

INTERVIEW 6

INTERVIEWER: Pat Hughes
Yondover Farmhouse
Loders

DATE: 1989

EDGAR BISHOP B. 1920

CANFORD

OXBRIDGE

Grandfather bought Yondover Farm in 1900
Edgar's father owned it from 1910, then sold it to Sir
Edward le Breton, in order to buy Longbredy Farm, but
still tenanted Yondover.

SUBJECT: Yondover Farm and Farmhouse, description.
Changes in farming from the turn of the century.

Reminiscences of Edgar Bishop, who was born at Yondover Farm in November 1920.

Had your father been here a long time before you were born?

Yes. The farm was originally bought by my grandfather, which must have been in the early 1900's. His father farmed at Manor Farm, and I think when he got married he must have come to Lodors - in fact I think originally it must have been my grandfather's first farm - his own business.

Your father didn't only own Yondover did he - he owned other farms?

Yes; just before the 1914-18 war he bought North Barn Farm, Long Bredy, which was 500 acres. I'm not quite sure when he bought Yondover: my grandfather bought it and my father must have bought it from my grandmother in about 1910, something like that. And then he sold it at one stage to the le Bretons and bought this 500 acres at Long Bredy, but he remained here as tenant. I think he must have sold it to raise the capital to buy the other farm, the better farm in fact.

Do you know who lived at Yondover before your grandfather?

No I don't.

Records really don't go back that far do they.

7 No they don't: but somebody connected with the farm must have occupied it from the turn of the century until 1952.

And who came here after your father?

The Newberrys ^{tenanted} ~~owned~~ it from 1952 onwards, until 1974.

You have given me some agricultural ^{returns} (terms) here which are very interesting because they show some big changes. I notice that in 1918 there were a lot of different crops, far more crops than we have now - for instance wheat, barley and oats, but also 8 acres of beans.

Yes it was very much mixed farming, which was the norm in those days.

What sort of beans were they?

Feeding beans, grown for cattle and horses.

And you had an acre of potatoes, which presumably were for the family.

Yes: there were eight men who all had a ^{row} run in the field.

And you fed the farm workers as well?

No.

And then you had $10\frac{1}{2}$ acres of turnips and swedes.

That would be for hurdling for the flock of sheep -- they were a hurdle flock.

What do you mean by a hurdle flock?

In those days they were folded all the year round. They put the fertility back into the arable land and crops like swedes and turnips and vetches would have been grown and they would have been hurdled over them and then grazed on the pastures in between.

And you also grew 6 acres of vetches.

Those would have been for the sheep as well.

And 3 acres of other crops: and $2\frac{1}{2}$ acres of clover.

That was grown as a seed crop. It would have been sold to a seed merchant for selling to other farms.

It must have been a fairly profitable crop -- quite a big acreage as opposed to 27 acres of wheat and 49 of barley. The other big difference one notices is the working horses: in 1918 you had 9 working horses.

Yes: there were two regular carters, a head carter and a junior carter, and then the odd horse which was used by the men who ran the dairy. They also bred one or two cart horses as well because of course everybody was using cart horses in those days. They would have replaced some of the working horses and surplus ones would have been sold I should have thought. And we had one saddle horse which my father would have ridden.

15 or 16 horses back in 1918, as opposed to 8 horses in 1926, but 6 of them were still agricultural working horses. And then in 1943 you were into the riding horses.

In 1943 there would have been no cart horses, just cows and heifers. Only 2 agricultural horses and 6 saddle horses, which would have been used for riding.

Another big change was the number of employees - 11 in 1918, 8 in 1926 and 5 in 1943: so you went down to under half the employees actually working on the farm.

I think there was more than the average number of workers on the farm as we had a thrashing tackle - two men would have been occupied on that during the winter months.

So these were employees who would have worked all the year round?

Yes; they would have disappeared in the autumn to go thrashing and appeared again in the spring for the spring work.

When you say they "disappeared to go thrashing", they went to other farms did they?

Yes they did: they would have done quite a wide area, as far as Askerswell, Powersstock, etc.

Would they have been under contract?

Yes, my father would have contracted them out.

I notice that in 1926 you had 5 acres of orchard which you didn't have before: whereabouts was that?

The orchard was behind the cow stalls, and there was another small one by the barn at the other side of the railway line there. Of course in those days cider was one of the perks. There was another orchard opposite the mill in ^{New Street} Eastbrook Lane. That was the largest in fact. I think some of those behind the buildings here were mostly eating apples, but the others were cider apples as well.

And you actually used to make cider in one of the outbuildings out here didn't you?

