

DERSINGHAM 2000 HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW 33

Date interview conducted: 17th October 1998
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When did you first come to Dersingham?

I was born in the village. I was born in Lynn Road, it is now number 29. I lived there until I married. We moved out of the village for a short spell and then came back to Manor Road. The house we now live in came up for sale We bought it and we've been here since 1968.

Do other members of your family live in Dersingham?

No, my son and daughter are both living away.

What are your earliest memories of the village?

The earliest recollection would be the latter end of the war; the planes going out and coming back. I was born in 1939 so I was four or five. The bombers from the airfields about would be going out over the Wash. I can remember the army exercising and manoeuvres. I can remember convoys of army vehicles parked along Lynn Road and all the houses providing tea and sandwiches for the soldiers. Some were based at the Drill Hall, some at the School. We had soldiers billeted with us. We kept in touch. They were close friends; they kept in touch up to the time they died in the 50s and 60s. They finished up part of the family.

I went to school here; they were happy days. Miss Robertson was the first teacher, then Mrs. Hudson (olly Hudson), Mrs. Boyce (who remarried and became Mrs. Barker. lived in Station Road) and Miss Crowe. My first Headmaster was Mr. Mason Jones; then we had Mr. Carr. They were good teachers It was always a happy atmosphere.

We played football. At times the braver ones would hang and jump from the wall overlooking the Emblems. The trick was to see how far out you could jump from the wall, till one of the teachers twigged what was happening. There was also a gate in the top corner of the playground where you could get down onto the Emblems.

The Emblems was the pasture opposite The Feathers. At that time there was a big pond in there; that was all grassland. Sandringham owned that land. There was a footpath from the gate in the bottom corner through the Emblems

and you'd come out at The Green on Dodds Hill. That was all grassland that Stanton had. Part of The Emblems got took in with the gardens, gradually the use got less and less and it got shut off. Last I knew it was used for grazing for some horses. In the winter time when the pond froze over everyone would be there sliding and skating. It disappoints me that it's got in such an overgrown state. I always felt that was part of the village. It was a free fed pond from the woods up the back.

We came home for dinners; we walked home alone; there was no fear of anything happening.

I worked as an errand boy for one of the local shops for about two years; The Norfolk Stores. It is now a private house on the corner of King's Croft. It was grocery and off licence. The original manager there was Peter Houchen. In my time the manager was Arthur Stewert whose parents lived up Dodds Hill. It belonged to Peatling and Cauldron the wine merchants whose HQ was at Fakenham. They sold out to Green King, the brewers. Half the shop was grocery the other wines and spirits and beers. Shanks of Red Pumps Garage took it on as a laundrette when it closed as a shop. Beryl Baverstock also ran it as a pottery shop. Shanks took it on after her. It was a big store. They delivered to Wolferton, West Newton area once a week. There was a van. I was the errand boy. Sugar would be weighed into the blue bags; butter and lard would be cut and put in grease proof paper - there were no branded goods at all. Everything was loose; rice, pulses; everything was in drums and weighed out into bags. You had big tins of biscuits all loose.

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

I belonged to the cubs for a time and the Boy Scouts.

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

The death of King George VI affected a lot of people; I was at St. George's School at that time. The school had the day off and we were at Sandringham at the side of the road for the funeral. The school were on the corner where the cafeteria is now; we were lined up along there. The funeral service was at Sandringham then the coffin was taken to Wolferton to be put on the train for London. The school were there. St George's was taken over by the army. After the war was it was offered back. Mr. Willis was the first headmaster. A lot of people owe a great deal to him. He was a good man. He commanded respect. He was good with children, they could relate to him. But if you stepped out of line you soon came back in. The slipper was the standard punishment. He had a way of sorting things out.

The floods; they did not affect Dersingham as the water stopped at the railway

line. Dersingham is set back in from the rest of the coast. We didn't suffer too much. It did affect the village for a long while. My father had to cycle to Wolferton in the early hours of the morning to help get the race horses out of the Wolferton Stud. Hew had to cycle in the gales and storm. They took them up to Sandringham

The garage which is now the Q8 garage (*Post Office Road*) was owned by Mr. Sherman. The whole area was wooden buildings and that was completely destroyed by fire one night about 1948. It was a major disaster for the village garage to be burnt down. Mr. Fred Magness lived in one of the two cottages opposite; he worked there. He got the cars out before the garage was destroyed. The biggest concern was whether the fire would burn the chip shop down. The fireman had to keep water on the side wall. One or two cars were taxis.

