

INTERVIEW 16

Interviewer: Pat Hughes
Yondover Farmhouse
Loders

Date: 17th January 1991

MR HAROLD (DOUG) DERBY, BORN 7th June 1916
24 LODERS

MR HAROLD (DOUG) DERBY Born 7th June 1916

Doug was born at number 18 Loders, since pulled down. He was the fifth of seven children, the eldest and youngest being girls and the five middle children all boys. His father worked for Mr Harold Bishop at Yondover Farm, driving one of the threshing machines, which were steam engines in those days. He was seriously injured when a rope parted and he fell off a wagon full of hay. He broke his neck, but lived another 25 years. In his spare time he grew vegetables for the family and was also a general handyman. He had a shed up the garden, where he repaired watches, clocks and bicycles and soldered milk buckets and kettles. His mother, whose maiden name was Reed, lived next door at number 17, now Oak Cottage, before they were married. Doug liked to help her with the cooking and, like the other women in the village, she added to their meagre income by working on the nets. All the children helped with the chores, gathering wood before school, helping with the gardening, collecting the milk and filling the copper with water from the pump on washday. Eggs from the next door neighbour were bartered for vegetables and rabbits were caught for the pot.

Doug could have gone to the Grammar School, but, like so many other families at that time, his parents could not afford to send him. He started work milking the cows at Yondover Farm, but when he was sixteen, decided that he was not earning enough, so for the next two years he worked for the British Net Works. Eventually there was not enough work there and he was laid off. After this he spent many happy years working at the Loders Arms, where he did everything from milking the cows, looking after the pigs, growing the vegetables, to acting as barman in the evenings. He delivered the milk in buckets, slung from his shoulders on a yoke and his round stretched from Loders Court to the school.

Doug married late and his wife was 18 years older than him. She was an invalid in her final years and Doug looked after her until she died in 1989 at the age of nearly 92, having outlived both her children from her first marriage. Her maiden name was Marsh; she came originally from Askerswell and was evacuated from London back to Dorset, during the Second World War. Number 24 Loders was up for sale in 1955 and when Doug pointed out to Palmers, the brewers, that the Loders Arms was dependant for its water on the well at 24, they bought it for £850 and rented it to Doug, who has lived there ever since.

Interview with Mr Harold (Doug) Derby of 24 Loders, on 17th January 1991.
Interviewer, Mrs Pat Hughes of Yonderover Farmhouse Loders.

Int: At what number Loders were you brought up?

HD: Number 18, but that's pulled down now. Joined on to Mr Howells (*The Rev Neil Howells, 19 Loders*), then they put the new one up in the garden, y'see (*18 Loders, Mapes*), what was our garden.

Int: What year were you born?

HD: 1916, 7th June.

Int: Can you tell me about your brothers and sisters and what their names were?

HD: Yes. The eldest one is Flossie, she's still alive, she lives in Bridport. Then there's me brother Fred we lost two year ago, brother Dick, 'e's in Bridport livin', there's brother Jack's at Chideock and brother Bill's in Bridport and the youngest of the family, she's at Crawley. (*Margaret*)

Int: Where did you come in the family?

HD: Let me see, there's one, two, three, four before me, I comes fifth, I think.

Int: Can you tell me about your parents; what did your father do?

HD: 'E used to work on the farm, 'e used to work for Mr Bishop down there. 'E used to drive one o' the threshing tackles, steam tackles.

Int: What was your mother's maiden name and where did she used to live?

HD: Reed, she used to live up where Mrs Miles lives (*now Oak Cottage*), she was born there. They used to call it number 17 then.

Int: So your parents were brought up next door to each other.

HD: That's right, yes.

Int: Tell me more about your father, he used to drive the thresher.

HD: Tha's right, yes, but 'e 'ad a bit of a sticky head to finish with. 'E was out in the field out there an' we 'ad a wagon tipped over a load of hay an' we 'ad a load it up on another wagon an' 'e was up the top tying it an' the rope parted an' 'e come down over an' pitched right in front of us. He lived 25 years with a broken neck. 'E went back to work; the only thing was 'e couldn' look up, like, he 'ad to turn 'is whole body round to look round. Doctor never even sent 'n to hospital, 'e was in bed for 18 months. 'E finished up doin' a bit of jobbin' gardenin' about, y'know, 'e was at the Court for a bit, then 'e was for Brigadier Hammond out the Old Mill.

Int: Tell me a bit about yourself. You went to Loders School, did you enjoy it?

