

**MR PHILIP SYMES**  
**Born 1st February 1930**

Philip Symes was born in number 1 Box Cottages, Uploders, one of eleven children. He has two sisters still living in the village, Bertha Young, still at number 1 and Mabel Skeets at number 3 Box Cottages. His father, Frederic Symes and his mother, Emily Gale, both came from Loders. Emily's mother's maiden name was Travers and her family can be traced back to the C17. Sarah and William Travers owned Uploders House in 1756.

Philip's parents both worked exceedingly hard, his father cultivating five gardens, to keep his family in vegetables, then going on to start farm work at 7 am. His mother, like the majority of the village women, was an outworker on the nets. Apart from this, she brewed home made wine from all manner of fruits and vegetables, as well as cooking, cleaning and washing for her large family. She also used to cure rabbit skins and barter them for fruit.

Everyone knew everyone else in the village, when Philip was a boy. He and his elder brother, Oscar, used to lie in bed, after the lights were out and, as a game, they would name everyone who lived in all the houses from Folly Cottage to Loders Mill. When Philip left Loders School at the age of 14, he went as an apprentice to his uncle, Charlie Gale, the blacksmith at Uploders, where he stayed for nearly six years. They shod hunters and carthorses and the occasional donkey, did wheel bonding, repaired ploughs, cultivators and harrows and made gates. At the same time he was learning welding, with somewhat inadequate equipment.

In 1949 he went into the Navy to do his two years' National Service and, when he came back, there wasn't enough work for him with his uncle. There were no longer the horses to shoe, so most of the traditional blacksmith's work had disappeared and welding had taken its place. Philip now works for a firm of agricultural and plant engineers on the Saint Andrews trading Estate.

On 26th March 1951, Philip Symes and Jean Rice, from Poole, were married in Saint Mary's Church, Bridport. They have one son, who is the Assistant Manager of a bank in Bath.



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**1 Box Cottages, Uploders.**

**Interviewer: Pat Hughes**  
**Yondover Farmhouse**  
**Loders**

**Date: 4th December 1990**

Int: Tell me about your parents.

PS: Frederic Symes, my father and Emily Symes, my mother. Her maiden name was Gale. She was a Lodgers person and so was my father. On my mother's side it goes back; her mother was a Travers and it goes right back then to 1700, I think it was. They owned Uploders house then, the Maltravers.

Int: Was that associated with Matravers?

PS: I think it was. It was a French family originally. Harold Brown wrote a village report\* on it, it's mentioned there and I think they owned Uploders House and 2000 acres of land in those days. I don't know too much about my father's family; on my mother's side, much more seems to be known.

Int: Do any of your relations still live in the village?

PS: Yes, Bertha, a sister, Mabel, a sister and Phyllis, a sister. Bertha Young still lives in 1 Box Cottage and Mabel Skeets lives in number 3 Box Cottages. I had another sister, Amy and Ruth, who died at two years old, a brother, William, he died a fortnight ago and a brother, David, killed in 1943, in the Navy. We were 11.

Int: You all lived in that cottage?

PS: We were all brought up at number one. Gradually farmed out, I think, as we got older. There were only two bedrooms and one room downstairs with a lean-to on the back, you see, no water or bathroom.

Int: Where did you get your water from?

PS: Pump at the back, you see, which was shared. It was then three cottages. They were originally thatched, until about 1936, I think.

Int: Tell me about your early life, you went to Lodgers School?

PS: Yes, we went to Lodgers School at 5 years old and that's the only school I went to. I left at 14 and then did an apprenticeship under my uncle, Charlie Gale, the blacksmith at Uploders. I did nearly 6 years apprenticeship.

Int: Tell me a bit about it. What was the business like then?

PS: When I started we were still shoeing horses for Mr Bishop, who lived here, he had 12 hunters in those days and there was still quite a few horses on the farms, cart-horses. This was in 1944.

Int: Just towards the end of the war. You were too young, of course to have done any war service.

PS: It was still that changeover period, with a few tractors coming in, but mostly the equipment was still horse drawn and we did at times convert different things to be drawn by a tractor, you see, that was used for horses. That was some of the work, you see.

Int: Tell me a bit about shoeing horses at that time.

