Duncan Marston 14 December 2024

Interviewed by Imogen Radford

**Summary**

Born 1948, always lived Icklingham Mill (never more than 50 yards from the river Lark). History of the mill since it was taken over by grandfather, Carlos Marston, in 1910 when it was not in use, and developed over the decades, expanded, modernised, changes in ownership (Tate and Lyle for a period, Heygates since 2017). Had five sons, including Sam born 1913, who worked with his father then took over running the mill in the late 1930s, then his sons Duncan and Nigel took over in 1974/1975, and Duncan’s daughter Claire now takes a key role in managing it. Managed by Marstons continuously since 1910, though now known as Heygates. Details about milling, wartime control, flour production and products, Duncan’s work travelling and advising. Recreation including shooting wildfowl, having boats on the river, including a sailing boat. Changes in the river and its management over time. Eel trap. Grandfather ran the Icklingham Pig Club. Father in the Home Guard. Connections with the church.

Additional material: photos taken to help with the discussion; photos discussed including of the mill and of Carlos and his five sons.

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Key:

**I = Interviewer = Imogen Radford**

R = Respondent = Duncan Marston

[00:00:00]

**I: I'll just start by saying my name's Imogen Radford, and we are here from the Tales from the River project here to do an interview. Tell me your name.**

R: Duncan Marston

**I: Thank you. Would you mind telling me either your date of birth or the year of your birth?**

R: Yes. I was born on 24th of January 1948. I was actually born in Thetford in a maternity home there. But I've lived here all my life in the Mill Housewhere I live now [or did until older and built current home]. I've never moved more than 50 yards from the river.

**I: When did you come here? Just immediately after you were born?**

R: Yeah, but a day after. It was snowing apparently.

**I: Was it...**

R: Snowing...

**I: It was January, of course. Yes.**

R: Mum and dad lived here at that time. And my brother was already born, who died a couple years ago. And we've lived on within the sight of the mill and the river all our lives. I've never done anything else.

**I: And your parents were here and their parents as well?**

R: My mum and dad were here. My parents were here. And before that my grandfather was here. He moved here in 1910. As far as we know, we think it was around April 1910. There is a marker in the church yard. There was a burial on the day that he came, but I've never been able to find the gravestone. But we reckon it was April 1910. He had five children. He had some here. I think he had one here and four were born when he was a miller at Barton Mills. Came up the river on a punt with all these worldly goods and had bought Icklingham mill off of millers downstream, which was Parker Brothers.

**I: That's really interesting. No, carry on.**

R: Do you want me to carry on? Right.

**I: Please do.**

R: That's how it all started. There was a water mill here with a breastshot water wheel, which gave him enough power to make roughly half a sack of flour an hour. Now, of course, a sack of flour was 20 stones in old money, and a half sack is 10 stones so he was capable of making 20 stones of flour an hour if everything was alright. But the millstones when he moved here had been used to reducing flint to pea shingle.

**I: Oh, really?**

R: So they were a bit rough, but he set about them. And his first year he set about them by dressing 'em and sorting them out and also built a boat which he sold, the boat.

**I: What sort of boat?**

R: To make a shilling or two in the first year. He made a little profit in the first year. Not a lot. At some time during that period, in those early days. So, Alfred Munnings came down here to see him because grandfather and our predecessors were at a mill atBungay. And I think he fell out with his brother, ex stepbrother by then, and he walked across Suffolk and got a job at Parker's at Mildenhall. And that's the legend of how he got here. He bought the mill and the little water mill is still extant, the building is still there. He bought that on an IOU from an old dealer that lived at the top house here, that white house up there, for 300 quid, which in actual fact was a lot of money in 1910. But he did it on an IOU. And then he paid it back and he got paid back eventually. When, I don't know, I've never been able to find the IOU, but dad always said it was around somewhere, but haven't found it.

**I: Goodness. So he worked at Parker Brothers?**

R: He worked at Parker Brothers. Yeah.

**I: And they owned the mill at that point?**

R: They owned the mill at that point. They owned this one as well.

**I: This one as well?**

R: Now, the mill before Parker's and before us was a man called Benstead. And in Icklingham Church, there's a window in the chancel in memorial of him. He was a church warden for 40 years. And he had Icklingham mill, it was a one pair mill, but by that I mean one pair of mill stones. You'll get a bit of millers’ language, I'm afraid so you'll...

**I: Yeah, you might have to explain some of it as we go along.**

[00:04:25]

R: *[Laughter]* and he was quite a steady old Christian, obviously and he looked after the church for 40 years. Grandfather was very much a self-made man, very charismatic sort of guy. A lot of people knew him and he formed the Icklingham Pig Club.

**I: What club? Sorry?**

R: Icklingham Pig Club.

**I: Pig Club? Right, right. Yes.**

R: Now, I've got the document. I've got the original book in there somewhere, I might get it out for you before the day is gone. Because what he did with that was this, he had a meal, and he needed some trade for it. The flour trade was not always easy and he needed good quality for bread flour. There was a baker in the village who he supplied, but he also made animal feed. And the animal feed business was done by going around...every little house had a pig or a few chickens or something like that and he formed the Icklingham Pig Club. Now, the Icklingham Pig Club was quite interesting because what he did was he said to somebody that wanted to join, right, I will supply you with a pigsty, a pig, and the first year's meal till the pig was ready for slaughter. So, he did all that free of charge and then took it to Bury market and those proceeds were divided up, I think a little bit unequally. I think it was more for my grandfather than it was for the poor. I could have done that *[unclear 0:05:51]*, but that's beside the point. And that was the basis of how it worked. And he had quite a few people in the village. I think at one stage he had something like 40 pigs being at the height of it. Now, the motto of the Icklingham Pig Club was, many can help one, but one cannot help many *[laughter].* And the most famous story about the pig club is that there was one old boy who granddad knew very well, and he said, "I'll have a pig." So, the granddad went through all of the paraphernalia, putting the pig in position in the pigsty and all the rest of it. And when I went, he didn't have to do anything of course, 'cause grandfather and his mates did it all for him. It was all part of the service. And when the pig died and it had to be slaughtered and the money came back, grandfather said to him, "Do you want another pig then?" And he said, "No, that's too much work." *[laughter]* When it finished, I don't know, I'll get the book out for you in a little while.

**I: Okay. That's fascinating. So, that was your grandfather?**

[00:06:57]

R: That was my grandfather, Carlos Marston*,* yeah.

**I: And that was in the early days?**

R: That'd be 1910. In 1913 he supplied all of those people.

**I: And there's a picture there, look.**

R: I thought that was the ledger, but that's not...that's the real McCoy is.

**I: Picture of the giant pig in 1930 *[laugher]*.**

R: Many can help one.

**I: Yes, many can help one.**

R: My father used to say, that was the beginning of socialism in Icklingham.

**I: *[Laughter]* that's fantastic.**

R: So that was how it started. And he got the mill to run and made it go better and started to make flour. Do you want me to carry on with the history of the mill?

**I: Yeah, do.**

R: Fair enough.

**I: That'd be great. Yeah.**

R: At that time, of course, it was driven by a water wheel. And the reeds used to grow in the river. And that picture over there is the five sons, grandfather and the five sons. If you wanna bring it over.

**I: Yeah.**

R: That was grandfather.

**I: Oh, yes. Yes.**

R: And these are his five sons. In order of age, that was Cecil, Aubrey, who later went and worked at the family flour mill at Bungay. Uncle Tom, who was a great big man, grandfather, Uncle Jack, and dad. As you can see, dad was the youngest of them.

**I: What was your dad's name?**

R: Sam. Yeah, it was Sam. And they used to have to clean the weeds in the river to keep the flow of the water going down. They had a rope with scythe blades on it, fixed a rope and they had to, have a gang, one side and a gang the other. But of course, the problem was that two into five doesn't go equally *[laughter]*. And the boys didn't wanna pull the rope, and the old man was getting a bit old so it was always a row about who was gonna get the two and the three.

**I: Well, one of 'em was bigger than the rest of them, wasn't he *[laughter]?***

R: Tom always got a lot of work, but he could be very difficult. Tom could. And so they had to do it. And I think very often when they started to cut the reed, it got off alright but of course it was waist high in nettles and things and it was always good for a row. Good, good for row *[laughter]*.

**I: How often did that have to be done *[laughter]?***

R: We did have the scythe in the shed over there, but my brother, when he died, a lot of that got dissipated as these things do. But that's the five brothers. That's whereC Marston and Sonscomes from. Oh, now, this was definitely prior to 1940 because it would've been, C Marston and SonsLtd. It wasn't formed as a limited company till November, 1940 when the invasion was imminent and all the rest of it was going on and granddad and father thought the best thing to do was a limited company, you know? And of course we went under control because of the war.

**I: It was essential business isn't it...**

R: Yeah. And flour was controlled. You couldn't do anything really. You couldn't get steel and couldn't get machines, you just had to do the best you could. But I jumped a bit there early. I was trying to think about this last night, by 1930, the water wheel was disused, but he put the roof up of the mill in 1921. I've got a picture of that to show you, but he put the roof up by about six foot.

[00:10:25]

**I: I brought some pictures, actually...**

R: If you've got a picture of a mill building, we can go in and have a look with all of those there.

**[photos of mill]**

**I: Yeah.**

R: Oh, that's it. Yeah.

**I: That one?**

R: That's the one. Ah, lovely. You can see there. 1, 2, 3, 1, 2, 3.

**I: Oh, it's raised up, isn't it? Yes.**

R: He put it on in 1920.

**I: Ah.**

R: And took the water wheel out, and put a turbine in under here.

**I: Okay, so that's 1920, roughly.**

R: I think it was about 1920, 21. That's the best I can give you. I might be a little way out. By 1930, he bought a diesel engine to run the mill itself, the flour mill when he built this one. And to show you on the one in the...they built a roller mill in 1930. I always thought it went up in 1936, but there's some doubt about that. They haven't...

**I: So can you explain then...so, first of all, he got the turbine, but was that still running the usual sort of mill stones?**

R: No.

**I: No?**

R: No. It ran a roller mill.