Yes, at the end of the house here.

What is lucerne?

That is a crop which is deep rooted. It's the clover family and will produce several crops in a year. Being deep rooted it was not affected by dry weather and you could cut and cut again. Very good for the horses. One acre of that in 1926.

So the animals were rather secondary to the crops?

Yes: it was mainly a cereal and sheep farm.

And the dairy would have been secondary?

When the war came of course there was a switch to growing more cereals and increasing the dairies. Dairy cattle seem to have appeared in the 1920's - 1926 or 27, when there were 17 dairy cattle in calf, and in 1943 they hadn't really increased.

And those would all have been milked by hand?

Yes they would. I think the milking machines came in a little earlier than 1943.

When did you have your first tractor?

It was during the war - it must have been about 1938/39.

We've got a list of milk prices here, starting in 1922 going up to 1931. It started at 1s.5d. per gallon in 1922 and went down to 9½d. a gallon in 1931, in January of that year. Why was that: what happened in the 30's that altered things?

From the early 1920's to 1929 most of the milk went to local factories, independent factories, and then was sent to London and there was a milk crisis in 1930, before the days of the Milk Marketing Board. The milk factories had the monopoly and dictated the price every year, and there would be a meeting every year with the milk factory and the farmers where they tried to negotiate the best price: so it looks as if in 1931 there was a big drop - about a third - in the price per gallon, and presumably that was when the milk crisis started. I know the Bridport Milk Factory went bankrupt - that could have been in 1930 - and after that there must have been difficulty in getting rid of the milk. I'm not sure when the Milk Marketing Board was formed - somewhere in the early 30's - and when they came in of course there was a buyer for all milk, which was the turning point of the milk industry.

And that's when people started keeping more cows?

Yes, when there was an assured market - no guaranteed price of course. But then they began to expand.

Another thing you used to do at that time was to catch wild rabbits and sell them.

Yes, there was a plague of wild rabbits when we were children. ^{I can remember when the} By ^{here was} the late 1930's they were really getting out of control and doing a lot of damage to crops. They then started employing rabbit catchers and there was quite a sale for the rabbits: in fact it became a proportion of the farmer's income.

So you think there was a big change in farming during the second world war?

Yes, in fact I think one could say it was a revolution. One started to notice it about 1938/39 when it was fairly obvious that war was coming and the Government was obviously worried about the shortage of food and were beginning to give more attention to farming. In fact there was quite a fillip amongst young farmers clubs and the district discussion club. They were formed during the early part of the war to educate farmers really. There were no young farmers clubs before the war. They were really trying to educate farmers in modern methods. Then of course there was a District Advisory Officer; Ralph Whiteman was the District Advisory Officer for West Dorset.

What about agricultural colleges? People didn't go in the same way to agricultural colleges did they?

No they didn't. Prior to the first and second world wars there was an emphasis on agriculture at Beaminster and a lot of farmers' sons went to Beaminster Grammar School where there was an agricultural section. In fact I think Ralph Whiteman was educated at Beaminster Grammar School. A lot of the larger farmers' sons seem to have gone there: Eli Lentall at Upton Manor Farm was there.

Do you remember when Eli Lentall was at Upton Manor Farm?

Yes: he came there as a manager originally: I'm not sure what date that would have been but it was before the war: in fact it

must have been 1935-ish - just guessing. His farm was used as a demonstration farm - there was a film made there.

But the farmer who appears on the film is called Thomas Nye: does that mean anything to you?

No.

And Eli Lentall was the manager at the farm?

Originally yes. It was owned by Major Nicholson from Mappercombe Farm where Admiral Crutchley lives.

And how long did Eli Lentall stay there?

He managed it for Major Nicholson, and when Major Nicholson either died or sold he must have bought the farm - at least rented it. And then when he died his son-in-law took it over.

And it was sold to the Crutchleys eventually?

I think the Crutchleys must have bought the estate from Nicholson - ^{that's} just guessing.

We were talking about the revolution in farming which took place in the late 1930's and then really accelerated during the war.

Yes: it was mechanisation and the use of artificial manures, nitrates, which revolutionised farming. And then you saw the increase in dairy farming and small herds which were 15-20 cows, and then herds becoming 40-60 cows, and of course later there were 100's and 200's.

And I suppose the countryside looked different here because there were far more crops, and during this revolution crops became less obvious and there were more animals.

Well I think you saw more cereals. In the mixed farming days you saw a variety of crops - flax was grown during the war, mostly on the hillside here: it was a flax growing area. And there was a flax mill at Netherbury which was revived during the war when they started growing flax in the area which was taken to Netherbury and treated.

