

Marlene Boyle

Marlene's story starts in Freckleton, seven miles from Preston where she was born, the eldest of six children. She talks about how her mother and father met, both coming from farming families. During a thunder storm, an American bomber crashed into Freckleton school killing all of the children in one class including Marlene's cousin. She came to Fordham in the back of a furniture van with a few chickens, a dog in a kennel and a bike and Ernie Lees who lived with them until he got married. Growing up on a farm and working the land around Warmingford airfield at Hammonds Farm where they kept pigs, chickens, a milking herd and later reared milking heffers. She wasn't very fond of school life in Fordham, not very impressed with her teacher Mrs Miller and trying to avoid going to church with her grandma, the rector at the time being the Reverend Oddie. She talks about an old tramp in the spinney in Chappel Road and Jimmy Brown, who committed suicide. She mentions old school friends, Fred Waters, Trevor Rayner, Rodney Sweeney, Roy Cope, Jimmy & Terry Cant, Carol Cope, Edna Wright, Liz Fathers, Maureen Donnelly, Joyce Warren and Cecil Rayner. The runways on the airfield were built by Archie Howie and her brother's best friend, Robert Harris, lived in the watch tower. She talks about prisoners of war who helped on the farm and Mr and Mrs Bowls from Valley Cottage who helped to look after Marlene and her siblings. She talks about her dad shooting his thumb off with a shotgun, her mother's difficult encounters with the cows and her dislike of the bulls. Younger siblings getting into trouble with molten lead, gypsies visiting for the pea picking season, her brother, Bill, trying to put cats through the sheep deep. Lots of visitors to the farm bring supplies: Greengrocer, butcher, milkman, the fishmonger called "coddie", the Corona van, the Co-op with the bread etc. Bill Lake of Aldford Garage, Eight Ash Green, who ran a bit of an unofficial taxi service for the school children and Marlene's mum before Windmill Coaches started up an official service and lastly, Peter Nice, a regular on David Bakers rambles who lived in Eight Ash Green and would cycle and walk miles. He sadly died in a road traffic accident.

Interview by Jess Jephcott at Ditchling, Quilters Green, Fordham.

Theresa Jephcott in attendance.

A Fordham Local History Society project.

Transcribed by Theresa Jephcott April 2012 & January 2014.

(JJ) This is an interview for Fordham Recalled and we're here today in Fordham, this is the 10th April 2004 and the interview is with Marlene Boyle and thank you for coming Marlene to talk to us and we're going to be talking about your life story as part of the Fordham Recalled project that we're running in conjunction with the Fordham history group. So, as we always do, we'll start at the beginning, so could you please introduce yourself. What was your name, given to you when you were born and when were you born?

I was born in Preston, Lancashire on the 2nd August 1944. I was born in Preston, but that's not where my parents lived, they lived at Freckleton, which is seven miles from Preston.

(JJ) What sort of house, well what was your..?

Well my father lived, that was my father was a farmer but when my mum and dad married they had me, they lived with a person called, two people called Mr & Mrs Easton, until we moved down south which was fourteen months, no, yeah, fourteen months after I was born.

(JJ) So what were parent's names?

Jonas and Margaret.

(JJ) Jonas Rhodes?

Rhodes and my mother's maiden name was Woods. My father was one of eleven and my mother was the only girl, she'd got three brothers. I think my father used to say, they used to

get dressed, when they used to go out at night, they used to have to get dressed very quick so they could pick, get the best pair of shoes, there used to be a fight for the best pair, they must have all had the same size feet.

(JJ) So the Rhodes were a Lancashire family where they, as far as you know?

Yeah, as far as I know, as far back as I can remember, anyway. My mother's farm was, before she married my father, was in Manchester which is now a golf course and she used to say how big the farm house was, how big and square and draughty and, I wish I'd listened to her more now actually, but never mind.

(JJ) So mother, Margaret's parents' names?

Was Woody & Lena.

(JJ) William Woods and Lena.

They farmed, as I say, in Manchester which has now been turned into a golf course but I believe some of the sheds are still there, they've made them into the club room, club house.

(JJ) So your parents, sorry, your father's parents, what names were they, who were they?

My father's parents was Jonas and Elizabeth.

(JJ) Jonas Rhodes.

Jonas Rhodes and Elizabeth, her maiden name was Parkinson.

(JJ) Did you know them, what did they do, were they farmers as well?

Yes I knew them, my grandfather, he died when he was 69, which I thought then was old, he did look an old man, but I think they did in them days at that age, but he had very bad asthma and he never seemed to do, he never, trouble when you're children you don't really take much notice, he always looked as though he was old, but he wasn't. Mother had, my grandmother worked very hard with eleven children. She had very, very long hair and she used to plait it all and put it up on top of her head but a really nice, a really nice person. My mother's parents, my father, my grandfather, or my mother's father was always give the impression that he was very strict, and I think, it made, you know, it made my mother work hard. Because she'd got three brothers, and I think she treated her more like another son and she had to work really hard, he was very, he ruled the roost when they were farming in Manchester. She had to be back on time, if she went to a dance, you know, but she was a farmer's daughter same as what I am but she...

(JJ) Do you know where they met, your parent's?

I think, well when me mum moved from Manchester, she moved to Newton which is on the other main road from, there's two roads to Preston, Blackpool or Preston, there's two Preston roads and one was on one road and dad was on the other separated by farm land and, I think, that's how they met, 'cause they was both in farming and this that and the other.

(JJ) They used to bump into each other.

They used to bump into each other, yeah.