**I: Alright. So, the roller mill and the turbine came together?**

R: Needed a little bit more power than the water wheel produced. He had a half sack, *[laughter]* 10 stones of that, a half sack baby roller mill with a sifter and so forth and he put the turbine on that. And then they had all sorts of other bits and pieces. They had mixers and things to mix pig food and poultry food. And then he developed into proper flour mill and put a new Ruston & Hornsby engine in. And I think it was about 1932 or three, something like that. Anyhow, there's a letter somewhere in the archives, and we were very bad at this, from him to mother before they were married, saying he'd been to the Suffolk Show and he bought the largest diesel engine on the showground *[laughter]* so he was proud of that. You have to forgive me, I sometimes break down a bit when I get on this.

**I: Oh, yes, yes, you're very proud of him. Yeah.**

R: Yeah. He did all of that. And he then had a Ruston & Hornsby to drive the mill, and from there on it grew. The war came and it grew. They ran all through the war. We have got somewhere, some of the national flour labels where we made to make national flour. As you know, bread never went on rationing during the war.

**I: It was afterwards, was it?**

R: It never went on ration in the war. The socialist government managed that after the war. But we had to add 10% barley right at the end just to eke out the wheat coming in from Canada and so forth.

**I: 'Cause barley could be grown locally?**

R: We use English wheat. Yes, because there wasn't so much, it was much more vegetables and dairy and meat and poultry orientated. Sugar beet and so forth was equally as important. Turnips for feed more than wheat. Wheat was basically Canadian wheat.

**I: Yeah. So in the war…?**

R: In the war, we still kept shipping Canadian wheat over.

**I: You did?**

R: 'Course it got sunk, a lot of it. And we shipped flour out to the Mediterranean. In fact, there was a guy in the village who was in the Navy, and he saw a shipload of our flour, 'cause it was all in marked bags, go down off Gibraltar. Well, the exact details of the battle, I don't know, but that was the legend. That was what father used to tell me. Going back to the mill itself, you can see ther,e there's the water wheel. This is the lucum*.*

**I: Yeah. On the right.**

R: That comes from the lookout, is what that means. It's called...

**I: Oh, does it?**

R: On every flour mill you'll see a lucum.

**I: Oh, I didn't...**

R: Not everyone. And inside there's a hoist. And then you back up a horse and cart here and hoist the bag up the top of the mill and tip the wheat down to go through the stones. The slate roof, the little windows have been bricked up long since. Who that is stands in there I don't know. But that was there.

**I: We don't know the date of that photo?**

R: Well, it must have been prior to 1938, because my father built his house here in 1938. There is the garage of that house. And the cottage was on here. The cottage was adjoined there. The amazing thing is you can't see the cottage on that one.

**I: Perhaps it's earlier than. That must be an earlier photo.**

R: It could have been. A job to tell, I don't know.

**I: Yeah, I think it's so...I think it's a postcard.**

[00:14:58]

R: Yes, it was a postcard.

**I: I can see.**

R: They sold them in the village. Yeah.

**I: Ah, right. Yeah. So postcards...**

R: I think, somewhere there's one or two, the spare postcards in the village.

**I: They're often around about 1910 or round about then 'cause that's when postcards were really popular. But it could have been earlier.**

R: That's right.

**I: Because it could have been just before your grandfather took over...**

R: It could have been. It was just after he got there. Yeah.

**I: Or just before or just after.**

R: Because up there...

**I: There's a photo. Tell me what that...**

R: That one shows this here, doesn't it?

**I: Ah, yes. That's the lucum.**

R: There's the mill. And obviously there was a bit of a building on this side here. It was a bit more of a building up here, which probably might well be that one. But that was it. These apple trees of course. When I was a boy, the apple trees were still there, some of them, because every watermill had apple trees to cut the wood down to make the cogs.

**I: Oh really? I didn't know that.**

R: And they used to form cogs outta the apple trees. So you often found apple trees. They're very hard wood in mill gardens. Now, there's a boat there, isn't there?

**I: Oh, yes. So there is, yes.**

R: God knows what all this is. That could be anything.

**I: Yes.**

R: I guess this was taken in granddad's day in the early days 'cause there's people about.

**I: Do you think that's a family photo that one, or is it?**

R: No, I was thinking he had a number of people working for him. Jobbing people, you know, that used to come down and help him. In the census in 1911, was it, it was grandfather and grandmother, a baby and a horseman living in the cottage. So, quite what that amounted to, I don't know. But the only horseman we ever had, we only ever had a horse, one horse, had a bad foot. We had an old boy called Holmes who used to look after that for granddad and I think he was sort of jobbing... He did do jobbing, things like that, and get a sovereign where he could...so that's where more of a sort of a working photograph than a family photograph.

**I: So, when he started, was it just him or did he have people working in the mill with him? Do you know?**

R: When he started it was himself. I think...I don't know of any other employees at that time other than his sons. By then the eldest son would've been getting towards 20, I think. So, I don't think it was...there were a number of people that worked for him.

**I: Maybe later when he expanded that was, perhaps.**

R: Yeah, and by the ‘30s he did have a lot of people working for him, and the business grew. My father was very much the driving force to put it mildly *[laughter]*. He was a quite handful. He was a very energetic man, very knowledgeable. He was self-educated. Him and Jack did go to the County Grammar school at Bury St. Edmunds. And father used to bike there in the summer but lodge there in the winter. 'Course there must have been a bit of money somewhere for him to do those sort of tricks. And the postmaster at Cavenham, Les Ford, he got an award eventually for longevity with the post office. As a boy he used to bike over from Cavenham and meet dad at Brook Farm at Lackford and they would bike into Bury together in the summer. And they had a secret method. He told me this, Les Ford did. They'd get a piece of chalk off the ground and make a mark on the side of the barn. And that would say whether, one, they goin’ on ahead, or he was gonna wait for him and maybe hid in the bushes or something like that, as boys were. But they put a mark so they knew if he'd gone ahead, the other one bike like hell to catch him up, and that was how they communicated with no telephones were there.

**I: No. Did they play tricks? Like pretend they'd gone on and... ?**

R: I suspect so. I was think all of that took place. I was think all of that took place. There was some mischievous, always something happening.

**I: What year was your father born? What year was your father born?**

[00:19:30]

R: 1913.

**I: 1913. So he was only a young boy when he first came here.**

R: And of course they started work at 16 years old and 15 years old. In the school records up here, Tom, this one had to be kept back from school and it says to look after the baby so that've been dad. Dad was only 16 when his mother died, we’re all buried in the churchyard up here. That's it. It was a hard life. I was talking to my eldest cousin who was towards 90 before she died, not so long ago and she said, you know, Dunc, they must have had a little bit of money because they always had something different, they had a car before anyone else. Granddad bought a little Ford lorry and they did work in the mill and so they weren't destined to anything like that. A couple of books have been written on the mill.

**I: Have they?**

R: The Miller's Daughter. Now, who wrote that? There's people at Bungay who knew a lot about the Marston family. And it said in there that the cottage was very damp and musty, which I suspect it was. Dad always said it was hard going and when his mother died, he was left on…, he was only a young lad and so I think it was a lady in the village used to come and do for 'em, as they say. So there you go. Then of course, he met mother who worked at Icklingham Hall – bulldozed down and then built council bungalows. Mother and him built this house here, Mill House, where my brother used to live, and my sister-in-law still lives in. It was the first new house to go up in Icklingham for 300 years, I think. Brand new. It was the first house ever to have a bathroom. And the village used to come down on the Sunday to have a look at the bathroom. They did. Dad would say, "Come down, have a look at it." 'Cause it was tiled. It was about as big as a big shoe box, *[laughter]*, but it was tiled.

**I: What year was that?**

R: I think they built that in 1936 and got married in 1937/38.

**I: That was quite early, isn't it?**

R: She came up from the west country and her sister had already got the job here at Icklingham Hall Service. And so she got a younger sister to come up with her. But mother's abiding memory is when the Mildenhall Air Race was on from Mildenhall to Australia, was the butler, borrowed mum's bike, apparently, and he biked off down the street at five o'clock in the morning because it was an early start for him, summer's day. And mother said, "I can see him going down there now on my bike, lady's bike and bit wobbly." And he went to see it. What else is there to tell you? Must be a few other things.

[00:22:50]

**I: So, the expansion. It was originally water power and when...just what you've heard about those really early days. I understand they did some coal trading. Do you know anything about that?**

R: Ah, yes. Oh, I forgot. You remember better than I do. We had a coal round. Yeah, we had a coal round. Every village could have food for their chickens, their pigs, or the baker could have some flour, but they'd also delivered a ton of coal at the same time. And we had a ton of coal, a coal yard in the mill and we used to collect the coal from Mildenhall. Now, the trick was, there's always a trick, isn't there? When they went down to collect the coal from the railway trucks at Mildenhall, the big door on the side had to be opened. When they opened the big door on the side, the coal fell on the ground. Now, of course, people like Ridleys and the big coal merchants, their men didn't bother to pick that up, they left it there. But every time this lot went, they had to clear all these odd bits of heaps of coal up, shovel all onto the lorry before they bought anything into the truck *[laughter]*. That was all free. And the granddad would apparently say, "Make sure you pick up a..." I think they used to call it the tailboard fall or something like that. And he said, "Make sure you pick it up, bring that home." Another little story away from that. But in 1948, we bought a pigsty for the farm, the land over behind the mill from the Oxford Showground. So, dad sent a lorry and two men down to collect it. It was precast concrete, quite modern for its day. So, he said to the driver, "Now you pick everything there is on that show stand. Bring everything home."

Well, not only did they put the big slab, they put the paving slabs on, they'd laid out to make it look nice. They brought some tent poles, and all sorts of things out. Had real big load, just not just a pigsty, they cleared everything up, everything he laid hands on came off home. But when it came home, mother wanted a new washing line so the tent poles came in for the washing line and the concrete slab, well, dad laid them to make a nice path forward to walk on so she didn't get mud on her boots *[laughter]*. And that was there right up until I helped my brother lay a new concrete path 'cause they were getting a bit uneven. All of those tricks.

**I: Sounds like they looked after the pennies, didn't they?**

R: That was a different life, wasn't it? A different world. Different world.