HD: Yees, o' course there's a lot more there them days, y'know, about 128 there then. There was three rooms there, y'see, they had a partition across and in the bottom room there was a gallery in there one time, that was the infant class, then you move up and the third one was right down this end (*western end*).

Int: What happened when you got to the age of 14?

HD: Come down to work on this farm 'ere (*Yonderover Farm*) with Mr Bishop. It had everything on it bar pigs, they never kept any pigs. 'E was a sort of gentleman farmer, actually, very nice bloke to work for. Nearly 300 acres, y'see, all horse labour.

Int: What was your job?

HD: Milk the cows. In the long building, bottom part was cows, top part was stables. There was quite a few sheep. Mrs Greening's (*see Interview 2*) father was the shepherd. Yeah, 'e used to live out Bell Cottage where Reverend Willmott is now.

Int: Can you describe a day in your family life, when you were a youngster, still at school.

HD: Oh yers, specially if it was winter time; winter time they used to do a lot o' hedgin' an' before we went to school in the morning, we had a little four-wheeled cart up the back, we 'ad to go up where they was 'edgin', load 'im up wi' wood, bring it back, before we went to school. An' when we came out lunchtimes we 'ad to nip up for another lot and another lot in the night. That's all we burnt in them days, because you couldn' afford coal, out of the question. We used to have a big rip of wood up the garden, stacked up.

Int: You still fetch wood down sometimes, don't you?

HD: I haven't lately 'cos I don' burn no fires now. I'm all electric now. I can' be hassled wi' the cleaning up the grate and lord knows what. I don' want it till late in the evening and by then it's not worth doin' it. I used to have it while the wife was alive, o' course.

Int: So you got the wood. Was this before breakfast?

HD: Oh I used to 'ave me breakfast first, couldn' go on out wi' an empty stomach.

Int: What did you have for breakfast?

HD: Nearly always Quaker Oats to start with. That was a liner, I used to love that. I was a bit queer, I wouldn' 'ave no sugar on mine, I used to have golden surup. You don't see none o' that now, do you?

Int: You had a garden, did your father grow a lot of vegetables?

HD: Yeah. 'E used to 'ave a garden at the Old Mill as well, part of the Old Mill garden, had that fer years out there. Used to 'ave that off of Mr Bishop, that was before 'e sold the Old Mill an' tha', you know. That was the first place in Loders where there was electric light. A man named Mr Crawford come from Surrey and bought that off of Bishop. 'E runned it off the water mill with a dynamo, 'ad big batteries and tha'. Before the war, long enough, somewhere about 'bout 1928, '29 I expect, 'long there.

Int: Did you have electric light when you were a child?

HD: No, we didn' 'ave 'lectric light then, good lord above, no.

Int: What sort of lights did you have?

HD: Candles and paraffin lamp.

Int: Did you have homework at school?

HD: No, never used to have no homework them days. Di'n' wan' it, you used to have to do enough when you was in there. We di'n' have so much playtime as what they git now, y'know.

Int: What was your mother doing, while you were at school?

HD: Oh she 'ad plen'y work to do at whome, you know. Used to do the nets, you know. All of them did, through here. Well they had to to subsidise what's name, couldn' live otherwise.

Int: What about your water?

HD: Used to go 'cross the road, opposite the school, there used to be a pump there in the corner. It should never have been done away with. Village pump, I don' know who Blokes that built the wall, I s'pose, that's who whipped 'e out, to have the lead, I s'pose.

Int: Presumably there's still a well there.

HD: It's in Mr Budden's lawn. Whether 'e makes any use of it, pumps any water out of it, I don' know. I expect 'e's got it piped underground, goin' indoors, if 'e uses it at all, for certain, electric pump, see. Oh yes and you had to make sure there was plenty of water in it, specially Mondays, when mother was washin'. We had to fill up the boiler, in the shed up the garden, a portable boiler, you know, 'ad to fill 'e up, make sure there was plenty o' water in't, mind. We 'ad all these little jobs to do, mind, we couldn' scheme out of it very well.

Int: You needed a large family to do all these jobs.

HD: My eldest brothers, they used to do the gardenin' wi' father, I di'n' like gardenin', I used to stop indoors and help mother. Don' want everybody in the family to be a gardener, that was my excuse! Tha's where I had a good schoolin' in cookin' an' looking after myself, you know.

Int: How did your mother do the cooking?

HD: Over a wood fire, old kitchen range, you know.