PS: We used the forge, with coal, washed smithy breeze, they called it then, which was quite hard to get towards the end of the war and we did have to switch to coke at one time, but it weren't quite as controllable. Smithy breeze is a washed small coal and you can keep a nice small fire with that, but coke, you've got a job to control it, it spreads so and you get the heat where you don't want it, that's the problem. We used to put our iron together with the heat of the fire in those days. That was before we had welding, which we've got today. Each piece had to be got to the right temperature, brought out on the anvil quickly and hammered together.

Int: Tell me about the types of horses you shod.

PS: We shod hunters and also cart-horses and the occasional donkey.

Int: They all came to you?

PS: No, we used to do about 5 or 6 horses at which is now Crutchleys, Grays Farm we called it then. We used to do those cold, take the shoes over and fit those cold. You had to be much more careful trimming the hoof to keep it level. It did need much more care. With a hot shoe it burned and fit perfectly, but with cold shoein' you had to be very careful not to take away too much in one place, otherwise you couldn't get round to a level base again.

Int: You say that the Bishops had about 12 hunters.

PS: Yes, they had about 12 hunters; they used to take in visitors during the summer that used to come down for holidays and also for riding and they used to stay in Yondover Farmhouse.

Int: Was there sometimes a queue of horses waiting to be shod?

PS: Sometimes two or three; you didn't want too many in one day, it was very hard work. All the hunters' shoes we used to make ourselves from the strip of iron, but the cart-horses we used to buy the shoes in sizes and just put the tips on and shape them to suit the foot. For cart-horses we had about five different sizes and then of course we used to cut the metal a certain length for a certain size of shoe on a hunter, you see. The last price I can remember, before I went in the Navy for National Service, was 26/- for a set of new shoes on a cart-horse. That's £1.30, isn't it! In those days, of course, I started work at 15/- a week, which is 75 pence and, after ~~five~~ <sup>six</sup> years, was earning £3. That was in 1948.

Int: So 26/-, when you were earning £3 for a week's work. How long did the shoes last?

PS: It was according to how much work they did on a hard surface, you see. On a farm, they would come back in in perhaps a month or 5 or 6 weeks' time and have them taken off, the hooves trimmed and the shoes put on opposite feet, you see, changed over. That would only cost them a part of what new shoes would cost, you see.



Int: Did the hunters have to be shod more often?

PS: They had to be shod 'cos most of those did road work, you see, with people riding them.

Int: What sort of nails did you use?

PS: Real horse nails. They went in different sizes for different feet and they were shaped so, as you drove them, the tip was chamfered off so it turned and came out, so that you didn't drive the nail too deep, otherwise you got lifted out from underneath the horse.

Int: Did that ever happen to you?

PS: Oh yea, you have to take the rough and tumble with that sort of job.

Int: How did you find it when you first started at the age of fourteen?

PS: Not too bad really, because over the years we'd worked on farms during the war, from 12 years old, we were let out for ten whole days a year, either pickin' up potatoes or helpin' with the harvest for 6d an hour, you see. We were allowed ten days off school for that, so we were always used to working on farms.

Int: There's a technique, I suppose, for lifting a hoof so that it's not too heavy.

PS: Yes, it looks much harder than what it is.

Int: Sometimes the horses lean on you too.

PS: They do, and that is a problem with a cart-horse, but only once did I get one that leant on me and I couldn't get out and I shouted and two of 'em came and pushed the horse up. I jumped out, they let go and it sat down in the road, so it meant to go down anyway! The thing you had to do is, when something like that happened or you got kicked out from under, you went straight back and got on with it again, you see, otherwise you'd never go back. You must do that; fall off a bike or fall off a horse or anything like that, you must get back on, even if you don't stay there very long, you must make yourself do that again.

Int: What about back troubles?

PS: I never suffered any back trouble when I was doing that job, but from quite a few years ago, I've suffered from a back injury. It does play up now and again if you stay in one position, you know, bent over, so what I try to do is not to do that.

Int: You're still doing blacksmithing?

PS: Well we do some blacksmithing now, no horse-shoeing or anything like that. We do agricultural engineering and mostly welding; I do repairs and making up ironwork and things like that. I work for a chap called Don Townsend, in Bridport. We're agricultural and plant engineers really, more than blacksmiths and we're on the Saint Andrews Trading Estate.

Int: You did other things apart from shoeing horses?

PS: Oh yea, we did bonding of the wheels. George Leaf of Powerstock, he did all the woodwork on the wheels and we did the bonding - that's the steel bond put round the wheel to pull all the joints together and hold the wood together. We used to start at 5 o'clock in the morning when we had that to do, so we got that clear before we started on the day's work!