**I: So the coal came from Mildenhall, but it didn't come on the river. It came by lorry did it?**

R: It never came up by river. There was coal shipped up in the late 1800s, I think, up to the maltings at Bury. We never had any. Having said that, though, the last time the river was dredged, they brought a bucket or two of coal out and dad told me that a coal barge, it wasn't a barge that we would understand, a big barge, it was basically a narrow boat, but just a barge bit of a narrow boat, it's a towboat along with a horse, isn't it? And they pulled some, and he always said to me, that one sunk over the other side and certainly as I was a boy, I can remember seeing some rotten rafters of this old barge that lay there.

**I: And so where was that? Just out... ?**

R: Opposite the mill.

**I: There's the gates, isn't there? There's the remainder of the gates.**

R: The gates, yeah. That's the lock. Yeah.

**I: And the lock. And then the old gates as well. Bits of old gates. When we came, we were busy looking at all the old posts...**

R: That's the end of the sluice at the front. And at the other end, it was two wooden lock gates. There's still bits of it left. Not a lot now, but it's still...and that was the lock. Now, dad always called that the pen. Now, I don't know whether it's called the lock in canal terms, but he always called it the pen because it penned the barge as the water came up.

**I: Right. Right. Yes. And that's where the barge sunk, or a bit further down the sluice?**

R: The barge sunk upstream of the sluice. Or allegedly did.

**I: Allegedly. Yeah. So, do you know when they stopped bringing it up? By barge, I mean...**

R: Oh yes. I don't think anything came up by barge.

**I: Not in your grandfather's time?**

R: Not in your grandfather's time. No.

**I: So, it would've stopped before that.**

R: It might have been at the very beginning. The history of the navigation is well documented.

**I: Yes, that's true. But I don't know if people know exactly when, and it might be that your grandfather had said something about it.**

R: I don't know. I do know that dad always said that they brought barley up to the maltings at the Lion Pub 'cause they had their own malting there to brew their own beer. Right. But as far as the mill was concerned, in our day we never had anything delivered or transported by water.

**I: But they did come past going to the Red Lion?**

R: Yeah.

**I: When was that roughly? When did you...**

R: They brought barley there up at the turn of the century. That was what father used to tell me which I think would be about right because the malting bit was still there, right until recently they brewed their own beer there.

**I: When did the maltings go? Do you know?**

[00:28:18]

R: No, I dunno. Elveden Estate, the estate would probably know because they've got land either side of the river.

**I: Oh, yes, yes. Okay. Yeah. That's really...so when your grandfather took over, was it a going concern or did he..?**

R: I don't think any trade came with it at all. I think he just bought it and started from there. He didn't have any trade with it what we would today called trade. I think he built that up himself. That was why in the first year he caught eels, built a boat, and...

**I: Tell me more about both the boat and the eels. So, the boat first, tell me about the boat.**

R: Well, all I know about the boat is – he was a clever old stick, he'd spent some time in his early days on trawlers. And he was very handy with his hands, he could carpenter and so forth and he built this boat and flogged it. How much for and to whom I do not know.

**I: What sort of boat?**

R: A rowing boat. A small rowing boat. Yeah. Not a super cruiser there, *[laughter]* a small rowing boat. A small rowing boat and he flogged that. I think he also wove some baskets, but I'm not too sure about that, I don't think we ought to go down that road.

**I: Not at all.**

R: That's just purely something in my mind about it. But I know he built a boat.

**I: What about the eels?**

R: The eels are much more interesting. By the water wheel, this was the pond in front of the mill. But eel trap used to be here, and it was basically a weir, and at the end of the weir was a wire netting cage.

**I: About 18 inches wide?**

R: And when the eels were running, they used to be swimming so they got into the current and went in, had a little weir into the cage. Then those eels were collected, put in a bran bag, which is a hessian sack 'cause they could sent to London by train from Mildenhall Station. And I think they went to Nine Elms. Not sure, Nine Elms was always talked about. And then they were bought at Nine Elms by Billingsgate fish market people who were there too. And the eels, then the money somehow got back to us. I don't know how, but it did.

**I: They were alive when they were being transported?**

R: I think they were. Yeah. I think they were.

**I: How did they get to Mildenhall?**

R: We would've taken them then either I presume. Whether we didn't have a car at that stage, all we had was a small Ford lorry. But of course the railway would collect stuff and deliver stuff so they may well have sent an early...

**I: They sent someone to collect from the railway possibly.**

R: Yeah. The railway may have collected 'em next to the mill.

**I: Oh, okay.**

R: Possibly, don't know.

**I: Possibly. We don't know for sure. Yeah. What date was this roughly? Or what dates did this happen?**

R: Well, the date of the eel trade, I would've thought would've been between 1910 and 1920. Would've thought that'd be that sort of period. Of course there was a trade for him in the East End and there was a war going on. All the rest of it. So, that would be the best I could guess on that.

**I: And they would've been quite lucrative I presume... ?**

R: Well, they were. I dunno how much a pound or whatever it was they sold for. I've got no record of any eel transactions. In fact, very remiss of me. I've never really studied the ledgers and the ones we have got. A lot of the early stuff, of course, wasn't recorded quite as it was by the time the ‘30s and the ‘40s came. We weren't bad bookkeepers, but there wasn't too much written down. Grandfather kept his money in a leather pouch called a Long Melford. It was called a Long Melford. He paid the men with that. On a Saturday morning, he would sit in the cottage and each one of 'em would come in for their pay. AndLeslie Cook, who worked for me for many, many years, he started here as a boy and almost worked all his life with us. And he said the first day he collected his money, he went up to grandfather, Mr Marston in those days, and the old man looked at me and said, "You are Tom Cook’s boy, aren't you?" So he said, "Yes." He says, "You better have another half crown." Then he said, it was the only time he ever gave me anything *[laughter]*. But of course that was because he just started work and was to encourage him. That was how you could do things in those days. You couldn't do...in latter days of my time, I've been able to give a bonus, a hundred quid bonus. But you can't do that now. It doesn't happen. It's too much talk about it. So, there you go. That was how it was. And he had his Long Melford and he'd put the money in, he'd take the money out and if he saw it getting lower, I dunno what he'd do *[laughter]*.

**I: He knew where he was with it.**

R: They had ways and means, didn't they? They had ways and means.

**I: I suppose the eel business, it must have been worth enough to do it.**

R: Oh well, it was. Yes.

[00:34:05]

**I: So, did they eat them themselves? Did they eat the eels themselves?**

R: Yes. Sure. I had eels. Mother used to cook us eels. They were still alive when they went in the pan. Uncle Jack, this one, used to have to come and skin ‘em for mum. He was good at it. He always had a sharp knife 'cause he was a bit sort of a gamekeepers type as well. You'd see he's got a gamekeeper's bag on there, look. He was always shooting, hunting and fishing. He was good at that sort of thing and mother used to cook the eels in a big pan. They were still wiggling about, used to kind of look at it. Very rich meat, and she used to do it with parsley sauce so I had to get some parsley for parsley sauce. Always had a parsley sauce. And we never had jellied eels, it was always fresh.

**I: So, it was basically boiled with the parley sauce?**

R: Yeah, boiled. Yeah, that's...

**I: You liked that?**

R: I know how mother used to do. And I presume they were boiled. She had a big pan of eels. And it was called a bate of eels.

**I: A base?**

R: A bate. B-A-T-E.

**I: B-A-T-E of eels. Okay. Alright. Interesting.**

R: Even up to recent years I can hear father or Uncle Jack or somebody saying something wasn't very well. "You wanna have a bate of eels?" They'll put you right. Because it was all protein.

**I: Of course. Yes.**

R: And it was a bate of eels, it wasn't the feed of eels or a portion of eels. It was a bate of eels. Now it might have just been local here, it might have been the slang used with us, but...

**I: Maybe. No, it's interesting. And it's interesting how those names carry on, don't they?**

R: Well, they do. Yeah.

**I: So, yes. Yeah. So that was what? That was back towards the '20s and then...**

R: That was, yeah.

**I: Yeah. That was just one of the many things they did really...**

R: Well then, Leslie Cook, he started work I think in 1939, 'cause he went into the navy in 42, something like that. And his first job was to get eels outta the eel trap for grandfather. He had to take a bran bag 'cause a bran bag, was a very open woven hessian sack. And he had to get it. And so that enabled him to get hold of the eel. And that would stop them slipping outta his hand.

**I: Oh, so he'd use the bag almost like a glove?**

R: Used bag...exactly.

**I: Yeah. Oh, I see. And you had to be a bit careful with eels, didn't you? 'Cause they'd bite.**

R: Yeah, they could bite. Yeah. But no one thought of this. People were suffering then, weren't they? You know, they probably hit the bloody thing *[laughter].* So yes, all those things happened.

**I: Right. And so, it was a net rather. It wasn't one of these willow trap type things. It was a net that they...**

R: It was wire netting.

**I: Wire netting. Oh, okay.**

R: Ours was.

**I: Yours was?**

R: But of course, in the early days they may well had a woven net or a basket even so the water could go through and leave the eel.

**I: So, anything that let the water go through but not the eels?**

R: Because the water was continuously going over. It kept the eels fresh.

**I: Right? Yes, yes, yes.**

R: We marked the site of it. We buried it, but we marked the site of it around there, where the sluice was 'cause it was a little sluice to open and let the water over. And we put the sluice back in the concrete so we know where it was.

**I: Oh, did you?**

R: So, when I take customers around, I spin a yarn *[laughter].*

**I: You probably showed it to us last time when I came. And yeah, I probably have a photo.**

R: But it's a bit noisy around there these days and you can't always pick it up, you know.

**I: Right. So, we got up to about the wartime, didn't we?**

[00:37:25]

R: Wartime, Yeah.

**I: So, this is still your grandfather.**

R: Grandfather was still alive by 1940. 1940 we had a fire. It was the last day of 1940. Leslie Cook again was here and grandfather was here and dad was captain of the Home Guard. And the Home Guard were turned out. And the fire took place just about where we are sat now. There was a shed here with a Foden lorry in it. Pride of the fleet. And it was driven by this brother, Cecil. And from what dad told me, the battery was being charged and it shorted during the night and set light to it. Mother looked out of the house over there and said, "Sam, there's a fire." They all came running out and getting buckets of what they could get. Mildenhall Fire Brigade were alerted. We had the telephone here by then. That's an interesting point. We weren't on the telephone up until, I think about 1937, something like that. Dad used to have to bike to Lackford call box to make a phone call. He used to say, "You didn't forget anything, boy *[laughter].* You never went back made another call. You didn't forget anything, you have to bike back." But mother had to run to get Uncle Jack, that’s this one, to help him, who lived down the far end of the village. She ran up through the, where my house is now, it's full of nettles, in a night dress, ran down the street and got Jack to come help.