Int: What sort of things did she cook for you?

HD: Rabbit, mainly. You used to catch rabbit any time on the farm, you know. When there was corn cuttin'. Summer 'olidays, that was our delight, that was. We stucked them, knocked them over. 'Course they couldn' run so fast in stubble, like, as they can normally. Used to walk round an' see one caught in the corn. I used to skin 'em all. Mr Bishop used to know how big the families was, see, what children went there an' 'e used to dole them out, see; if you 'ad a big family, p'raps you'd 'ave three rabbits, if only one of 'e in family, you'd 'ave one. Oh 'e was very fair like that, you know. We used to put a wire down for them occasionally, y'know. When you wanted a rabbit, you could always catch a rabbit, 'e was only too pleased to get rid of 'em.

Int: You ate lots of vegetables?

HD: Oh, plenty o' vegetables. They were better taste in them days; o' course we never used artificial, that was the trouble, like they do now. You can' touch anything today, not even the blessed water, let alone anythin' else, terrible!

Int: What sort of vegetables did your father grow?

HD: Oh, everything, we used to eat all of it, parsnips, carrots, beans, peas, you name it, we ate it.

Int: Very good for you. Of course you used to have milk from the farm.

HD: Yeah, we used to 'ave stews, rabbit stew, swedes, parsnips, doughboys an' onions in it, goo lord above!

Int: You're making my mouth water!

HD: There was always a big boiler on up the chimney corner, full of soup an' tha', nothin' was ever wasted, used to all go back in the hot pot. We used to come out of school, we had our own enamel cups, we used to dip that out, lovely! Couldn't drink it, it was too thick, nearly. Stick to your ribs, that did, beautifully.

Int: What about milk, did you fetch the milk from the farm?

HD: Yeah, we all 'ad turns. When I started working down there, I used to carry it on back meself. I couldn' get out of that chore then, well not that it made any difference, 'cos I used to come on down 'ere in the mornin' and used to go whome to lunch there, about 10 o'clock, 10 to ha' past. We'd have a bit o' bacon sometimes, sausages, you know, fried potato, Mondays, bubble and squeak! You always knew when it was wash days, you knew exactly what you was goin' t'ave to eat.

Int: Did you keep your own chicken?

HD: No, we didn' bother about that. Well the garden wasn' quite big enough for'n. You could always get eggs, different people 'ad 'em, you know. We used to barter. We had plenty of runner beans, when they was about, see, well and person next door, number 17, they 'ad a lot o' chicken, 'cos they 'ad a lot of ground, tha's what we used to do. They used to 'ave the vegetables and we used to 'ave the eggs.

Int: Did you get butter from the farm?

HD: Butter, that was un'eard of them days, m'dear! Tha's what we used to call 'march on' then; we used to march on it well too, we did!

Int: Tell me more about Yondover Farm. They had livestock and they grew crops as well, didn't they?

HD: Oh yeah, corn, swedes, turnips; they used to feed the swedes off to the sheep, you see. We always used to get a nice bag full of swedes in fer the winter and the swede green, that used to be nice too; oh, beautiful, specially when you'd 'ad a frost or two on it, lovely that was. Oh we didn' go short or anything like that, really. The bigger the family, the happier you were, because you were all served the same, there was no favourites or anything like that.

Int: Tell me about what happened to your brothers and sisters.

HD: One of them, Dick, 'e used to work up at the Court, gardener and after he come out 'e went to Melplash Court, gardener over there, tha's where 'e finished up. Fred, 'e jobbed around the village, gardener like, you know. Jack, 'e was mainly on the railway and the buses. Bill was a baker in Leakers fer, oh about 40 years, I think, never went nowhere else. Margaret, she was in the chemist in Bridport, she finished up with the chemist in Crawley. She never married, Bill didn' marry, Fred didn' marry.

Int: Where was your wife born?

HD: She was born at Askerswell. I don't know a lot about her family 'cos her father and mother was dead before I met her. She was married before and she had a business in Pinner, tobacconist and paper business, but apparently 'er husband used to squander the money on 'orses she give 'im the order of the boot.

Int: What was her maiden name?

HD: Marsh.

Int: When were you married?

HD: We lived together for about 8 years previous to that, up round where Raymond Crabb is, then we went out where we are now. We went in there the 5th September 1945.

Int: Did you have any children?