Int: How long was the day's work, when did you finish?

PS: It wa'n't too long a day really, we used to start normally at 8, 8 'till 5 and Saturday mornings, but if we started at 5, we still finished at 5. We used to do other things after that, if it wasn't hay-making, we used to go dancin' or something like that! It was a good healthy life, you never really took any notice of time and work, I don't think, in those days.

Int: What about fires? It was a bit hazardous with sparks, I should think.

PS: It was a thing you sort of got used to and you got burned a few times, but you sort of gritted your teeth and carried on with it, which you were made to do in those days, much more than they are now I think, you know. I think you were brought up with the idea you were going to work and earn your living and that was took for granted.

I got deferred to the end of the apprenticeship and I went in the Navy in August 1949 and did two years National Service. When I came back to the job again, a lot of the work had disappeared by then, my uncle was getting older and he was more interested in plumbing, you know, farm water schemes and really there wasn't enough work for me to do so, 'course I never worked in Loders after that. I worked there for about two months, but it wasn't really very satisfactory.

2 Int: Tell me a bit about the changes, from when you started as an apprentice to what it's like now. Techniques, for instance.

PS: Oh, it's much different. When you get an apprentice now, 'e goes to college one day a week; there was no colleges we could go to then, you see. The only thing we did get was, we 'ad an instructor that came once a month from the Rural Industries, to teach welding, but I mean, you couldn't learn much, it was only a very small welding set that he brought then. He didn't believe in welding, you see, because everything that was put together should be put together in the fire, according to my uncle, because 'e'd always known that, you see. You can't teach an old dog new tricks! 'e wasn't interested in the welding, but this chap, 'e used to come and I gradually picked it up. He came to the forge. I've done welding ever since and I do more welding now than I do anything else.

Int: Did you mend tractors?

PS: Not tractor engines, there wasn't too many about, but we repaired ploughs and cultivators and harrows we used to do, we used to make up sections of harrows. Another thing we did a lot of, as the changeover was coming from horses to tractors, we used to make up draw bars for rollers, you see, to make them suitable for towing by tractor, rather than the high frame they used to have, to be on a level with a horse.

Int: Did you do any wrought iron?



PS: Yes, we used to make gates and things like that. Before I started there, the gate at Loders cemetery was made; I think that was made in 1936 or 7. The only thing that I can remember doin', not long after I started, was painting it. They unhung the gate and brought it and I painted it in the road - you can tell 'ow busy it was in those days - on some drums, you see! It could do with painting again now, looking at it. We did give it a coat of liquid lead, which was a very small tin, which I could only just lift off the ground then. We wouldn't be allowed to use it now, I shouldn't think.

Int: Did you make some of the old Dorset gates with the iron bars through the wood?

PS: Tha's right, we used to make some of those. 'Course all those were riveted together and the holes that the bars passed through were actually punched hot, this is the all steel ones. Mr Leaf, at Powerstock, made the wooden ones. We used to make the strap ones that had the steel straps going through, that were riveted where they crossed and punched and riveted in the ends. There are still quite a few of that pattern, not in very good repair. Wrought iron was used for the wood and metal gates, which stood the weather much better than mild steel. This is why all the old iron work is still in such good condition now, as against mild steel, which is used today.

Int: Doesn't wrought iron rust?

PS: Nowhere near as fast. It's not as clean, not as refined and of course dirt doesn't rust. This is why cast iron, you can bury it for hundreds of years, pipes, and you lift them out and they may have rust attached to them, but they're not rusty.

Int: You must have been at school with Arthur Crabb, I suppose.

PS: Arthur and Maurice, yes. I think Maurice went on to another school, he was a little bit younger. It was just coming in that you had to go on to a Bridport school, but we missed that. The school leaving age was 14, unless you went to the Grammar School.

Int: Can you describe the village when you were a child.

PS: The difference between then and now is really something. My elder brother, Oscar, and me, we used to sleep in the same bed and after they'd put the light out and that, we'd name everyone in the village, from Folly Cottage to Loders Mill, every house and we knew everyone. I wouldn't like to try that today. There were so many old characters in the village then, I only wish that I'd had a camera, like I got now, I could have taken their photographs and really kept them, because there was so many small farms and everybody who worked on it was a character. I always remember, Upton Manor Farm, in those days, was owned by Major Nicholson and the farm manager was Eli Lentall and he was a marvellous man. He was a very strict man, he liked everything done properly; you could go on 'is farm and 'e did'nt mind where you walked, as long as you shut every gate and every gate would shut, without string or anything. Every door on 'is barns would close properly, every hedge was right, everything was as it should be.