Mildenhall Fire Brigade, got to Barton Mills, what is now Fiveways Roundabout and had a puncture. So that stopped things a little bit. The fire raged and burnt the Foden out. Awful. Burnt the Foden out. And it had 12 tons of wholemeal on it. And Leslie Cook said, "I thought to myself, that's my job gone for the next year." 'Course it wasn't, it didn't happen like that. But they lost the lorry and there is a picture, but I can't find the *[unclear 00:39:37]*. There was a picture of it taken after the chassis was all burned out and the rubber off the tyres and the cab had gone and so forth. But because it was wartime, Newport’s, the sand and ballast people, bought the remainder, took it to their workshops and rebuilt it because dad couldn't go on and get a new lorry easily. He got one in the end. But it was Newport and he was friendly with Alan Newport. So he give him the bits and they'd put it together, you see. And they had two or three Fodens. And so they were able to get some spare parts from somewhere, on the hookey I expect. Who knows. Who will ever know. We will never know.

**I: It was war time, wasn't it?**

R: We will never know.

**I: And it was...so you couldn't just get another lorry 'cause it would be used by...**

R: Yeah, well you had to apply to the Ministry and it was a long process. It wasn't easily done. But anyhow, that was 1940 and the Home Guard was formed. Father was captain of the Home Guard. Everybody had a job. This one was Quartermaster. This one was in the Home Guard. That one wasn't. He was working at Bungay at that time, although he came back later to help us. Jack, I forget what he did. Mostly sort of skive and fiddle, I think. He was a bit... *[laughter]*. And so the Home Guard was formed. The postman, Busty Harral, was dad's sergeant. He was the first World War veteran. They had a few bits and pieces. They had a parachute drop in one night and they had a plane crash up the Cavenham road.

And there's a guy in the village, Wiseman, who's done a lot of research on that. And he's put photographs and he knows every bit of detail more so than me. And in 1940 at the height of the invasion scare, if the code word Cromwell came round, that means the invasion had started. Well, somewhere along the line, the rumour came round that Cromwell had been called. Cecil came down here 'cause he lived down the street. He had 13 children. He came down and said to the dear old dad, "Sam the invasion’s started, Cromwell has just been called." And dad says, "I don't think so, Cecil." Dad would've known 'cause he was in contact with Bury headquarters and the church bell would've been rung. But that didn't happen. But Cecil insisted that there had been rung. And to stop the Germans, he would throw the pin off the engine there. To start and stop the engine, you put a pin in to make the fuel pump work and to stop it, just pull the pin out. Cecil wanted to go one step further and throw the pin in the river. *[laughter]*

I think it was a bit of a bit of an altercation with him and dad. "Not, no, we haven't got...that's not gonna stop the Germans." But there you go. Legend and fun and games. But certainly they had all that. And then the war went on. And of course we came under control as I said earlier. Rationing for animal feed. You couldn't just go and buy wheat for chickens or anything. You had to have a ration for that. And there was rations for things like maize, fishmeal, all the ingredients of animal feed which dad used to have to administer from here. And then they were checked out by the local area. Our flour zone was Thetford. So any flour we made was taken to Thetford. There were huge troop concentrations there right up until D-Day. And of course the haulage was...they'd pick the mills nearest the haulage, you see? You mightn’t have carted it to Liverpool like we do now.

**I: Yeah. Very different then wasn't it?**

R: We were under control. And that was our zone. And everything was zoned. Even the empty flour bags. 'Cause it was jute, it was no bulk. It was all in jute flour bags. They were zoned and used to have to go to a central sort of government department for flour sacks and so on and so forth. And one interesting point, 'cause I'm a Churchill fan as well. Churchill got involved in the extraction rate for flour. Now in those days, the standard extraction rate was somewhere between 72 and 73% flour out of the wheat.

**I: Right. That's an extraction rate.**

R: He sent an Action This Day memo, can we increase the extraction rate to 75%?" In actual fact, it went to 80% in the end. So the flour was quite dark.

**I: Oh. So, explain what it means a bit more for me.**

R: The extraction rate. In wheat, the flour is inside the wheat. Surrounded by the skin of the wheat. The bran. That's the simple term for it. And the art of the miller was to get as much flour out of the wheat as you could. Now, the extraction rate is how much white flour you take out. The standard of the flour is determined by its whiteness or how much bran is in the flour. So the brighter the flour, the lower the extraction rate, or the better the miller, whichever way you like to look at that. But Churchill somehow got information about this extraction rate. And said, "We really must make sure that we get the maximum extraction out of the wheat because we got...he was frightened about the North Atlantic convoys. The only bit that ever worried him, he said. And he got involved in the extraction rate, which always amuses me a little bit.

**I: Yes, that's right. He took a real interest in every detail. Yeah.**

R: Oh yeah. Yeah. Didn't miss a trick.

**I: So that meant that you were wasting less bran, basically. Well, not wasting it.**

R: Producing less bran but of course that went for animal feed.

**I: So, it was never wasted.**

R: It was never wasted. And of course it was just as vital because people ate a lot more meat and poultry then than they do now. And so animal feed was equally as short as flour.

[00:45:58]

**I: Right, right. But the flour itself got darker because of this?**

R: It got darker, yes. The National Loaf was darker. But it was still good bread. And that was at the time because there was obviously a shortage of milk, a lot of things and foods. Millers started to add calcium carbonate or for the Latin term is creta praeparata to the flour in very small quantities to increase the calcium level. And we kept the calcium level in the bread up. And also some other vitamins got added as well to keep the health of the children and all the rest of it going. 'Cause they couldn't always get the best balanced meal.

**I: So previously you'd have put milk in with it as well, or you mean it's just 'cause people couldn't get milk so they needed calcium?**

R: No, we never did start to put calcium in until the war. And we are still doing it to this day. Still doing it to this day. There's been a lot of talk about it. And, but we still do it because if you look at ingredients list on a packet of biscuits or of flour based foods, you'll see wheat flour in addition, calcium, iron. There's a couple more. I can't remember what they're, but they're there anyhow. And you'll see as part of the labelling, because it's been added to the biscuit. And then the war came and we just kept running. It could make as much as you possibly could. Of course there were other considerations. You'd have to get diesel for the diesel engines to run. That had to be. You couldn't just have a load of diesel come, you had to show that you actually got the diesel for the engines for the mill.

**I: Was that all controlled as well?**

R: All controlled, all controlled by various departments. I think the Ministry of Agriculture did most of it for us. I don't know, but I've never even studied it. But that was what we called under control.

**I: And that was when your father was in charge?**

R: My father was in charge of it.

**I: Father was in charge then? Yeah.**

R: He really took over the business from late '30s. He was the driving force from late '30s right up until the '70s.

**I: Well, he was quite young, wasn't he?**

R: Yeah.

**I: Yeah, he was quite young when...so 1913 he was born, wasn't he?**

R: And my brother and I took over in the '70s, you know.

**I: Right. Which brother? What's your brother's name?**

R: Nigel.

**I: Yeah.**

R: Yeah. So he died about three years ago. And...

**I: Is he the man who lived next door?**

R: In the Mill House? Yeah, that's right.

**I: And when did your father die?**

R: Father died 1981. He wasn't that old. 68.

**I: So, he was still around, but he'd stopped working and...**

R: Oh yeah, he carried on right to the bitter end. He did. He was always there.

**I: He was always there.**

R: Wonderful miller actually. I miss him terribly.

**I: Yeah. He knew all...**

R: He knew what he was on about. Talk to him, and he'd give an answer just like that. He was good on milling. He was good on building. He's a good carpenter. Self-taught. He could quote bloody Shakespeare and Churchill and God knows what. That's how it was. And as regards to a miller, he was good. I travelled all over the world looking at mills and so forth. But I've never found anyone quite as rounded as him. There wasn't a thing he couldn't do. He understood structural steel work.

**I: Did he?**

R: Yeah. You know, and he understood foundations. He understood the law, he understood rights of way, he understood options, he understood all sorts of things like that.

**I: And a lot of that was self-taught then?**

R: Yeah. Was self-taught.

**I: Almost all of it. Yeah.**

R: Yeah. And mother said when he was a young man, he used to read a passage of the Bible before he went to sleep. And he quoted the Bible as well. *[laughter].*

**I: He knew the Bible too?**

R: But then he'd also swear and drink like everybody else. *[laughter].*

[00:50:03]

**I: So, was he and your family were connected with the church, and churchwarden...?**

R: Yeah. Dad was churchwarden for I think 30 years, something like that. He was involved in, I don't really know the detail of it, but there was a new roof put on the church. We got two churches in Icklingham. And there was a new roof put on the church which is now disused, a thatched roof. And I always got this feeling that dad was behind that somewhere. I think he wrote a cheque out. He would do that sort of thing. Yes, he was involved with the church. He gave a small graveyard, which is in my land. He gave me the land to build a house on when I was older, and then couple of years later he gave a bit of my land to the church for a graveyard. But you didn't argue with him. That's what he was gonna do. And that was it. You know.

**I: He was quite a forceful person...**

R: And if you look at the corner of the wall up here and you go away, you'll see there's a buttress up against the wall. It was starting to fall down so he got the local brickie man or builder to build this buttress, concrete buttress. And I think the bishop said to him, he came to the consecration of some sort or another. He said, "Did you get a faculty for that, Sam?" He said, "No, the good Lord called me to do that." Of course, he didn't charge anything. You see, he didn't charge anything. He wouldn't charge anything. He was on the parish council. He was on the...not so much the parish council. He was on Mildenhall District and the Water Board. But as he used to say, it’s mostly for my own end. He was a council member for Cavenham, not Icklingham, for Cavenham. Yeah.