(JJ) So you were born in Freckleton in 1944, were there any other children born in Freckleton, in the family?

No, I was the only one.

(JJ) And then you moved or the family moved.

Yeah, before we moved though, I don't remember this, of course, but I was only a baby but, an American bomber crashed in the middle of the main road at Freckleton. One wing landed on the school and the other wing landed on the café, killed, I think, all the children in one class including my cousin and, I think, I think I was seven weeks old, but I might have been younger than that. Don't know why but 23rd August comes into me mind, but 'cause there's a seat in the graveyard, 'cause they've got a huge square grave and my mum, my dad and my grandparents and my aunt, they're all buried within a few yards of this big grave.

(JJ) And this is in Freckleton Church?

In Freckleton yeah, churchyard yeah. It just completely smashed the class up, it was a thunderstorm that brought the plane down, it wasn't nothing to do with fighting or anything and the Americans were so sad for what happened they built Freckleton a playing field and since then there've been a memorial put up and the reunions were every year but there's not many of them left now of the Americans that was in the war, sort of thing, so they kept coming back and so..

(JJ) A sad story.

Very sad, yeah, yeah.

(JJ) So what made the family move, what was the decision?

Because of the land, there wasn't enough, there's more land down here, plus, everybody else seemed to have come down. The Lofthouses were already down here, I didn't know until just recently because John Lofthouse has just died, he came down in 18 something, I don't know what year. The Baines', the Chamley's and the Bradshaw's all came from up there.

(JJ) The Bradshaw family that we know in Fordham?

Yeah, and the Baines', well actually the Bradshaw family lived up the farm that me mum and dad bought. Me mum didn't know, hadn't even seen it I don't think, the Baines' looked at it for him, so they bought the farm and I don't think my mum saw it till she come, till she came down, wondered where she was going. Yeah, so they bought the farm off David Bradshaw's grandfather and so we came down from up north in a furniture van, this is what I've been told, which I believe is true, furniture van with a few chickens in a crate and crates and a dog in the kennel some coal and me and probably a bike 'cause we'd no, there was no cars or anything.

(JJ) So how many acres did they have?

Well it's a job to say because I think it was 48 but we rented a lot of the airfield, a lot more than that. To start off with, when me dad first came down, he rented the land right to the top past Rowney's but somebody wanted part of it back, so we rented where the figure eights were, where the planes used to turn round and we had this huge mound of soil on our land where the rabbits all used to live in. When we was kids I wish we'd appreciated more what the yanks had left behind really, you know, there's quite a lot of things now that people would

love to have had if it hadn't all got dumped, but anyway, so we came down and there was no electric, no water apart from a well, no transport apart from a bike and my dad just worked very hard. We made the road out of part of Penlan Hall, they pulled Penlan Hall down after the Americans had finished with it and took that and put it under, for rubble, under the road.

(JJ) So this farm, which farm is it now today, what is it known as today?

Hammonds Farm.

(JJ) Hammonds Farm, which the Bradshaw family had.

Had, yeah, can't remember who had it before that, anyway the Bradshaw's had it.

(JJ) So that's quite close to the airfield.

On the edge, right on the edge of the airfield.

(JJ) That's Wormingford airfield.

They took a lot of it, they took the land from Hammonds to make part of the airfield and ...

(JJ) So father was a farmer, it was mainly arable?

No, no arable at, we did have a little bit of arable, we used to grow a few turnips and things like that but never any corn, we was, he had a dairy herd of 40, we had a few thousand chickens, this is, you know, as we built up, about 800 pigs.

(JJ) So it was a pork farm more than anything.

Yeah, all the pigs went to Sainsbury's, every pig for 40 years went to Sainsbury's so that's, so anyway, our local shop wasn't Fordham it was Chappel and we used to bike down there in the early years, we never got, we eventually got a car but there was still rationing and the chap who used to own the shop in Chappel was called George Munson and he used to get me dad sugar which was rationed, he used to get a big 56, he used to get a lot, so he'd take it up north to his mother and brothers and sisters and I remember once when he got stopped by the police 'cause he had to check his petrol, because petrol, I don't know what you couldn't, there was something wrong with petrol, you had to have it, not dipped..

(JJ) Coloured or something?

Coloured, yeah that's right and he was absolutely petrified that they were going to open the boot and find this, this sugar that he shouldn't have had.

(JJ) Contraband sugar.

Yeah, he shouldn't have had.

(JJ) So what were your earliest memories really?

My earliest memories, oh dear me

(JJ) Were only of Fordham I presume?

Yeah, we used to kill our own pigs, which I think sometimes, I don't think we should have done that really, 'cause the police were always there to check, because I mean the police

used to come and watch you dip your sheep, that's strange really but you used to have to have a policeman there when you dipped sheep.

(JJ) Why was that?

I don't know really, but they did, that's strange.

(JJ) Use of dangerous liquid.

You think of these things sometimes and you think was it really true. It must have been, I don't know.

(JJ) You could have dipped somebody else and done them some harm.

Well yeah, oh what else was there?

(JJ) So why did you kill your own pig?

We used to cure all of it and eat it.

(JJ) So it was for personal use?

Personal, yeah, yeah. I think me dad might have sent his mother some up north but we used to kill our own pigs.

(JJ) But the main herd were shipped off to an abattoir, presumably?

Oh, yeah, yeah that's right and we used to keep sheep as well.

(JJ) And that's the last you saw of them?

Yeah, 'cause when you take dock sheep's, lambs, sheep's, lambs tails now you put an elastic band round the tail but you used to burn them off in them days which is with red hot iron, about that wide, and you used to sit the lamb on its bum and just burn its tail off and there was no blood or anything 'cause it just sealed it all, you know.