Int: That was a demonstration farm during the war, we've got the film, 'A Farm in Winter'.

PS: My father's in that. We saw that at Loders Ex Servicemen's Hut, which is now the Village Hall; we saw that just after they made it. I was talking to Reg Ascott, who married Eli Lentall's daughter and farmed at Upton Manor for some years afterwards and he saw that film in Tobruk, during the war, in an old shelled out cinema. 'E said you could 'ave knocked me down with a feather, when that came up on the screen. They brought it out for that purpose; it was made to show around forces abroad, for information, to see that everybody was doing their bit, trying to produce food. 'E was on the War Ag. Committee too; 'e used to go around and tell them 'ow much they 'ad to plough up, sometimes 'e wasn't too popular! 'E was one of the straightest men\*\* you could ever meet. 'E would say what 'e meant; in fact 'e wanted to keep me working in the blacksmith's shop, not to be called up for National Service, 'e didn't succeed, but 'e did try. He thought it was more important to 'ave someone to carry on the blacksmith's shop than it was to have just one more going into the services.

Int: Your uncle was getting quite old by then?

PS: Yes, I'm not sure how old he was, but 'e was getting on then. 'Course there was no-one else to take it on, no-one else took it on then.

Int: Could you possibly write down who lived in each cottage, all the way down the village.

PS: I'll try. I can still remember quite a few and, if I think, I can visualise what they looked like. I've got a few old photographs, you see, there were so many relations, aunties and uncles. That was an uncle that I worked for; there was an auntie and uncle had Rose Cottage, Uploders, Harry and Elizabeth Crabb. She knew a lot about the history of Loders, she was a marvellous woman. She could relate back quite a few years, because she took an interest in it. Like Mrs Taylor\*\*\*, she was telling me that she's got an account of every child that was born in Loders out of the Parish Magazine, or the papers for years and years and years, she's got the cuttings. It would be a great shame if they were lost. She is a marvellous woman. I always remember, she always had a birthday party for Roy, he was an only son and three or four of us used to go and 'er husband, Fred, 'e used to make one of these boards with pinnin' the tale on the donkey and it always looked so simple until they put the blindfold on and you never knew where you were! They used to entertain us with games like that. It was always quite a jolly evening. She's always lived in Pine Cottage since I can remember and her mother used to live, she was a Mrs Hines, she lived further up the road, just beyond Uploders House, by Lockshill, this way\*\*\*\*. She was very good at needlework, then she came and lived next door to Mrs Taylor. She lived to a grand old age and she was still doing needlework. Roy was about two months older than me, I think, the same as Arthur Crabb.

Int: Who was Mrs Baker?

PS: Mrs Baker was Mrs Hines' daughter, who was married to Harry Baker, who was a painter and he used to paint all the coaches and wagons and they used to look really beautiful, the colours and all lined and lettered. He used to do those in a small workshop attached to that house.

Int: What other characters in the village can you tell me about?



PS: All the men who lived on the farm at Upton Manor, Freddie Crabb, 'e was the only man we were allowed to throw a rotten potato at, but not try too hard to hit 'im, Eli Lentall used to tell us! Then there was old... 'e didn't work at Upton Manor.... Tommy Collier, 'e was what we used to call a 'strapper', which 'e took so many chain of 'edging to do for a certain sum of money, you see, but of course 'e always wanted to draw a little sum of money before 'e started and o' cours 'e'd spend that in the Crown and gradually the hedge 'd never get done. 'E used to do quite well!

Int: Was Harry Crabb related to Arthur and Maurice Crabb?

PS: No, Harry Crabb, 'e was an uncle of mine. His father was Alfred Crabb. He lived in the village, then as far as I know moved to Powerstock. He was an old carter and they were related ... he had a brother, Jack Crabb, who lived next to the school, whose son was David Crabb, who was Head Gardener at Loders Court, who had a daughter, Jessie\*\*\*\*. A lot of the families, a brother and sister married a brother and sister, quite often that happened, because I s'pose there was no travel out of the village.