There were not many car owners in the village. Mr. Bunn lived down Station Road; everyone called him Dinky. He had a taxi. He lived in one of the bungalows on the right as you go down the hill to the station. Houchen's in Bank Road had taxis. People had bicycles, horse and cart. They went on the train. I can remember when the trains stopped. It was used for goods. The farmers; the sugar beet was carted to the station and put on trucks; the coal came in on trucks. All produce, cattle everything was moved by the railway.

When my children were small we had a beach hut at Heacham. If it was a nice day you could put the pram on the train and go there with the children. One occasion, 1958, it started snowing in King's Lynn about 3 o'clock absolute blizzard. The buses stopped but the trains were still going. I was at work. I finished early, I went to the station and they finally managed to get the train out of the station at half past eight. We got to Wolferton and the cutting was blocked. We went back to Wootton. Eventually we got to Dersingham about 10 at night. It was just a single track from the station up to the village. The snow was 3 feet deep; if the trains hadn't been there you wouldn't have got home.

The by-pass; you suffered the traffic get worse. Summer time nothing went anywhere. You walked or cycled. It was a godsend. The back roads got busy as well. We bought our house off Norman Towers the Butcher. The story was when they wanted to go out at weekends Mrs. Towers just marched into the road and put her arms out and stopped everything dead and waved Norman out. It was the holiday traffic. If you grow up with something it is not a problem.

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

The by-pass obviously. The development; not necessarily for the better.

Someone was protesting about some development, they said they were looking after our environment protecting that space against development. It was pointed out to them that where they lived was once green fields. We've always known the development would happen it was just a case of when. It's been accepted; in the main for the good. As a village we have every amenity you could wish for except a bank. The Sandringham new development I can remember that was said as long ago as 1950. That has always been known.

What would you like to see happen in the future?

Abandon progress and stay as you are. I'm concerned that the atmosphere of the village should be kept but still move on. The village feel must stay. There are parts of the village I would call satellites; used as a base, come home at night to sleep and go out on the morning. People don't take part in village life; just a convenience to be here. The atmosphere is important and the village is quickly now losing its characters. I can't see after my generation goes where the village characters are coming from. Some of the locals move away.

Do you expect to be buried in Dersingham?

At the present time no. I won't say why on tape. Cremation and my ashes scattered on the common; so many happy times there. In the school days that was where every one went.

What does the Millennium mean to you?

Another year; I'll be sixty. Everyone makes a new-year resolution. I read in different places what people propose to do and my feeling is in two years a lot of it will be dead and buried. If you are going to do something it's got to be something that will last and be used. A lot schemes are not relevant.

The new village hall; yes we need one. The village is fragmented; you haven't really got anything where you could pull everything from. Position is tricky; it's not just the building, you need two or three times the space for car parking. My feeling is the Station Road allotments. That would cause an uproar. The setting and the lay-out of the Pastures should be left as it is. The recreation field; you would take up too much land. The other place would be the Baron land, the allotments on Sandringham Hill, I don't think is a viable proposition. It would take too long to raise the finance and you would have problems running it. You would have people in the short term get involved. The organisations in Dersingham are a little bit their own kingdom kind. Everybody looks after their own. You need two or three people to take the village by the scruff of the neck and just get on and do it. There are people

who could and would but won't. They have done things in the past and got so fed up with the attitude of every one else they won't do it any more. 400 replies to the questionnaire from 1800 is a very small percentage. I would stop it. If money is available put it into trust to help young people and older people from the education point of view. We know how expensive it is to go to university and anyone of ability is held back by the financial situation.

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

What have you done for the village? I don't think in the future the village will be looked after as it has been in the past. The Parish Council are not village people as such. Things change anyway. We've seen so many changes in the last 50 years that we could not imagine. I can recall seeing people go to Lynn in a horse and cart and I can recall seeing someone landing on the moon.

The photos; my father was the local correspondent for the Lynn News and my mother took it on from him; it's the social history of the village.