So the war came, then he built another mill here, another eight sack plant, which is a ton an hour, a long haul from five stones. Originally. A ton an hour. And increased up to 16 sacks an hour. He built that. He bought another mill from Coleman's at Elmswell, took the machinery out and put it in the building here. And then he bought another little mill second-hand from Haverhill and put it in another building here.

So, he ended up with three mills. And all the while he was one of the first millers to start to use pneumatic conveying within the mill, where we suck it like a big hoover. We used to have belts and buckets, conveyors. But he was one of the first to do that. And in 1940, no, 1950...let me get this right. 1951, he flew to Germany, which was quite unusual in those days. They were still rebuilding Germany. And he bought a German wheat cleaning plant. And he went over with the agents who were Turners of Ipswich. He went over with Horace Root, the sales manager. Quite something for anyone to fly to buy us something, you know. And he got there. The Germans started at 6 o'clock in the morning in the drawing office. And dad had to be there as well. And he's told them what he wanted and gave them, as I mentioned, in the building. And that morning they drew the plant up and what we call laid out, where you put the machines in the right position to work, drew a layout and a flow, which is all some bits and pieces, had lunch. And he always said, lovely cream cakes. Cream cakes and coffee. And then in the afternoon they did a negotiation. And by that evening he bought the plant. And that was delivered to Bury Railway station. And of course they came in German trucks, same gauge, but German trucks. And the station master at Bury phoned the old man up and said, "We can't lift or do anything else with it. We can't cope with these trucks. What do we do?" So dad had to send lorries and men out and get the machinery unloaded here.

And he had a friend called Tom Stewart, who was a contractor in Bury, who sent his big crane out. The only crane in the district. Dad and Tom were quite friendly. And they unloaded it onto our lorries and got home. And that ran and ran, that as a beautiful... The Germans were very good engineers, even after the war when it all been bombed to nothing. And dad said the women were still sweeping the streets with brooms to clear the rubble up and the dust and the concrete dust in Frankfurt. It was Frankfurt actually, which had been hit heavily bad in the war. And he bought quite a number of machines from that company, which was called Hartmann, at Frankfurt. They also devised a system whereby they could unload herrings from a ship. I'll just tell you this. And to do it, they sucked them out and what they did, they sharpened the edge of the tube and pushed the tube into the herrings, into the hold of the trawler and suck them out. And if the herring got in the way, sliced himself on the sharp edge, but they got him out of the thing. 'Cause that was for fish meal trade wasn't for human to substitute. In those days, fish meal were a major protein source for animal feed. So we always had fish meal around. But course it's gone now 'cause the stocks have been depleted so much.

[00:54:52]

**I: So, it didn't matter that they got cut, did it? But the system was very efficient. That was the same factory made those as made the equipment for the mill?**

R: That's it. They'd make anything for you. The Germans did. They'd make anything for you.

**I: So, when you say bought a mill, you mean another piece of, well...**

R: I mean a selection of equipment. Roller mills, plant sifters, conveyors and all the bits that go to make flour. It was quite a complex affair. I'll take you round. I haven't got time this morning...

**I: No, no, that's fine. That's fine. So basically, it's like adding another big fitting capacity?**

R: Another grinding line, if you like a production line.

**I: I understand. Yeah. In old terms it would've been wheels.**

R: That's right. Yeah.

**I: Not wheels, millstones. Sorry.**

R: That's it. Yeah. Put another pair of millstones in it.

**I: Like millstone, but that's the modern equivalent. Yeah. So how many did it end up within your father's mills?**

R: Well, we ended up with three, but we remodelled them continuously. Every year, Dad always said we'd do it Easter, boy. So there's always a big job going on at Easter, which meant getting a machine outta the mill, into the mill, wiring it up, unloading it with a crane, finding room and stuff. And every Easter we had something on. He used to say, you always want a big job on Easter, boy, because Easter the weather was right. It wasn't raining, it wasn't too hot. And you got a little bit of a lull in trade up, Christmas had gone. And the pickup after Christmas had been and gone. And so Easter was getting ready for the summer. And so you could always do work at that time. That was his thinking, which was fair enough. We still do it today.

**I: Okay. So, we've got to your father, he did all this expansion.**

R: Yeah, that's it.

**I: After the war? '50s?**

R: In through the '50s, we expanded tremendously right up to the '60s. There were some good years in there. When we came out of control, there was some good years. Of course control was profitable because you had a fixed profit figure.

**I: Right. Right. So that was quite good for the mill at that period.**

R: Didn't do any harm at all.

**I: When did it finish?**

R: Control finished in 1953 to my certain knowledge. Through the '60s of course, we then moved on to bulk handling. We carted the flour in tankers rather than bags. So we didn't need a number of people to operate the packing lines and shift packers, all the rest of it. Although even today we still do some in bags. The small bakers still have in bags. We never did...yes we did, we did for a little while do small packs of self-raising flour. He built the self-raising plant. It wasn't a huge plant, just enough for local trade, you know.

**I: And that just adds an ingredient.**

R: Just add and try a bit of everything really. That's what happened. Try a bit of everything.

**I: Yeah. He sounds like he was very inventive in all ways. Yes. Yes. And then you took over...**

R: I took over...I left school in 1964. My brother was six years older, so he'd already been at work. We were both educated at Culford school. I took over with Nigel around about 74, 75. Dad was always in the background. And we were young and keen, and I was young and keen. I went away to London to train to be a miller in 1968. And then I spent my entire life here building and pulling things about. I've subsequently been to flour mills, New Zealand, Europe. Never been to the States. One of things I regret. Never been to the States. Can't go in there. 'Cause...

[00:59:41]

**I: You talked about Barton Mills and I...**

R: Barton Mills. Yes. Parker Brothers at Mildenhall, yeah. Grandfather worked for them. He lived in a mill cottage. And the legend has it, he came here after Luther Parker, who was the main Parker family man, said to him, will you run the mill and stoke the boiler for the steam engine? Had a steam engine driving it, and also take the flour off, which means he had to fill the bags that the mill made on a Saturday afternoon. And the old man said, "Yeah, I will do. Give us half a crown." He had five little children, or four little children, give us half a crown. And he wouldn't do it. He wouldn't give him half a crown extra for doing the whole lot. And so the old man said, "Well bugger you!" And with that, he came, he knew this was up for sale, and Parkers, they would never admit it, but they were in a bit low water. And so he managed to get some money together to buy this. This was up for sale. He bought it and moved up here. And legend has it, whenever there was a board meeting with the Parker family years going down the line, we'd have been all right if we never, the old man had never sold it to Marston. So, I got on alright with the Parkers. We was always there. We didn't actually go to Christmas lunch with them. *[laughter]*

**I: But that was at, he worked at Barton Mills Mill, or...?**

R: Well, there was two or three, you, see?

**I: Yeah. And then there's the Mildenhall one.**

R: The Mildenhall one, which was...what do they call that? Do they call that Lark Mills? I think they do.

I: Yeah, exactly.

R: And there was one on the other side of the bridge. Bridge Mill. And then there was a mill at Barton Mills. But I think grandfather lived in a cottage at Barton Mills.

**I: Right, right.**

R: I think, I'm not sure. He might have lived in the cottage at the Gasworks basin by the Bridge Mill. I don't know. Lost in the midst of time.

**I: Okay. And so, was it the Barton Mills he ran?**

R: No, I think he worked, I think he worked at Mildenhall.

**I: Mildenhall? Okay. Yeah. Yeah. It's confusing. 'Cause Barton Mills, where the Gasworks is, is Barton Mills, isn't It?**

R: Yes, that's right.

**I: So, it gets a bit confusing to me.**

R: I'm not too sure of that.

**I: No. Sure, sure.**

R: I'm not too sure of that.

**I: So, he was definitely connected and he was working.**

R: I know Uncle Tom was born in Barton Mills.

**I: Right, yeah. Yes, yes.**

R: But no, I've never studied it. I don't really know. So I can't pontificate on that.

**I: Tell me a bit more about Jack and his...what did he get up to?**

R: Jack, he was good salesman. A very good dealer. He was also a farmer. He was interested in farming. So when we bought the land, the other side of, he farmed that. And then in 1960, all five brothers retired, except dad. He bought their shares out. And Jack went and farmed at Timworth, at Timworth Hall, rented a big farm off Joe Turner at Ampton, and farmed there until he died.

**I: And when you said he was a bit of a gamekeeper already?**

R: Yes, he loved shooting and fishing.

**I: Shooting and fishing. Was that sort of connected with his farming or he just did it?**

[01:02:43]

R: Well, it was connected with the mill, you see. It was always, he was gonna shoot a duck on a cold January evening for lunch the next day, or pheasant or whatever. Rabbits and hares. He was always interested in that sort of thing.

**I: So, when did you buy the land opposite?**

R: 1948.

**I: And you kept it until the...?**

R: We still got it.

**I: Still got it. You still got it. Some of it's...so you still own it, but it's a nature reserve?**

R: The nature reserve. No, we don't have the nature reserve.

**I: Alright. That's where I was wrong.**

R: Basically, when you look at it is, there's two bits. There’s the Nature Reserve, the Cavenham Nature Reserve. That you know is there. And our piece is here. And we've sold some of that off of gravel. So it makes Marston's Gravel Pit at Cavenham. You'll see the sign as you go on.

**I: I see. Yes, yes. So, Jack and others of you, in terms of the river, so he would've shooting duck, whatever...**

R: He would shoot duck. And we used to stand alongside the bank and shoot duck. And there was...I don't know, you know this, but there were two children drowned in the river.

**I: No, no.**

R: Well, there was one...for many years, by the south door of the church, there was a small headstone for a little boy that was four years old. At least that's what I've always led to believe, I can't see this headstone there now. And I happened to be talking to my cousin who lives at Eriswell, she's the oldest one because she's getting towards, must be getting towards 90 now, I would think. And she said, well, there was another child drowned in the river, sort of in the '30s, I think. I think. And we can't be sure of it, I'm afraid. So there was, to my knowledge, two children have been drowned in the river. We didn't have wild swimming in those days.

**I: Do you think they fell in or?**

R: No.

**I: Do you think they fell in, or is the story that they fell in?**

R: Don't know.

**I: Don't know. Just that they drowned.**

R: We'll never know.

**I: Sometime in the '30s and thereabout.**

R: I bet if you looked in the archives at Bury...