(JJ) Sounds pretty gruesome, doesn't it?

Yes I know, but in them day, you know, cutting the pigs teeth and that, I don't think they do that now, they just snip all the teeth off, keep out of the way of the sow and take the little pigs in the house in a basket or keep them out the way because they used to squeal at the sow, it's upsetting, because it's not a nice thing to be chased by but, err what else can I tell you..

(JJ) So brothers and sisters, where there any?

Yes six, five brothers and sisters, Jonas was born two and a half years after me, then Janet was about nine months after, eleven months after Jonas and then there was Dot, David and Bill, there were nineteen, was it...

(JJ) What was the difference in ages?

There's twelve years between myself and my youngest brother.

(JJ) Who was Bill?

David.

(JJ) David.

Yeah, twelve years, so mum had six children in twelve years.

(JJ) So he was born in 1956.

Yeah, now what else, what can I say now? Loads of things but just trying to remember them, especially in the early

(JJ) Well early memories really.

Early memories.

(JJ) So you being the oldest were you, did you have to look after the children?

Not really, no, when mum had all these children, dad got help for her which was Mrs Waters, which is Fred Waters' mother. She used to bike up and look after us and do some housework and, you know, become a really good friend and..

(JJ) So Fred Waters, was he the same age as you?

No, he's six, he's seven years older than me.

(JJ) But you got to know him as he grew up.

Yes, but we got to know them all 'cause Fred, had got a brother and he'd got three sisters and then when I'd started, that was before I started school, but before I started school, I started, well my birthday was in August, which I would have been five in August, so I started Easter, because Fred was the only person that I knew in Fordham and he was leaving school in the July so I started earlier so he could keep an eye on me for a little while till I got used to it but I didn't like school at all, they used to take me in, kicking I think, carry me, I can remember been carried in, kicking my...

(JJ) That was Fordham school?

That was Fordham school, just hated it, I hated it, but anyway, Mrs White was the teacher, that's the only teacher that I can remember at the time was Mrs White and she used to, when dad was late picking me up, which he sometimes was, never late going but been a bit late being picked up. I had to go sit in the schoolhouse and she used to give me these iced gems, you know, until he came. After Mrs White left, I don't know, there must have been other teachers in between, but we had this teacher called Miss Miller. Now I've always got this idea that she lived down where David Cannon lives, not in a house but in a caravan, but I'll really have to check that up 'cause she was a, I don't know how she ever become a teacher because she didn't teach us a thing. She just took us on nature walks, she taught us how to freeze when a car came past which is stand to attention and freeze and we used to go on these nature walks and she'd take us down the river swimming. Now, however she did that I do not know because, I mean, we used to get changed, undressed down there, swim in this dam, which was very dangerous.

(JJ) Where was this, close by..?

Yeah, down the bottom of the hill, Blare Fisher's, I'm sure that was called Blare Fisher then, there must have been a person called Blare Fisher that lived there. The more you say the

name, the more stranger it sounds but that could be checked on I suppose, she used to take us down there and ..

(JJ) But you didn't like schooling much?

No we could have learned a lot more if we hadn't had her I tell you she was, you know, a really bad, a terrible teacher. We used to, bellbine that used to grow, them big white flowers, used to seal the end up and blow and they used to pop and do these silly things, you know.

(JJ) So no OFSTED in those days!

But she no, no I just don't know how, I would love to see a picture of her to see whether I remember it, can remember her, I thought she had her hair tied and I'm sure she used to, she brought her dog to school sometimes, I'm positive she did but the more I think about it the more I think I'm, it's not right, but I'll have to ask some of the people I went to school with at the time.

(JJ) Can you think of any names at school that you'd still see about today?

Urm...

(JJ) In your class?

Urm, in my class, well Trevor Rayner was at school with me but he's a bit younger and there was Rodney Sweeney but I don't see him and there was Roy Cope, he was older, but they're the ones I can remember, urm Jimmy Cant, Terry Cant.

(JJ) All lads by the sound of it.

Yes! No, it was Carol Cope, it was Carol Cope. She lived at Fordham Hall and we always, shouldn't be saying this on tape really but we always thought she lived with her grand with her mother and father but it turned out that it wasn't her mother and father it was her grandmother, she thought they were but I think she knows now anyway but I know she was petrified of the place 'cause I was only little and living out where we lived I never really come to Fordham other than go to school, you know, you used to get invited to parties and I used to go to Fordham Hall, you know, go to the toilet and they used to run away and leave me, I didn't like it very much and there was Carol, there was Edna Wright, Liz Fathers was Liz Ratcliffe at the time, she's older but, there was Maureen Donnelly who was older. Maureen Donnelly lived in the house what used to be in the car park of The Three Horseshoes, that's where Maureen lived.

(JJ) Knocked down a few years ago.

Yeah. Urm, no what do you call it lives in, Joyce Warren still lives in the village, her name is Joyce Eve now, she was older than I was, there's quite a lot still about actually, Cecil Rayner he was the same age, well a bit younger than Fred, he's still in the village.

(JJ) Rayners a good local name as well.

Yes that is, yeah.

(JJ) So, if you didn't particularly like school what was your favourite subject if there was one, at all?

Art I think, I've always liked nature, always liked walking, and that, Mrs Miller taught me that!

(JJ) What about church, what about the church did you go to church much?

No, well yes, when no...

(JJ) Where the family church goes?