And the old mill here was a flax mill wasn't it?

I think it was grinding corn for feed.

You say your father owned the old mill as well?

Yes he did. That was used for grinding corn for the sheep, and later for cracking cake which was also fed to the sheep. And I think it was used until about 1930-ish when he sold it off and a couple from London came and did it up and took all the old machinery out. They left the mill - in fact he produced his own electricity.

And who lived in those cottages along there? Along New Street Lane past Mudlark there was another house or cottage which has now fallen down.

Where John Hyde lives, in Mudlark - his parents lived in that one and the top one was beginning to fall into disrepair. In fact I seem to remember an old chap living there - it was in very primitive condition, mud floors and mud walls and things - until it fell down around him or he died, and then it wasn't economic to repair. I remember my grandfather was going to bottle cider and he had some early German wine casks, earthenware ones, and one of the rooms was stacked full of these.

What about the other cottages coming this way? There's the old mill - who lived in that cottage?

There was no-one living there: but there must have been someone living there at one time because part of it was a house, but it was quite small. There must have been a miller living there at one time.

Coming in this direction, there were 2 of your farm workers living in the other two cottages opposite the old barn: did the old barn belong to you?

Yes it did. That was originally thatched and it was burnt down, when my grandfather ^{first} ~~did~~, and rebuilt. Obviously when it was rebuilt corn was mixed on the raised platform at one end and there was a trap door so the sacks could be lowered to a wagon below.

And the cottage which is now one was two cottages - 12 and 13 Loders.

I first remember those one being occupied by the carter and one

being occupied by the steam engine driver for the thrashing tackle.

And was this machinery yours - did you have a steam engine?

Yes, we had a steam engine and one thrasher, and a special thrasher for thrashing clover seed.

We have a picture in front of us of an old steam engine with a lot of people standing beside it, who at the moment we can't recognise, but you remember somebody who still lives in Bridport who used to drive yours?

Yes, the chap who used to drive my father's steam engine - he might be able to give us a clue - his name was Bill Dean. In fact the building at the back there looks very much like my father's barn which at one stage was burnt down: and that is the sort of gang of men who would have gone with the thrashing machine.

Of course there were quite a lot of fires in Loders: we have got a lot of photographs of them - mostly thatch fires I suppose.

Yes: one was this barn and there were two cottages in the lane opposite the house - these were before my day but I remember people were still talking about them!

I've just been showing you a photograph of the old Tudor barn outside which was allowed to fall down: have you any idea round about what date it might have been?

Well I think it must have been a Tudor barn and part of the original homestead here - a separate building, not part of the original house. In fact it was beautifully fitted out: the area on the top was divided into 4 very large bins where all the corn or product could be tipped. It was all lined with tin right up to the roof so rats couldn't get in there. I remember it being in nice condition.

When did the roof fall in?

I remember when we were children the wall on the left started to subside and my father had it rebuilt, and when we left here it was still in very good condition. It was probably lack of thatching.

I can see the outbuildings there where you have got the stables.

Yes, those were originally the cart horse stables and later became the dairy. Well, they were cart horse stables, then they became

hunter stables, and then they became the dairy.

And you've got a big rick there.

Yes, the area above - that was the stack yard. The hay, and some corn, was brought down there and stacked in that yard and fed to the cows and other animals.

And what about the other side of the yard, which we can't see in this photo?

That was the orchard.

Yes: and to the left where the buildings are?

The bottom half was cow stalls and the top was cart horse stables. In the middle is a water trough which could be used by the horses on one side and anything in the buildings in the yard on the other side of the water. It was divided by the wall and the gate, so anything let loose on one side could drink in that trough.

And how did you keep the trough full?

There was a water supply to it, I think by gravity, and it came from across the road - from Mr Crabb's farm across the road.

From that stream there?

I think it came from higher up - that's just the overflow.

And there was another building also, across to the left.

That was for rearing calves.

And what about as you go out of the back door on the left-hand side against the wall by the road?

That was a smithy: there was a furnace there and a repair shop.

This is where you shod the horses?

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No, this was in my grandfather's day I should think, where they did all the repairs to the heavy machinery. It has been in disuse for as long as I can remember, just a collection of ancient tools and scrap iron. In fact next door to that was a couple of pig styes, and also the sewage system where I imagine all the drainings from the cow stalls and the piggery went into there and could be taken out into some container and taken out onto the land. That's why you've got such a good garden!

I don't seem to be able to grow a tree in the centre of the yard there and I think it's because as you dig down it's pretty wet: I think you come to clay.

Yes, I think you do.