HD: No. She had two children by her previous marriage, a son and daughter, but they died. One got wounded abroad, in the army and 'e died and 'er daughter died. She outlived all 'er family. She was 18 years older than me, di'n' make a scrap of difference, not a bit. Life's what you make it. We started off 50/50 down the line and that's how we carried on.

Int: She was over 90 when she died, wasn't she?

HD: She'd 'ave been 92 on the 5th February, she died on the 3rd January. She was only in 'ospital a couple of days, took 'er on New Year's Day and she passed away on the 3rd. That was two years ago, the third of the month. She was ready to die, though, she'd 'ad 'er innin's. She always used to say, "thank God I'm the age I am", she said, "I've 'ad the best of this world", and she was right too. I'm beginning to think that meself, now, sometimes. I'm on borrowed time, y'know! The trouble is, they don't tell you how much they're goin' to let you borrow!

Int: But you enjoy life, don't you?

HD: Oh yes, I just go across the road (*to the Lodgers Arms*) and 'ave a game of crib (*cribbage*) wi' the lads.

Int: And you've still got a lot of family alive in Bridport.

HD: Oh yeah, yeah; I'm the only one apart from me young sister, which is the youngest, she was the baby of the family, the only one that was made a fool of, I think, but she was the youngest and we all spoiled her. Yeah, 'cos two year ago, I think, she took an early retirement, 'cos she was workin' for ICI. She was manageress in the chemist. They 'ad to give 'er a golden 'andshake and an index linked pension. She was 'appy.

Int: Did any of your family go on to the grammar school?

HD: No. I passed out, but me parents couldn't afford to put me there, them days, that was the trouble; but I still maintain that I learned more after I left school that was any good to me, than I did all the time I went. The funny thing is that nearly everybody can remember the Battle of Hastings, 1066, but what the hell good's that to me to earn a livin'? Don' want to know about all those old battles, new ones come quick enough, let alone botherin' with the old ones! Same as this lot out in the Gulf now, I don' know what that's goin' to turn out to be. Well, I can see what's goin' to happen out there, if 'e starts usin' chemical warfare, there's goin' to be another Hiroshima. Bang, straight in. 'Cos the Yanks ain't goin' to have no nonsense, you know.

Int: What did you do in the Second world War?

HD: I was in the Territorials previous, for about 8 years. I got blown up at Woolwich and that was the end of me.

Int: By a bomb? What sort of injuries did you have?

HD: Yes. Head injuries.

Int: You were in the army?

HD: Yeah, Royal Artillery. I got bombed at Woolwich Barracks. I come out in '41, I think.

Int: Then you came back to Lodgers. Was that the only time you lived away?

HD: Yeah. Wish I hadn' lived away then! Could've 'appened anywhere else, I s'pose. Was to be, I s'pose and there you are. I firmly believe in fate y'know. Mapped out for you, I think.

2 Int: Did you work at Yondover until the war?

HD: No. When I got to 16, I was entitled to a shilling a week rise. Mr Bishop used to pay us every fortnight then, the huge amount of 18/- for a fortnight's work. When I got to 16, I said to 'im, "I'm entitled to a rise, y'know, guv'nor", I said, "1/- a week". 'e said, "I can't see my way clear to giving it to you"; I says "I can't see my way clear to stop 'ere". So then father come 'ome afterwards, see an' we sat there 'avin' our tea; "what's this I 'ear?" " 'e said, "I di'n' answer, see. I knew what 'e was hintin' at. "I'm talking to you," 'e said. "Sorry father", I said. " 'E said, "you'll go out of this door tomorrow and you'll git another job before you ever come back". So I 'eard they were takin' on people down there, British Networks at the time, so I went in Bridport and I knew the foreman used to go in the Star Hotel, which was bombed out during the war and I saw 'im and arsted him, any chance of a start in there. "What've you bin doin'", 'e said, I said, "workin' on a farm". "What d'you leave for?" and I told'n. "Oh, fair enough", 'e said, "you ain't a lazy bloke, you start Monday mornin', 8 o'clock. I used to walk from 'ere to Bridport, 8 till 6. First job I done down there was makin' hangman's ropes, believe it or not. I was on piece work with another bloke. My first week's wages, for five and a half days a week, was 27/6. I chucked it down on the table, father was sat down there. I said "ow about that then, father?" That was more than 'e was gittin'. "Paw", 'e said, "ow long's it goin' to last?" "Don' matter 'bout that", I said, "I got to make the best o' it while I can". Then, about two year after that, they started standin' people arf on, short