Well my family up north, my grandparents, especially on my dad's side, were very church, not strict church, but they really went to church. My dad's brother George he was the church warden for absolutely years and years and years and when my grandma used to come down and stay with us at the farm, she used to go to church and she used to want to take us and we used to run away and hide, which was really rotten.

(JJ) Which grandmother was this?

That's me dad's mother, and that wasn't, you know, we shouldn't have done that, but we didn't every time hide, but we just didn't, I don't know, just when you're kids and living on a farm and...

(JJ) Who was the rector then, do you know?

Um, Oddie, yeah Bill Oddie, no not Bill Oddie, he's a naturist, isn't he?

(JJ) No, in the books I'm reading he's the reverend Oddie, yes,

No, he wasn't Bill Oddie at all, he was called Oddie, but not Bill Oddie. Yes, Bill Oddie, but no Oddie, sorry! Another teacher we had was called Mr Gladwin or Gladwell and I always remember in the garden at the farm we found a bead, which was quite old, a blue one as I remember, and he said he'd like to see it and I took it to show it to him, and he never gave it me back. I'll never forget that, wasn't worth anything, only as big as your thumb nail, but that was an old one.

(JJ) It could have been Roman or...

Yeah, anyway he never gave it to me back, so that was it, but I shall always remember that.

(JJ) So what about home, what did you do for fun? A young girl growing up, what was...?

Just used to play on the farm really we never seemed to...

(JJ) Didn't wander very far.

No, we used to go for walks every Sunday. We used to walk for miles and miles and miles.

(JJ) Who's we?

Well, brothers and sisters and just used to take off...

(JJ) Take a dog with you or...?

No not now 'cause we had a sheepdog so um, we, later on we used to have a dog with us yeah, one called Pip, but we just played in general really, we didn't go anywhere, apart from, going to the pictures, or anything like that.

(JJ) What was going on at the airfield, was that all closed down?

Well, when we first moved to the farm, the Americans were still there, not that I can remember but they were, apparently, but they went soon after we arrived and my brother's best mate at school was Robert Harris, who lived in the tower, who lived in the watch tower type thing and, 'cause that was farmed then by, you know, Archie, Archie's father, farmed it Archie Howie, Archie Howie's father was the one that actually built the, did the runways and when he died his son carried on but only renting it, of course, off the ministry, whatever.

We all learned to drive on there and there was lots of stuff that was left behind and lots of drawings on walls and writing, we never took any notice of, which we should have done really.

(JJ) Was father a drinking man, did he visit the pubs?

No, yes, no he wasn't a drinking man, he did, I say he didn't drink, he did, but not to excess he just bought a whiskey but no

(JJ) Where would he go to a pub or..?

Urm, I think, The Shoulder of Mutton, but not that I can really remember, I think later, a bit later on in his life he probably, when he got a bit more, you know when he'd be off the farm a bit more, but no not, I think he liked a whiskey, I think, but not, he had very bad, he used to have very bad headaches, very painful migraines.

(JJ) Did you ever hop off yourself to the shops in town?

No, no not till, not really, no not till after, 'cause when urm, me dad went in 1959 or something, I think it was anyway he decided that he'd alter the house, the house was urm... quite old, there's been a house there for a long time but I don't think actually in that spot and what it was, the roof was like that on one side but on the other side it went right down, you could touch the guttering, so in some of the bedrooms when you got out of bed you'd hit your head on the ceiling so what he did, he chopped the farmhouse completely in half so that was open to the elements, open straight across to the airfield and we'd got no kitchen, got nothing, so we, he built another shed which we called the egg shed which we used to pack the eggs in which was made of brick and that was only a square shed but that was dry enough and we lived in there, we had our baths in there and we ate in there, there was a cooker in there and everything but we slept actually in the house.

(JJ) A bit crowded with the chickens, wasn't it?

Yes, no, it was called the egg house 'cause we packed the eggs in there not because they lived in it. So....

(JJ) When you say we, all of you, the whole family?

Yes, yes six of us then and um, we used to run up to bed, up a plank, a scaffolding plank and if it was raining the water used to run straight down our necks, ready-made shower, um yeah, David was in a pram, me brother David was in a pram. Dad had built the farm up then and he'd concreted everywhere 'cause it was all mud at one time. Every one of the pig sty doors was painted black and white stripes, all the barn doors, everything was, that was a complete modern farm by the time, you know in later life, the yard used to have to be swept every time there was a bale of straw carried across it, that had to be swept up, all the drains were swept out, cleaned every day, every pig sty was cleaned, washed out every day.

(JJ) This was father's way or?

Yeah, this was his way.

(JJ) Tidy person.

Yeah, then later on in life, you know, when I worked there, I did it, you know, we all did it.

(JJ) Why black and white doors?

Don't know, black and white striped doors. That was in one of the farming magazines, Best Farms.

(JJ) Diagonal?

Straight down each plank was different colour, one was white, one was black, I used to paint those and the garage doors and that. My brother now, where he puts his car, he's done his black and white as well but absolutely, you didn't, there wasn't a you know we used to, when the pigs used to go to Sainsbury's, and of course we used to drive them all out of the pig sty's, a chap called George Letts used to come round. He was the Sainsbury's pig buyer and he used to walk amongst the pigs and he used to say that one, that one, that one and he used to spray the top, spray its back red, or put a red cross on it and we knew that the week after that, them pigs had got to go. And me dad, we used to feed the pigs on swill, they were all swill feed pigs. To start with, it all come from Tottenham, Tottenham pudding and then he got the swill from Butlin's holiday camp when he used to go up at half past five in the morning, pick it up in swill bins, and he used to go then because there was no traffic and various schools and Earls Colne grammar school, Fordham school, they used to pick up and all the schools, Colne Engaine, Earls Colne, the lot.