**I: Yes. It might be in the newspaper archive. You're right, or somewhere. Yes, yes.**

R: It's sure it’ll be recorded. The death of a child in the river.

**I: But it was a thing that people talked about then. It was a thing that people knew about having happened.**

[01:05:00]

R: Oh yes. It was in the public domain. Very much so.

So after the '60s came, we carried on, we carried on. My brother and I, we sold the flour milling bit to Tate and Lyle. I operated it for Tate and Lyle 'cause they had no millers at all. So I really never left the mill. It's always been known as Marston's Mill. And then Tate and Lyle sold it onto a French company who then sold it. I then bought the remainder off them, and then I've sold that to Heygate. Now we're part of the Heygate group. And that really is, it is all modern business really after that. The interesting bits were up until the end of the war really. Or the '50s. So I spent my life, I was very highly thought of by Tate and Lyle, though I say it myself, and they sent me all over the place to do jobs like build a mill in Belgium. I built the mill in France. France was an interesting one because Bacardi made a vodka called Wild Goose, very expensive vodka. That was all part of a Bacardi empire. And they had this little mill to break the flour down to make the alcohol. And the mill was in Provence. And they took it in bit by bit, carried it across France to put it in a new location near St. Quentin. But the man that took it apart and knew all about it left them. So they had this mill, they couldn't do anything with it. So they sent it for me, and a couple of others. I took two of my blokes over with me and we put it back together for them and set it going. And so that was quite interesting. And then I did a consultancy job for them for about two or three years. I got paid £400 a day and a penny.

**I: A penny?**

R: That's how it worked out. Would you believe. And I did consultancy work on starch flour mills and alcohol and glucose plants at Lillebonnenear Le Havre, France, Belgium. And one down in Alsace, which was nice. I did a bit of that. But apart from that, I was always here. I travelled. That was all, you know, so yeah. A bit of a life history really.

**I: Yes, yes. How come Tate and Lyle were involved?**

R: Tate and Lyle were involved because they owned a cereal refinery processing plant to make glucose and sweeteners from wheat.

**I: I didn't know they came from wheat.**

R: And so, before you could do that, they had to make the flour. It wasn't the same as bread flour. It was a slightly different process, but very similar. And I knew enough about it. And they had nobody, when they bought it. They used to buy their flour in from other millers, you see. But then they decided they wanted their own mills. They got bigger and bigger. And so then I built the mill here for them. And then they asked me to stay on and keep running it. And I had virtual autonomy. I used to go to the annual general meeting at Tate and Lyle. I always remember the boss of Tate and Lyle came up to me and he said, "Duncan, you see, we never hear from you very much." I said, "No." I said, "I'm gonna keep it that way as well." [Laughter]. He said, "Well, carry on." I said, "I will do. Don't you worry." [Laughter]

[01:08:43]

**I: Yeah. So, the Tate and Lyle part was here. It was one of the mills here?**

R: The mill. They only had the one mill.

**I: Just the one here.**

R: But then they built, they got involved in big plants in France, which I also got involved in a little bit. Not too much. It was starch flour. They made the starch and broke this down, the starch, with enzymes into glucose and fructose and high ratio syrups. And the outfall from that was used for alcohol, fermenting alcohol. Potable alcohol. So you could mix it for gin, soft drinks, cans, alcopops and that sort of thing. Wherever a neutral alcohol was needed they made it.

**I: I see.**

R: A bit of a long story.

**I: No. Thanks for explaining that. Because I, and also anyone else who might be listening and interested wouldn't necessarily know a lot of that detail.**

R: No, I don't think people knew about that because it was an add-on thing. And out of that, of course, we also extracted the gluten from the wheat flour and sold the gluten back to the bakery trade to enhance flour. So we cut down on Canadian imports.

**I: Oh, I see. Yes.**

R: And use mostly English wheat. Mostly English wheat now for bread flour. It used to be as much as 50% Canadian or American or...it was all sorts. There's Plate wheats. There was Australian wheats. Plate in South America. Canadian, American, Western Red Springs, which is the best wheat from the prairies. It's a whole world of things to know about.

**I: 'Cause I understood that you needed quite hard wheat to make bread.**

R: The harder the wheat, the higher the protein usually.

**I: They couldn't really grow that here in the past.**

R: No. They've improved...the breeding over the last 20 years has gone leaps and bounds. So, we now have a hard English with a fairly high protein content of 13%, which will make bread with enhanced additional gluten.

[01:10:44]

**I: Just going back to the brown or the white or the extraction rates and so on, because these days brown bread is quite popular and it's seen to be healthy...**

R: Brown bread is popular.

**I: ...So made out of brown flour, presumably.**

R: Wholemeal.

**I: Wholemeal flour. So, how does that come in?**

R: There's two sorts of things about brown flour and brown bread. 100% wholemeal everything's in it, including the germ. That's a 100% wholemeal loaf. If you see a brown bread...when I say brown bread, that's basically probably something like an 85% extraction. It hasn't got everything in it. Then there's half and half, isn't there, which is half wholemeal and half white flour. You get a dirty coloured loaf. That's all that amount to. *[Laughter]*. Wholemeal is wholemeal and wheatmeal is wheatmeal. You can buy biscuits the same as digestives, which is a wholemeal biscuit or you can buy a wheatmeal or sweetmeal and they taste completely different.

**I: What's wheatmeal then?**

R: Wheatmeal? A wheatmeal is basically finely ground wheat. So, there's wheatmeal biscuits, some of 'em call 'em sweetmeal, and it's just not...it's just some of the bran, some of the endosperm mixed in with the bran and the germ is the key to it. If the germ is in there, it's a wholemeal. That's probably all that it is.

**I: It is interesting that...so as a miller, you want to make, obviously, the best flour possible for the job. White is considered best or...?**

R: White, well, in my life, is considered best. Warburtons who are market leaders in white bread, they use a mixture of Canadian wheat and English to give a very good loaf. When I was training, a loaf of bread would come up that high with a good crust on it and very even crumb texture. Then we started to go to what was called the Chorleywood process, which you get a lump of batter, you put hell a lot of energy into it and bake it quickly with a lot of steam, so it got moisture in the bread. But the best bread is still good quality wheat, Canadian, English or whatever, finely milled with no bran in it, so it's nice and bright and white. You get a nice white loaf. That's where I come from.

**I: But not using wholemeal *[Over speaking]*.**

R: Wholemeal is wholemeal...wholemeal is all right. I don' like to go on wholemeal.Good white bread has got its own flavour.

**I: So, the difference between traditionally baked and the Chorleywood is quite a big difference, isn't there?**

R: Yeah. Plant bakery is completely different.

**I: Completely different. The baking side of it, you don't get involved in as such because you are producing flour that *[over speaking]*.**

R: I've never been involved in the...Heygates are involved in the baking. They've got their own bakeries, Fine Lady Bakeries but I've never been involved in that. Although, over the years, of course, I've visited many bakeries and biscuit factories and food factories of all kinds. Custards and sauces. Anywhere where there's flour being used.

**I: Yeah. So, you have to understand all of that to understand where the flour's going...**

R: Or at least have a passing knowledge or at least enough to talk about it.

**I: Yes. *[Laughter].***

[01:14:02]

R: Heygates have got a plant in Downham Market. There's a number of millers in Norfolk. There's Duffields. Now gone, of course, as regards flour milling. The feed mill is still there. Reed Woodrow and Norwich City Mills by the football ground, RJ Reed that used to go as, and they joined up with Woodrows and became Reed Woodrow. Basil Leeder at Long Stratton. There's a number of them. Deering and Kearsleyat Wells, I can remember. Heygate at Downham, which was Bird's Mill Downham then. In Suffolk there was Hitchcock's at Rattlesden. There was Cranfield at Ipswich. A whole range of them. I think when I left school, there were 46 mills in the East Anglian Flour Milling Group. There's only us now, in terms of [over speaking].

**I: Really? Is that right, just one left? Right. It's quite unusual, isn't it, to have a great big mill like this in a village 'cause it's grown up through the way you described and it's *[over speaking]*.**

R: We're lucky to have survived. The majority of them have gone, but we've managed to survive one way or another.

**I: I wonder what's happened. All the others have gone, but flour is still being produced. Is it because mills like this are so much more efficient?**

R: Yes. The Port Mills Rank...of course, in the 1920, something like that, he expanded tremendously with the port mills. He had Port Mill at Newcastle, London, Liverpool, Bristol. Also, Spillers who were big millers, they had port mills, which was alongside the dock so they could bring Canadian wheat in, then they bought the bakeries as well. Sunblest Bakeries, Mother's Pride. 101 different, Hovis, 101 different brands Take vertical integration, but it didn't actually work. There wasn't quite the money in it. If you charged enough for the flour, the bakery didn't pay. If you charged enough for the bakery, the mill didn't pay. So, then people got out of it. The big companies got out of it. We got Del Getty, which was an Australian operator. They came in and bought Spillers, but that never worked either. The remaining ones now are ourselves, Heygates, ADM, which is Arts of Daniel Midland American company, Rank Hovis is still with us. They're still going, but they've shut most of their mills down. Whitworth's are big millers, was a family business, and they were owned by the George family who owned Weetabix. So, they sold Weetabix and spent a lot of money into the flour milling industry. Then there's people like us who are in the third rank. We got taken by Heygates in the end, so Heygates are bigger. We are probably number two. We like to think we are number two anyway. We might be number three. We don't really know, but we think we are number two.

**I: Still going strong.**

R: We must be fairly close to it, by sheer tonnage. Of course, bread consumption has dropped.

**I: Has it?**

R: Overall, people don't buy bread in the same way that they did. Mcdonald's, yes, they use a lot of hamburger buns, but the standard white loaf of bread isn't really seen quite so much, the modern housewife doesn't have a bread bin or a bread knife and cut a loaf, whatever happens. That has changed. So, the market has changed. Yes, there's lots of things like doughnuts and so forth, but they're not big flour users like a loaf of bread was, and there's no home...well, there is home baking, but not on the scale in the villages where every housewife made her own bread.

**I: So, the flour now goes to different uses more than *[over speaking]*.**

R: Yeah. As much as anything. The market has changed as everything. People's food has changed, hasn't it?