Another good character I can remember was Ted Crabb; that was another family of Crabbs again and he was a carpenter and he lived just next to Knowle Farm, the next house, in fact the cottage adjoining Knowle Farmhouse, he had a workshop at the back, which when we walked in there as boys, we were ankle deep or more in shavings and 'e made coffins as well. 'E was a marvellous man, little stories they used to tell you to impress you. It was a marvellous life, really to watch all these things, and it all went on in the village. There was a blacksmith's shop at Uploders, then there was another blacksmith's shop, before I can remember, opposite Home Farm, at the bottom of the hill, where the Chapel is, where Mrs Hyde had the shop, next to that. There was another one where the car park of the Loders Arms is. There were two thatchers there, Felix and Harry Legg which, when I was a boy you often seen them, pushing their bike and a ladder on their shoulder and all their tools and they used to walk to where they were thatching their houses.

Int: Do you remember Percy Bowditch?

PS: I remember him, he was the dairyman at Upton Manor. I always remember that bit of the dairy, because my father used to help him out by milking on Sunday afternoons, to give him a break and, o' course, being a nosy little boy, I always wanted to go on and watch. All the milk had to be carried down over the steps into the dairy below, whic' meant quite a lot of work. of course, during the war they had land girls as well on the farms.

George Ellery was another character; I don't know what he ever did, 'e used to work on the farm next to Loders School, Rob Tulley used to have the farm then, it was an actual farm then, where the Barn House is now, it was Waddon Farm. 'E was quite a character, 'e used to dress up in a frock coat and a top hat at times, if it so took him. Of course we used to chase him and have a bit of fun with it. 'E used to work on the farm as well, but what 'e ever did in 'is earlier life, I don't know. Everybody used to poke fun at 'im, us boys did. He was a bit eccentric, we'd take the mickey.

Then of course in the earlier days there was two village carriers, George Ellis, who lived at Uploders. That's another thing I can remember, there was a wooden bungalow on the opposite side of the road to the forge and I can remember seein' them assemblin' that, George Ellis's. Of course his son now lives at Home Farm. The other carrier was Macey, we called 'im Mickey Macey, he used to do a carrier's service then. At Raikes, we used to call it 'Macey's corner'. This corner here at Yondover was 'Bishop's corner', not this hill, but the next hill was 'Randall's hill', because George Randall was in the farm that Maurice Crabb has got now, you see.

Int: What about the church at that time?

PS: We used to go, not as very young children. We went to the Chapel as very young children, because it was across the road from us. The time we used to like going was Harvest Festival, to see all that lovely fruit we never saw any other time. Of course they used to allow us children in the gallery in the Chapel, until one of the older boys used to reach over and turn the clock hand and it used to strike and they used to turn us out of the gallery. It was high spirits, really, it wasn't vandalism. They weren't interested in what was going on really, I s'pose and they had to do something. We went to church, we went to confirmation lessons and we were all confirmed, I think. We used to go to church, two or three of us, quite regular on a Sunday morning. I never went to Sunday School, I don't know why, we went to church, but I never went to Sunday School. Mr Willmott, 'e was the vicar then, I think. He came just after the war, in 1947, he was an ex-army chaplain, that's right. There's a story Sir Edward le Breton told me, but I daren't put it on the tape. I'll tell you without the tape!

3 Int: Do you remember Sir Edward le Breton?

PS: Oh, very well. I think the first time I ever remember seeing him was just before Christmas, each year, they would bring a catalogue into the school, or Lady le Breton would, from Selfridges or Gamages, one of the big London firms, with toys and all the children could choose a toy out of the catalogue, to the value of half-a-crown, which you were presented with when you went to the Christmas party at Loders Court. At the party we either had a conjuror or some other entertainment and a tea and you came away with your present and an orange and then p'raps a few nuts or summin' like that. Then you had a coach, to take you down, picked you up and took you there. They were very, very nice people and he did a lot for the village and also all us boys were all encouraged to play every sport you could. You almost had to play billiards, you 'ad to box, wrestle, play squash, tennis, everything and he had all the equipment and he would buy the equipment and he was so keen on sport and physical fitness 'imself. He was a marvellous man, his physique was really something.

Int: Did he teach you himself?

PS: Yes. His billiard cloth did get ripped. During the war we had evacuees from Southampton and I've seen them swing from the curtains in the smokin' room and landin' on the billiard table cloth and actually rippin' it. He didn't make any fuss about it. He just got this firm to come down and put a new cloth on - very expensive, I expect during the war it must have been terrible. But he encouraged all the boys in every sport, really.

Int: He let you read the books in his library too.