(JJ) So, what were your duties on the farm?

Urm, calf's, clean the pigs out, pick the eggs up, feed the chickens 'cause we had..

(JJ) Where did the eggs go?

Well, they went to London, urm..., they were picked up, went to London and I used to, they used to go in, in them days, they used to go into the individual trays into wooden crates, then the lorry used to come and I used to write messages on the lids, then the blokes in London used to write messages back, if we got the same... like Manchester United, 'cause I've been a Manchester United supporter all me life and I used to get rude remarks back.

(JJ) Yeah, I bet, very rude ones, I should think.

Yes, I did.

(JJ) What about the little lion stamp on the egg, was that something that was done in your time?

Yeah, it probably was, I don't know, it probably was yeah but anyway that's where the, that's what I used to do feed, 'cause dad built this, what they call, a battery house. It had a thousand hens in battery, or nine hundred and something in battery houses, battery cages sorry, then we had fifteen chicken cabins up the road, alternative, one there, one there where the road goes right up to the top of the road, each one had got a light outside it. It was just like Blackpool illuminations and each one of them sheds, I forget how many chickens we used to have up there, say eighty or ninety, something like that. So, they all laid in proper

nests with, on straw or hay, and they all had to be, all the nests had to be made, you don't make them every day but you used to, every now and then, say every fortnight, you used to have to go and nest the hens, you used to put fresh hay or straw in the nest, not straw so much because if you put straw in and it was barley straw or wheat straw they used to scarp the stuff out to find any bits of barley or, it was best with hay really.

(JJ) Nice and soft as well.

Yeah,

(JJ) Where you fond of chickens? Some people, you either like them or hate them.

Yeah, no, they were ok, they were ok, yeah. No I didn't mind them, you know, you'd get fed up with doing the different chores you got to do every day, but no, then we used to breed, rear calves and we used to feed them with milk and.

(JJ) What sort of cattle where they, what breed?

Fresian's.

(JJ) Fresian's.

Yeah, and we used to have a few sheep, when dad was alive, we had sheep urm... anyway, when dad had cut this house in half and redone it all, we moved in and, you know, it was all smart and he went on holiday and never came back, he died at 47 and left my mum at 39 with six children.

(JJ) What did he die of?

Brain hemorrhage, just went to bed and died, so that was... and he was on holiday and he died in the same..

(JJ) Quite a shock to the system.

He died in the same house, where he was, he was in his mother's house when he died. His mother had, fortunately, died in the April. If she hadn't have died in April, the shock of him dying would have killed her, I think, but she died in the April.

(JJ) When was that? What year did he die?

1961, yeah it was, 19...

(JJ) So what happened after that? Totally unexpected, how did the family cope?

Well, um, then we got, dad and mum had left us with Mr and Mrs Bowls, who looked after us after Mrs Waters stopped, Mr and Mrs Bowls lived in Valley Cottage where Alan Farrant lives now and erm.. I remember when I was told that dad had died I was right at the top of the airfield and I think it was one of the workmen, incidentally that was Ernie, that was Ernie when we came down from up North, Ernie came with us and he worked, he worked for mum and dad and he lived in the house

(JJ) Ernie?

Ernie Lees and he came from Kirkham and he lived with us until he got married. Erm... well after he died mum was left with six children and with me being the eldest at seventeen and David was five, I was the only one that had left school, she decided that she'd sell, well..

(JJ) What was the farm known as then? What was the name of it?

Hammonds Farm, still named yeah. Well, when my dad bought the farm I think he paid just over three thousand pound for it and mum put it up for sale in 1961 or whatever for twenty thousand! Erm... but that never sold, so she changed her mind and we carried on and then, eventually, my brother left school and we sold the dairy herd, we didn't milk any more, we decided that we'd, oh incidentally, we were the first one's in the area to get a bulk tanker, bulk tank 'cause the milk used to go away in churns when, you know, oh and another thing I used to have to do was wash all the dairy, that was the main, that was my first job in the morning was to cart the milk across the yard, actually I've got the pictures of me in the paper, 'cause the papers come and spoke to us and sort of dads life story and I used to wheel the milk across the yard in churns on a trolley and then that used to go in this big tank and be cooled with a big paddle and then it went away to, erm... where did that go to?, can't remember now, big bulk tanker used to come for it. 'Cause the bulk tanker goes through the middle of the village now 'cause it's got 'the white stuff' written on it, don't know if you've noticed it.

(JJ) No I haven't.

Yeah, it's called the white stuff. Erm... before that we cooled the milk, we took it across in churns then had to tip it into a big, two big, into a big tank which came out slowly down a corrugated, erm... it was about that wide, it was corrugated on both sides and through that run really cold water so the milk then run down the corrugated, then into the churn and then that was taken away in the mornings and then after that we got this bulk tank but I still had to bring it across the yard from the dairy to the, there wasn't no pipes, like some now go straight from the cow into the tank but that all had to be man handled across, and done all that. Well, going back to when dad died, mum didn't sell the farm she decided to sell the dairy herd and rear calf's and we bought fourteen calf's, at a week old, less than that perhaps and they used to be in little individual pens which was fed on milk until they were old enough to go off milk and then we'd sell them in calf, we'd put them in calf and sell them as in calf heffers but...

(JJ) You had a bull or was it A.I.?

