go. It would be quite handy for people in Dersingham to work down at Dersingham Station. Only small workshop units but I think I'm right in saying about 24 people employed there at the moment.

Will you retire in Dersingham?

I am semi retired at the moment.

Do you expect to be buried in Dersingham?

I certainly intend staying here (*and hopefully you will be buried in the village.*)
Yes.

What does the Millennium mean to you?

Well it -- I think I'm right in saying it's two years off. It seems very funny that people don't seem to think about anything until its upon them. I feel with the millennium that Dersingham will do certainly more than most villages and there is a Millennium Committee. When they can get the Parish Council on board I feel that something can be worked out, that they can do something that can enhance Dersingham.