**I: Yes, I understand. But there's still a demand for flour.**

R: Still a demand for flour. We are desperate for more capacity, and we will put morecapacity in at some stage. Don't know when, but that will happen.

[01:18:17]

**I: Now there's your grandfather, your father, yourself, and I believe your daughter is working in the business...**

R: My daughter, she's in command now or just about in command here. We answer to the Heygates family, of course, who get on and leave us alone. We get on very well. They're a wonderful family. They're a big family, but they're very good at operating a family business. Yes. Claire, she's done a bit of everything. She was in recruitment. She got a couple of degrees in cookery or whatever you call it, domestic science or whatever. My son's a vicar, and there we are.

**I: So, it's gone down through the generations. I believe it was..., it was Marston's for getting on for 100 years, or more than 100 years.**

R: The Marston family here, we've been here since 1910 as a family.

**I: So, 1910 to...well, so all the way...**

R: 114 years.

**I: 114 years. Yes.**

R: The family has always had, basically, a management role of one form or another,either outright owners or running it for somebody else. I've been in the flour mill for62 years.

**I: It's such a continuity, isn't it? It's really important.**

R: Unfortunately, neither my children have got children.

**I: Right.**

R: Well, we probably...Claire will probably be the last Marston to be in charge of thisparticular site, which is life.

**I: That's life. It's definitely something to be proud of.**

R: That’s applied to a lot of people, hasn't it?

[01:19:55]

**I: It does. Tell me a bit more...tell me what any of you, yourselves, your family or other generations did for recreation. What did you do for fun, and did you have any fun *[over speaking]*?**

R: For fun... We had some fun. As regards to fun...funnily enough, as mentioned at my brother's funeral, we had an old boat on the river and the fun was...there was a film came out 'HS Amethyst'...The Amethyst...in The Amethyst. It was the Yangtze Incident, wasn't it, where the battleship got stuck in the Chinese River, and he had to come down through the battle line. Well, we used to play this. I was on the shore and Nigel would row the boat up past me, and I would throw bricks at him to try and sink him. *[Laughter]*.

**I: Not really bricks.**

R: Yeah. That was a sort of fun we had. We all had a sailboat, and the river was big enough then to actually tack up.

**I: Really?**

R: We used to go for a row up the river. Shooting, of course, was important to my uncle and to my brother, especially. He was a shooter. I wasn't, although I did go shooting, but not on the same scale as they did. Granddad, he always had a gun ready for the pot. He wanted to go and shoot a duck for dinner or a pheasant. Dad wasn't so bothered. His hobby was archaeology, flints and arrowhead and prehistoric man. Jack was the sportsman. Tom, he was always interested in things like...he had apple trees and plum trees and things like that, and kept chickens of course. Cecil always kept pigs. Aubrey, he was...he didn't have too much of a social life. He was very much the what's the word I'm looking for? He was the quieter, weaker one of the family, but, he was a character Tom was. Cecil was difficult. Jack was clever. Dad and Jack were a driving force. Dad was a real driving force. Dad always looked after Aubrey,

**I: What did Aubrey do? Does he work in the business as well?**

R: He worked here. And also he moved to Earsham 'cause he married a ...I think she was a...I say he did in those days, a second or third or fourth cousin, something like that. He lived out there for the remainder of his life. He didn't live that long. He died at 60, Leukaemia, and lived a hard life. Dad died at 68. The old governor...as my father used to call him, the old governor, he made 79. Jack died at 60...I think Jack died at 69. Tom didn't last too long. I think he died at 64. It's on the gravestones up there. *[Laughter]*. Cecil, he made into his 70s. My brother died at 81...No, '80, and I'm now 77. So, they were all very...what's the word I'm looking for? They were all energetic and had their own characters. Tom was a tremendous character. People still talk about him today. He was a great big fat man. He'd drink beer and he'd...

**I: Was he a bit of a laugh?**

R: Had no children, and would make fuss of anybody else's children. See, Uncle Tom, he always got...when I went back to school each time, Uncle Tom would suddenly turn up just before I was about to go back to school and gave me...I have a 10-shilling note. He used to say, "You better have a certificate." *[Laughter]* 'Cause 10 shillings is quite a bit to spend in the tuck shop, but that’s how it was. Jack would never give anything away. Legend has it he could take a cigarette out of his pocket alight *[laughter]*. Dad would do anything for anybody. He'd do anything for anybody. That's it. That's the story.

The river...we've always been aware of the river. You do, don't you? It's never been a problem to us. It's becoming a problem now because it's not being looked after. Now, they say it's nice for the habitat and the birds and the bees. When I was a boy, there were otters, kingfishers and they'll say, "Oh, there's some there now," but you don't see them like I used to. Moorhens, you could watch 'em. It was much cleaner and much more pleasant. In the spring morning, the river used to look lovely. Now, it's just a massive reeds and vermin living in the reeds and rubbish coming down. I used to see things coming down the river.

I can remember a car floating down. I can remember various sofas and chairs and things, which had been chucked in upstream. The car came down because whoever was driving it managed to stop on the side of the bridge by the Cavenham Bridge and it rolled into the river. Mum was in the kitchen and I was in the lounge, I think doing...not very old. She said, "Dunc, you better come and have a look. There's a car coming down the river." There was this old car. Of course, dad went and got some men and we pulled the old car out and the scrap man came. There was an argument about, "What we're gonna sell it for." It came to nothing, but...*[laughter]*. So, there we are.

We had a sailboat. I suppose that the most fun that my brother and I had was a sailboat.

**I: How far did you go with that? Where did you go with that?**

R: We get up to Lackford. Take all day to do it. Get up to Lackford. Uncle Jack bought **an** outboard motor to make it go, but it didn't very successful 'cause the river was abit sort of low and you couldn't go and...

**I: Yeah. Was it deep enough to do that in there.**

R: Most of it was then. It's a bit higher. Couldn't do that now.

**I: No. Sometimes in the summer there's no water, is there, or not much water.**

R: Yeah. Not much water, but that's been messed about now because the wild swimmers have built a dam halfway up. They've all picked all the bricks up and tried to make the dam to make them under the bridge, so that's been spoiled. I don't go too much on that. People who have been living with it and working it and using it, you can't do that. Well, why not? Well, 'cause that won't suit the birds or the bees or something. I've seen duck come off that river and the sky is thick with 'em. Swans and geese and duck and otters and wildlife and herons. You might see two or three herons. You might see one now. Shame.

[01:26:55]

**I: How about the fish? Did you have anything to do with fish?**

R: Well, I never fished. I don't think anybody in the family did. I think Jack might have done in his time, but not to any degree. There's fish in there. One time there was a nice lot of trout. There's still a pike or two about, which keeps the trout down, of course. There's fish there, but because of the nature of the, the river's been allowed to turn into a ditch with reeds, the fish can't swim and jump like they used to.

**I: That's what they used to do? They would jump.**

R: Yeah. You haven't seen it come out. You have nothing to see. On the summer's evening, you'd see a trout come out and get a fly and go back down again. Don't see it very often now.

**I: I believe there's a trout fishery. People do… trout fishing club up there, I think.**

R: Well, we don't let the fishing...some of the fishing is with Mildenhall Fishing Society, but we don't let ours because we don't want the people on the land. You don't want the intrusion into the site. You can't have it anymore. If anyone says to me, can I come...my next door neighbour, he's an ex-policeman. If he wants to bring his grandsons down to put his rod in and they go and get a fish, I let them, but that's as far as we'll go because today's privilege is tomorrow's right. Before you know where you are, they don't only just come down for their selves, they bring in half a dozen other people wandering through the buildings and the lorries and all the things that's going on. You can't have it. We have a food business, of course, and so we have to practice food safety. That's how it is. Of course, you get audited on that. Has anybody got access to this? No. No, Public access. No. It's wrong. It used to be… people used common sense. Now, they'll park a car immediately in front of where a lorry wants to go through or get out and walk in front of one. So, there we are.

**I: Do people come up and down the river in boats these days? Do you see them or?**

R: They used to. It was not uncommon to see the odd canoe come down or someone launch a boat. They never got past the lock, of course. Turn around and go back. But nothing on the scale that you do now. Occasionally, you might see a canoe in the summer and then they get up and want a walk around where a garden property and so forth, or come down and come down here and march through. They don't respond to reception or anything. Walk past the sign says please report to security.

**I: So, if they come down the river or up the river, they can't get past...obviously not on this side. Can they get past around the other side or not?**

R: No. They can just access the river from say the bottom of the Guinness Arms.

**I: Is that...that's at...**

R: Just that next to the Lion. There was the Red Lion.

**I: Oh, yes.**

R: We can't have 'em through our property. Elveden Estate don't really access the riververy much at all, it’s fenced off. They keep to themselves.

**I: They have the bit, but where the Red Lion** **was and on the other side as well.**

R: The other side, they own, I think up to the Cavenham Bridge, and then it turns intoGough's, the other side.

**I: Did you ever swim yourself?**

R: No.

**I: Never swam.**

R: The River Lark now here is basically the outfall from Bury Sewage Works. Most of the outfall is from the sewage works. I won't go near it.

**I: So, you're not very impressed by the people going swimming then? *[Laughter].***

R: Well, if that's what they want to do, good luck to them, but don't start swimming in my bit. That won't happen.

**I: That's probably not going to happen, is it? No. Which is, your bit is, basically where the mill is, isn't it?**

R: Yeah. The mill. Of course, the other side we own...on the other side of the bank, weown quite a bit of that up and down.

[01:30:57]

**I: Yeah. I'm trying to get the geography clear in my mind. Yes. So, the Cavenham is down that way, isn't it? So, did you ever go down to Temple Bridge yourself?**

R: Temple Bridge is down that way.

**I: Down that way. That's fine.**

R: Yeah. Then Elveden Estate, go that way, that's the Elveden Estate. This is us, theElveden Estate. That's us the other side of the river.

**I: I see.**

R: Up here is the Cavenham Bridge...

**I: All right. Is that the one then that is sometimes called the Farthing Bridge, that one?**

R: Yes. It is Farthing Bridge.

**I: Thanks.**

R: Yeah. No.

