

DERSINGHAM 2000 HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW 20

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When did you first come to Dersingham?

I've lived in Dersingham all my life.

What are your earliest memories of the village?

My very first recollection of times in Dersingham was playing on Balding's farm. I used to live near what was the Dun Cow; it's now Budgen's, probably at the age of five or six. I had many a good time on that farm. I've moved from one side of the village to the other really. My brother and my mother live about three doors down the road from me. My uncle and aunt also live in the village.

I actually went to Ingoldisthorpe Primary School and St. George's Secondary Modern, which I think, is now the Middle School. I did what were CSE's going back; six or seven CSE's and three or four O Levels. I did enjoy it; it wasn't a large school, just the right size I felt.

I can remember the old railway line that was on Balding's Farm. Right down at the bottom of the farm. I'm not sure when it was dismantled but around when I was age of 12 or 14 I would guess. I can't remember going for rides on it. Thinking back when I was about 10 or 12 at the time it wasn't used very much, it was being run down. But I can certainly remember it being dismantled.

I think if the railway line was there now it would be a really big asset, considering how many people travel to Hunstanton. The congestion on the roads, although there is a by-pass now; I think it would be a great tourist attraction and enable people to get from King's Lynn to Hunstanton without all the traffic jams. Unfortunately I can't remember travelling on it but you can walk parts of it and I'm sure that would have been an excellent trip from King's Lynn.

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

I can't remember many clubs although I did do some bell ringing between the ages of about 12 and 16. I can remember one very memorable occasion ringing the New Year in which entailed putting muffles on the clappers and taking them off and then ringing the New Year in. I forgot who was the vicar at the time I remember I was probably only about 16 or 17 and we certainly had a few

sherries afterwards which was quite good fun. That was when Alec Nurse was alive and we were ringing hand bells as well; I can remember going round Alec's house ringing hand bells.

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

There was one important day. I'm not sure of the year, it must have been 15, 18 years ago when my father had died at the time; I was running the family business and I applied for the Royal Warrant after about five or six years of supplying the Queen with bread. We actually got the Royal Warrant again. I am now going back before I was born my father and uncle had the Royal Warrant and they lost it for some period of time to another baker, Terry Wagg. I know at the time I think my dad was reasonably upset about not supplying the Queen and I just felt that unfortunately he wasn't alive. Had he been alive it would have been a very proud moment for him as well as myself.

What you have to do to get the Royal Warrant? You have to supply the Queen and the rest of the Royal Family over a period of five or six years. Then you apply in writing to the Royal Warrant Holder's Association supplying them with all the invoices and they sit once a year and decide who's eligible for the Royal Warrant. I think it's about January time they then issue whoever's applied and succeeded in the application with the Royal Warrant. You can have it on your letter heads; you can have a big shield. As a matter of fact it's a coat of arms. The coat of arms that my uncle and father had going back to the 1950's which was put into storage after it was taken away from them I actually had the whole thing done up again repainted. The original one had gold leaf on it; it was really nice, a huge great thing. That's actually in my garage at the moment. I'm not in the bakery now. When I sold the business about 15 years ago I had to write back to the Royal Warrant Holders association to say I'm no longer going to be supplying. So they had to cancel the Royal Warrant but we kept this coat of arms.

Are there any other firms that have the Royal Warrant?

Yes. I know Scoles the butcher's got it the year before or the year after we did. Cranes Shed's have got it.

I've got a picture of my great great-grandfather who had the windmill at the top of Fern Hill; he's standing there with his top hat on. You can still see the foundations of the windmill at the top of fern Hill. The windmill's not there any more. My great great-grandfather was in the bakery; he was a miller and a baker as well I believe. There was my great-grand father and my grandfather. I didn't know my grandfather. He died about four years before I was born. He had the bakery built down Manor Road. My uncle and brother took over the bakery after my grandfather died and I took over the business when my dad

died. I worked for dad for three or four years before he died. We actually opened up a bakery on the main road; "The Crusty Cob" it's called "The Crusty Loaf" now in Jubilee Court. That's where I first came back into the bakery I ran that particular shop for about three years then unfortunately he died. So I went back into the business totally and unfortunately at that time the supermarkets were installing in-store bakeries and we found the business was not quite so easy to run. It was a family business; some of the family had passed away or wanted to retire, that's a sad fact. Family businesses do need a family to run them so we decided to sell. We actually sold it to two different bakers. One baker bought the bakery down Manor Road, and the other one bought the one on the main road. They were in competition but unfortunately the people who bought the bakery in Manor Road have closed it down so it's no longer baking bread or supplying bread at all.