A.I., I think, we did used to have bulls, yeah, but I think it was A.I., I can't really remember now, but anyway...

(JJ) What about the pigs, you kept them?

Yes, kept all them, Butlin's we'd packed up, Ron West took, shared Butlin's with us, how Ron West started actually, was with us. And he took half Butlin's with us to help us out. And then after that, it came from Epping Piggeries which was in London and we also used to get waste bread. It used to come in huge big lorries, of waste bread. Half the cakes weren't out of date, they were just tip them up in the yard and we used to... When dad was alive we'd cook was swill in vats erm... there was this big boiler house that was all individual vats with steel with steam pipe went underneath everything. You'd put the raw swill in there but it wasn't raw because it was all cooked anyway and then the steam used to come through to cook the swill and you used to have to stir it up with a big shovel with a long handle on it and..

(JJ) Sounds horrible!

Pardon?

(JJ) Sounds horrible!

Well, no, no it's alright, it smelt nice, I tell you. Mix it up with a bit of mash for the chickens, they used to love it, they really did, I can smell that now and then me dad and later on me brother, they used to have to take it out of the tank with a bucket and into another one and push this trolley round the yard full of this hot swill and tip it over the walls for the pigs and it sounds, really does sound strange to say it now, but that's how we did it. And then later on we got rid of them vats, as we called them, and bought a huge big tank like you see on the backs of lorries, you know big huge like boiler, the swill used to go up in an augur into that. And you used to turn a nozzle and it used to run out into the truck but then we got a motorised truck, but me brother still had to throw it over the walls to the pigs but um...

(JJ) You said when you moved to the farm there was no electricity.

No.

(JJ) So how did you..?

We had Tilly lamps

(JJ) For lighting..?

For lighting we had Tilly lamps and then we got a big generator, a huge big generator erm... which you know when you leave the batteries switched on for electricity.

(JJ) So when did the electric come to the farm?

Oh, I can't remember.

(JJ) Was it a general electrification of the whole of the village?

Yes, well it must have been or out on the outskirts because we were quite a way off the road you see.

(JJ) They'd have to trench through for you wouldn't they?

Yeah, and then the water came from a well, and that came from a well for a long, long time, we had a pump.

(JJ) Was that boiled or where you safe drinking the water straight?

No, safe drinking it. The well is still there, but just not used anymore, but we had an engine over the well and we used to switch it on and it used to pump the water up.

(JJ) So, no gas or anything like that?

No, no.

(JJ) Cooking was how?

We'd gas, Calor gas like whatever you have now, Calor gas things.

(JJ) For cooking?

For cooking. I'm going back to the first, come on trying to get there, we had prisoners of, when dad was alive, we had prisoners of war help us, and they used to, some of them used to come in lorries, and I can't...

(JJ) What year was that?

Er well, prisoners of war were still about, probably 1947/48, I don't know really when they were still here.

(JJ) So you were still really young then?

Well actually, these ones come in, these ones come, I think, from Earls Colne, but they come in a lorry and dad used to say that they used to take the seats out of the lorry, fill it full of muck, wash it all out, put the seats back and off they'd go because this was quite early on because I know one of them they always said he was as thick as a pitch forkiness but he spoke in German and of course Tom White who used to help us out at the time, he could speak German and he heard what he said you see and me dad said, you know, you send him back next, tomorrow, he won't go back alive. You know, after what he said so, but after that, we had prisoners, we had other prisoners that came and helped us but can't think what they were called, one called little Jack, who I think I upset, well he used to be so little they used to push the muck out of the cow shed it used to be so high he couldn't see where he was going. But I think I insulted him once and I didn't know at the time until I got older what I'd done. Mum used to cook him a breakfast 'cause we used to have full cooked breakfast every day and he used to eat in what we used to call the washhouse and I put some dog biscuits on his plate once, one day, and he threw the whole lot on the fire 'cause we used to have a copper in there, we used to light a fire in there to heat the water and he threw the whole lot on the fire including his jar of jam, I think, that went on as well and chased me, he didn't catch me, but he chased me but looking back, why he was upset, I was saying he was a dog weren't I really and I didn't know at the time, that was just a joke, I didn't you know, I was treating him as a dog sort of thing, and he was German, he got the wrong end of the stick.

(JJ) Why were they still here, why didn't they go back to Germany?

Well, there's a lot of them, there was little Jack, there was a chap called George who had really pitted skin, now he, I've got a picture of him. He lived at Stanway in lodgings and then there was one called Eric who I've, I'm with him in the book, now I don't know when he, I was only, when Eric was there, he was, Eric must have come quite early because I'd only be about two on this picture, I think, he's got a picture of me holding his hand in the garden. Erm, and then the last one was George Schnider, but he lodged in Fordham and then...

(JJ) And George is still with us today isn't he?

And George is still there, yeah he married, he actually lodged in the house near the bus shelter and married their daughter. My sister was his bridesmaid, Sandra Pettican, yeah Sandra Pettican, yeah, and my sister was bridesmaid at Fordham church. She hates the picture to this day, she's dressed in a blue frilly dress with a basket full of red roses and she hates it and this little bonnet on.

(JJ) Do you ever see George now, do you talk to him?

No, no not seen George for a long time. The last time I saw him was when Shelagh was alive at her mother's grave in Fordham.

(JJ) So George stayed here, he never went...?

Never went back no, what happened to the rest of them, I don't know but erm...

(JJ) But there was general good feeling was there with prisoners of war or?

Oh yes, yes

(JJ) One of them was going to put a pitchfork in you.