**I: So, you called it Farthing Bridge as well?**

R: Well, it’s a penny three farthings. First one is ha’penny, second one is a penny, third one is a farthing. The origin of Farthing bridge is basically, I understood it to be, as you drive through it, you'll see three bridges, a smallish one before the big main one, which is Ha'penny, Penny, and then the little one on the other side is Farthing. So, it's Penny Three Farthing.

**I: Oh, right. Alright.**

R: That's me. That's my understanding. I'm probably wrong. Everybody...

**I: So, the main bridge...well, that one there, that one. The bridge that...**

R: That's the Penny Bridge. Yes.

**I: Ah, right.**

R: It's never called Penny Bridge. It's called Farthing Bridge. They get muddled up. Yousee

**I: They've got muddled up, haven't they?**

R: There's a bridge here and there's another one there.

**I: Yes. They're not so obvious, the other bridges, are they? Usually, just go over them without realising. That's a couple of old photos of it and you can still see the gates on that one.**

R: Yeah. Well, I've never seen one with a gate on, but I don't remember what that gatedid, because it wasn't a lock there, was there?

**I: I don't know.**

R: No, there wasn't.

**I: I don't know. No?**

R: The next lock up from here is Cherry lock, which is up towards Lackford.

**I: So, there's a lock at your place.**

R: A lock here, that was rebuilt in 1938. The last one to be rebuilt. There's a stone on the wall, Great Ouse Catchment Board. People do not know what it means, but it is GOCB, Great Ouse Catchment Board. It was all to do with the Great Ouse, which came from where the Lark goes into at Littleport.

**I: So, there's that one. So, that one was never a lock. *[Over speaking]*.**

R: I never thought it was a lock, but there's a gate there so what that did I don’t know,

**I: Yeah. Don't know.**

R: I don't know.

[01:33:32]

**I: Yeah. I think that's everything. Unless you've got anything else you wanna say about the river or the history...**

R: Sorry.

**I: Unless there's anything else you can think of.**

R: No. I can't think of anything which would...

**I: No?**

R: No. Not really. What you've got is the history as I understand it. I can't vouch for its accuracy. It's only what I've been brought up and remembered. It's very little written down and dad never did write anything much down. He never did anything like this, but he did know a lot about it. What I remember is what I remember. Some of it gets changed as people's thoughts. As the queen said, people's recollections vary.

**I: That's right. *[Laughter]*. You have got that long knowledge going back from what you've heard from those people, so that's really valuable. So, thank you very much.**

R: Absolutely.

**I: It sounds like you've got some interesting archives as well. Earlier on, you were saying that you have archives or you have various things...**

R: We have various ledgers and things which are so deeply hidden in all the rubbishwe've got, but one day I'll get 'em all out and put them together.

**I: Sounds like you might want some help with that maybe.**

R: You never know.

**I: *[Laughter]*. I'm sure there'd be people who would come and help you.**

R: I'm sure there would be.

**I: They'd be interested to preserve the history.**

R: That's right.

**I: 'Cause on the Heygates website, there's a little potted history, isn't there, obviously?**

R: Yes, there is.

**I: Did you contribute to that perhaps?**

R: Yeah. But I've never discussed with Heygates much about this, they've just use their own history of their own company. A lot of the C Marstons and Sons and Bungay information is in the Suffolk Record Office at Lowestoft. I think it's Lowestoft.

**I: They've just closed them down now. The Bury and Lowestoft, they're moving all into Ipswich now. There's a bit further to go. Well, like Lowestoft is quite a long way to go, isn't it anyway, but...okay.**

R: Yeah. So, what's in there I don't know. When my son was working for Bury Free Press as a journalist, he had something to do with it. He looked something up and found a fair bit in there, but I've never looked at it. I've never even been to the Suffolk Record Office. I would like to find out a bit about the Icklingham Home Guard.

[01:35:38]

**I: Yes. That's very interesting, actually.**

R: That must be documented somewhere.

**I: I hope so. The trouble is sometimes these things only get documented if somebody does something like this to document it.**

R: Every other Home Guard platoon is mentioned, but never find anything on Icklingham itself.

**I: Right. Yes. That was obviously quite... obviously very important with your dad there in charge of it. It sounds a bit like it really was a bit like Dad's Army with some of them being older men and...**

R: Oh, very much so. He used to tell some wonderful tales *[laughter]* 'cause of course, in the early days they didn't have anything at all. General Hulme who lived at the hall at Cavenham, came just after Dunkirk, I think it was, and they had a demonstration of how to shoot over on the Cavenham Road. Apparently Dad used to say the old General turned up with his keeper, had a 12 bore shotgun and he said, "Now, this is how you do it. When you see a German rushing across there, you swing with the bird and squeeze the trigger." *[Laughter]*. Now, how true that was, I don't know. My Dad used to make...He used to make me laugh about that and tell him what happened. You swing with the bird and squeeze the trigger *[laughter],* because he shot the Germans like he would do pheasants.

**I: Well, I suppose it would work. *[Laughter]*.**

R: Had nothing else, did they? They literally had nothing else, but a pitchfork and a...

**I: Shot gun that they might have had anyway.**

R: Yeah.

**I: Do you remember the...do you know anything about the stop lines and the pill boxes and things that were put in?**

R: A little bit. We've got two pill boxes on our land. One, two. Each of those has got an underground rest chamber. There were different types of pill boxes. Some were anti-aircraft, some are anti-personnel, some are anti-tank. But to my certain knowledge, the guns were never put in the pill boxes. We never had enough guns to go around. They were built. Yes. There's an anti-tank pill box that's on Lord Iveagh’s field right by the bridge, which is aimed at the bridge. But to my certain knowledge, dad always told me the guns were never fitted. We didn't have enough, but they had to [*unclear 01:38:00*]. Of course, they used to...I've got dad's logbook for the Home Guard because prior to the invasion in 1944, the Home Guard been stood down in 1943, I think, 'cause it was no longer required, and there was a waste of resources. So, they were stood down, but they had to stand too against for the invasion about six days before and he kept that book, and in it on the 9th of June, the fifth, June the sixth that night, him and Bustey Harral, his sergeant, he visited every observation post and pill box, manned thing and wrote in it, "Nothing happening, nothing to report.” 200 miles away was the largest invasion in history going on. *[Laughter]*. So, I’ve got that and it's quite interesting. But there was nothing in it because nothing happened. He didn't know the invasion was taking place. Nobody did.

**I: It just shows really, doesn't it, that they were there in case they were needed. They were never needed as such. But was there a...does he tell you about there being a sort of atmosphere of....what was the atmosphere like ?*[over speaking]*.**

R: Well, the atmosphere...in 1940, people were worried. They were really worried that they was...when war was announced, dad was in the garden somewhere. I don't know. He was picking some beans or something. I don't quite know what. Mother cried as war was declared at 11 o'clock that morning on the radio. Dad always said to me that people were really worried in April, May, June of 1940 and the Battle of Britain. Of course, 1941 was equally as hard because we still stood alone. We had no allies. America had not yet entered the war, not till December the 7th, 1941. Yes, they were worried. After that, then the American influence came. There was food, there was more supplies, there was...things were a bit easier. Big airplanes landing at Lakenheath and Tuddenham, and all the rest. So, everyone felt more confident we were not going to be invaded by the Germans. He said to me, people were really worried. You just didn't know. We were that far away from it. No more. If they had have come, what did we have to hit them with? Nothing at all. We didn't have a tank worth...we lost it all at Dunkirk. We lost thousands and thousands of vehicles and kit and guns and ammunition, clothing and all the rest of it. The bit that always amazes me is how we managed to recover from that and keep our industry going, with bombing. We had no bombs much fall here. There was a stick of bombs dropped from across the mill. Mum and dad went and hid under the stairs in the house. Now, what good that was gonna do, I don't know, but that's what they did. We had to black the mill out so you couldn't see the lights. Even to this day, I could take you to a roof light where *[laughter]*, the blackout was...the only way to black out was to build a board, which blacked out the side, the skylight. The piece of wood, which dad nailed up to hold this board is still there. *[Laughter]*. I won't have it pulled down, but that's me. There's some pillars in the mill, which were built by Italian prisoners of war. To get this, they wanted to make a round pillar, dad made the mould out of steel. The mould was so heavy it took all the prisoners of war to lift it off *[laughter]* but they did it.

[01:41:52]

**I: How did he come to have prisoners of war doing that?**

R: Well, well, you go. They came to work. It was Italians. The first prisoners of war were allItalians captured in the desert and brought back, and there was a prisoner of warcamp up towards Eriswell, and I think they came from there. I think he's dead now,but there was a guy in the village kept in touch with one of 'em.

**I: Oh really?**

R: Mother had evacuees, of course.

**I: Did she?**

R: Two evacuees from London all went up to the village hall and picked them up.

**I: Did she tell you a bit about that?**

R: Huh?

**I: Did she tell you about that?**

R: Yeah. That was quite a...

**I: What's that like?**

R: It was quite something, but of course I wasn't born. Nigel was born in 1942 as they left, I think. Of course, they had to get clothes for 'em and feed them and they went from home and they cried and they didn't know what to do. It was all quite sad and difficult. One of the little evacuees, the first night they turned up, mother had made a steak and kidney pudding for 'em, which was good wholesome food, of course. But he only wanted fish and chips and you couldn't just jump in the car then and go and get 'em.

**I: Yeah. Interesting. So you were too young to remember that, of course, yourself *[over speaking]*.**

R: Yeah. They were very happy and they both...in my lifetime, they came back to see mum and dad as older men. They always recognised they were treated well here by mum and dad, but of course some of 'em weren't, were they?

**I: No. Some *[over speaking].***

R: No. Some of them were pretty awful, but they always highly rated mum and dad because they looked after them. The people, the parents lived at Wembley and they used to come down and see them. Of course, mum and dad looked after them and they'd give 'em a brace of pheasants or something. That how life was, or some eggs or something like that, 'cause we kept hens and...*[Laughter]*.

**I: Yeah. So, coming outta London, that would've been a real treat for all...**

R: It wasn't so much fun, really. It's glamorised a bit now, but it wasn't quite like that must've been pretty hard then your whole house was bombed out and everything you own left out in the road. So, there we go.

**I: Yeah. Okay. So, we can finish if you like. Thank you very much for your time.**

R: No. It's a pleasure.

[01:43:57] End.