When Budgen's came into the village that must have affected the trade as well. I think as far as local businesses are concerned I think the by-pass must have caused a decline in that sort of business because we were very busy going back in the 1980s with holiday traffic buying bread from us on the main road; now they drive straight through. One negative side of having the by-Pass and one negative side of having a supermarket in the village; it actually affects local trades.

My mum was hairdressing from when I was a little, at least from when I was four or five. She had the shop next to Budgen's that's called New Images now. She still does a little bit of hairdressing at Park House.

I started in carpets actually. As I was saying there's one negative side of that by-pass and supermarkets for some local businesses. But the village is growing, certainly in the housing market, with Suiters building 300 houses. I'm looking at things totally different now, thinking that it's actually good for the village. One time you're thinking we don't need this by-pass, this supermarket and now great lets have more of it.

Do you do a lot of your trade in the village?

I would say 90% of our work comes within a seven or eight mile radius; a very confined area really which is good; saves us travelling too much. We can give a lot of personal attention to regular customers. Being in competition with some of the big national companies they can't offer the same service that we do. The way I look at this area there's a lot of retired people in the area. There are a lot of retired people who don't want the hassle of having to empty rooms to have carpets fitted. They want someone to come in and do the whole thing from scratch. The bigger companies they'll sell you the carpet but they're not prepared to do the harder work and fine tuning to get the jobs done properly.

Being a small company, if someone likes to have a particular fitter that works for me, they can have the same person. Older folk don't always want complete strangers coming into their houses.

Would you say this is an advantage of village life? The same thing happens with the local electrician, We have quite a few local businesses. Local plumbers.

I think this a big advantage of living in a village, of living in a small community. Everyone knows everyone else; there's a trust element there. I can remember when dad was alive, when I was about 10 or 11, you never used to lock the barn up and you used to have bread and cakes in it. Villages can get too big. You can destroy that element of it; sort of Catch 22 situation here. On the one hand you want the village to get bigger for the business; on the other hand it's nice to have a small community where everyone knows everyone else.

What was the worst time you remember?

The saddest time of my life was when my father passes away. I was then thrown into the family business. I can't really remember anything apart from a personal situation.

Older people remember the floods and the war, but your generation haven't gone through that.

Thank goodness.

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

Certainly the size of the village. It's certainly grown. The By-pass, Budgens, They are the biggest things.

I tell you what I would love to have seen that wasn't the Dun Cow that was there before Budgens was there but the original Dun Cow that was there before the old Dun Cow was built. Living on the corner, when my mum had the hairdressing business, the Dun Cow was two doors down the road. I can remember drinking there and there were pictures of the old one. That would have been absolutely brilliant if that old place was there. It was certainly a very old-looking building I don't know when it was built. I can't remember if it had a thatched roof on it. There's an awful lot of character to those buildings. There aren't many pubs compared to 30 or 40 years ago. There was the White Horse which is now Jubilee Court, there's the Albert Victor which isn't a pub now but a dance studio, there's The Feather's is still there, The Coach and Horses is too and The Dersingham Club which wasn't there many years ago. The Old Hall - I can remember when Phyllis Jary had it some time ago. That was all rebuilt. There are less pubs now than there were but I think that's general anywhere.

What would you like to see happen in the future?

That's a difficult question for me because on the one hand I'd like to see the village grow and grow for business. On the other hand I'd like to see it stay where it is so that in the future there are places of character which relate to 50 years ago, 100 years ago. So you can have buildings of character left standing.

I can remember going back 15, 20 years ago when Mum and Dad were trying to get planning permission to build on land adjoining Sandringham Estate.

Will you retire in Dersingham?

Yes. What I would love to do is get to 50 or 55 and buy a boat and sail round the world for a couple of years and then retire in Dersingham. I do love this area; it had a lot going for it.

Do you expect to be buried in Dersingham?

I expect I'll be buried in the village; my roots are here and they'll always be here.

What does the Millennium mean to you?

It's going to be just over my 40th birthday. You can look forward into the future and think how much of a change will there be. Do you hang onto the past and think let's keep some of the past with us. It does make you realise how time is passing by.

I'm one of those people who'd rather go back in time to see how things were then than to look forward and wonder how things will be. If I had a choice of going forward in time to see how the future was or going back I would always go back. I love the old traditional; I can sit down and watch an old black and white film.

What would you like to say to someone in Dersingham in a 100 years time?

I would like to be able to say I can remember that building there. I hope that things were still here from the past.