Yes, part of him was a bit of a Nazi, I think, yeah only I think he was one of a group, I don't think he was one of the individual ones, I can't, I mean, if mum was alive now she, if she could remember, she'd probably say, but I don't know where they lodged. George with the pitted skin, I know he lived in Stanway but I can't think, I keep trying to think the person, the woman's name he lodged with but I can't remember, but Eric and all them, I don't know where they, where they lived or anything.

(JJ) It would be interesting to find out wouldn't it?

That would, yeah.

(JJ) So they came and they just did general labouring work?

Yes, yeah

(JJ) And generally everyone got on well together.

Oh, yeah, yeah, they did. There's no hard feelings, I mean half of us didn't want a fight anyway did they?

(JJ) No, that's right, I'm sure they didn't.

So, erm, anyway.

(JJ) So, how long did the farm go on? How long did your mother ...?

My mother, mother in 1988, mum decided to pack it in.

(JJ) Is mother still with us?

No, she died a couple of years ago

(JJ) So, what happened in '88 when the farm, presumably was sold on?

Yes, it was.

(JJ) Where did all the children go to?

Well, we'd all gone anyway, erm... there must be something else I can say about after when dad died, I mean, Jonas had left school then and erm... and Dolly Waters helped us for a little while, and Freds brother.

(JJ) So where did Fred fit in with this? Fred was a worker on the farm as well, was he?

No, Fred never did work on the farm, his brother did, Donny. Fred went to the Bradshaw's.

(JJ) Oh, so he was with the Bradshaw's for fifty odd years.

Yeah, yeah, Fred went to the Bradshaw's. Donny worked for quite a while and, obviously we had other workers as well, but we reared these heffers. Anyway, when we said about rearing the heffers to sell them in calf, we decided that we would erm... calf them first and keep the calf's, erm... but that was a bit of a problem because you have to milk the cow, these cows that have never been milked before, so it was a bit, sometimes they kicked a bit but um ...

(JJ) So you went on, got married, had children, did you work, after?

Yeah, I married, and then erm... my husband, for a little while, worked on the farm, not for very long, but for a little while and then when Jonas was at the farm my sister helped, Janet helped mum with the housework and that for a while.

(JJ) So this is while you had the farm, what happened after the farm when it was sold?

Erm, after it was sold, erm... well everybody had gone anyway. I was, well actually, the person who bought the farm, I was actually going out with at the time, which was John Coleman and erm... that relationship broke up and then he sold the farm about a year later, so...

(JJ) So brothers and sisters had to find jobs elsewhere or..?

Well they had, Jonas had packed up anyhow, Jonas had left the farm, he decided that he'd like to grow flowers. David had been in the army for eight years, my youngest brother, erm.. Bill had bought a bit of land and now keeps free range chickens and me sister Dot, she moved back up north when she was a teenager, she moved up with her friend who's parents kept The Three Horseshoes, that's where they still are today.

(JJ) And you've stayed in the village ever since, or?

Stayed in the village yeah, I'm in Chappel now but I've lived in the village up until the last year.

(JJ) Well that's quite a story, thank you very much, we did make a few notes before hand and I think we've just about covered everything, but if you think of anything else.

Yeah, apart from I was one of the first people, when I went to Stanway I was one of the first people there to wear a uniform at Stanway School and that wasn't built when I...

(JJ) Where our son goes to now.

Yes and where my grandson goes to.

(JJ) OK, well thank you Marlene for coming along.

Probably something I've missed but never mind.

(JJ) We've got a visit from Patrick Denney who's going to be talking to us now with a view to an article for the local press, I think, of course Patrick is one of the founder members of the Colchester Recalled group. Thank you very much Marlene, we'll end the interview there. Thank you.

(JJ) Right now, were going to have a second go with Marlene because we've just thought of a few other subjects that we didn't cover, so welcome back again. Marlene

I don't know in what order.

(JJ) Well two little points that you've raised, we are going to talk about dad's thumb, that's the important one, tell me about your dad's thumb.

Well, um, I was told, 'cause it happened when he was a teenager that he had a double barreled shotgun, I think it was double barreled anyway, it was a shotgun, and he was getting through some barbed wire, with the gun, and he must have had his thumb over the top of the barrel and he caught the trigger on a piece of barbed wire and that shot his thumb off erm, so I never knew him with two thumbs, he'd always had one thumb, which was...

(JJ) Right or left?

That's asking me now, isn't it? I can't remember.

(JJ) So, that was his story.

Yeah, that was what happened anyway, me dad's thumb.

(JJ) And then there was the time when you used to go with your mum on the bicycle.

Oh yeah, mum used to have a bike and our village shop was in Chappel and she used to sit me in the seat at the back and at the time when we, the farm before we had the cattle grids put in, we used to have a gate across the top of the road and it was another, not quite a quarter of a mile, bit less than that, to the farm house, and she used to have to open this gate and bike down this track which the cows could walk across outside and that particular time they were a little bit skittish, we used to call it, you know, their tails were a bit not quite so calm as they normally are and there might have been a bull in the field as well. So, she left the bike at the top of the road and we walked up the side of the hedge and she walked with me in her arms, in the ditch with this marauding cattle at the other side of the hedge. We may have looked suspicious being that low down anyway only looked like a dog, didn't it really, but anyway she had to crawl all the way up the ditch, quite a way, 'cause these cows were really playing up quite a lot. Mum used to have quite a few things with the cows 'cause dad used to go out sometimes and leave her to shut the chickens up and there'd be a bull in the same field sometimes, you know, it wasn't a very nice job sometimes, you could do it when the bulls were the other side of the field but you can't always trust bulls.

(JJ) No, that's right.

No, I never have liked them, no. I remember once when Ernie was, Ernie was picking mushrooms, because one of our fields was called mushroom field and this bull chased him and he jumped straight in this ditch and the mushrooms just went everywhere because of this bull, but ...

(JJ) Was he curious or was he..?

No, chasing you, they do chase and they're not very nice.

(JJ) He would have done you some harm, I should think.

Yes, definitely, If they'd have caught you. The other quick thing, when me dad, he hadn't got many sheds at the farm, he built his own shed out of straw, which was bales up either side and put branches across the top and then thatched the whole thing, which was quite a huge, we used to keep chickens in it and pigs in it and that field, to us, has always been known as the strawed hut field but that's the reason that field got that name but obviously it's not called that now because names don't carry on do they?

(JJ) Well, some of them do.

Some of them do but this one won't I don't think.

(JJ) What about a time when the children were messing about with some lead?

Oh, right, yes, that would be, the younger ones, I think it was Jonas and Janet, could have been Dot and Bill, I don't really know how many of them there were but they were melting lead in this pot, and somehow it had got an airlock in, whether there was some water in, thing they'd tipped it in or whether it was sand, I can't think which it was, could have been water, but anyway it exploded and it blew up in their faces and of course it stuck to their skin which could have been quite nasty.

(JJ) What all of them?

No, I don't remember who actually it was 'cause I wasn't there, you know, can't remember really, but anyway it did stick to their faces and luckily it didn't go in their eyes.

(JJ) Permanent scarring?

No, no.

(JJ) Well, a bit of luck there, we've got a note here about Jimmy Brown.

Oh Yes, well when we used to bike to Stanway, 'cause we used to have to bike from the farm which was about 2 ½ miles, not sure. We used to leave our bikes at Fordham shop and we used to have to bike past Jimmy Brown. Well Jimmy Brown lives down, used to live down Chappel Road and he used an old wooden house that he'd, Jimmy Brown was a man that came to work in Fordham during the war and never went back. He worked for Gunnery and he lived in this house, a bit of a recluse on his own with this dog, and as kids we were just absolutely petrified of this dog, we never saw it and it used to bark every time we used to ride past and we used to be really frightened to bike past this, even though...

(JJ) Where was this?

Down Chappel Road, just the other side where the spinney is, and there sometimes used to be an old tramp in the spinney with a fire, that didn't help neither 'cause once you...

(JJ) So there was a property next to the spinney not, so this wasn't in the spinney?

No, there was a property in the spinney, but not when I was, called Bratt Cottage, not when I was, I can't remember but the apple tree's still there. This was Jimmy Brown's was going from Fordham, past the spinney, on the right hand side of the road just where the corner is, where the path goes straight across, and it used to be there and erm.... poor chap committed suicide in the end and he died so..

(JJ) And the house was knocked down at some stage.

The house was knocked down, yeah, it was just a wooden house, yeah.

(JJ) And there was a tramp in the spinney, you say.

Yeah, there used to be, there used to be somebody in the spinney with a fire, some down and out, I suppose.

(JJ) Was it the same fella or was it...?

No, no, it wouldn't be Jimmy, no, he lived in the house.

(JJ) Never felt under threat from anything?

No, no, we were just frightened because we was kids really, erm.. Jimmy Brown....

(JJ) Did gypsy's visit that you knew of or..?

Traveller's used to come to the village to do pea picking, used to go to Fordham School with them and they used to live down, just through the farm where the plantation is now..

(JJ) What in caravan's?

Yeah, they used to come in caravan's, through Fordham Hall and they used to come every year to do the pea picking and ...

(JJ) Where they horse pulled caravans or..?

No, I don't think so, no I don't think so, you know I can't remember, I just knew the children really. We just kept away from there because, and then again, we thought we were threatened a little bit by them 'cause they were scruffy..

(JJ) Well that's right.

You know, kids, you know some you could trust and some you couldn't, I suppose.

(JJ) So, Jimmy Brown committed suicide, you knew about that at the time, did you?

Yes, yes.

(JJ) So, how did they find out about it?

Well, he obviously had some, I think some lady in the village used to feed him and this, that and the other and...

(JJ) And she just missed him.

Just missed him, yeah, yeah.

(JJ) Well, another note I've got here is the big hill.

Yeah, when they built the airfield, they obviously scrapped all the soil and there was a lot of surplus and they made this big huge mound on the bit that we rented which was absolutely full on rabbits and when me dad had the farmhouse rebuilt, obviously he did the garden as well, 'cause when he built the farm, re-built the farmhouse, he went right round the farm with another layer of bricks so that the back looked like the front, didn't look odd so the front was

very thick. So therefore, he did landscape the garden. So, he took all the soil from the hill onto the garden. Obviously, he went through the rabbits nests so us kids, well I wasn't much of a kid in 1960 but we rescued some of the rabbits and we put them in a big cesspit rings, you know when you make cesspits they got these huge, we put them in there to look after them but, they got out, we didn't realise they dug holes.

(JJ) Soft soil as well!

Yeah, so that's another daft things we did, yeah.

(JJ) Another daft thing, what happened to the cat?

Oh right, that's me brother, Bill when we used to um dip the sheep, as you do, to stop the fly from getting on them, my brother was only young, wouldn't be very old, might have been five or six, he decided that he'd dip the cats but I think he put them in churns and put the lid on and I don't think they, I think he drowned them, drowned one or two.

(JJ) Did he get in trouble for that?

I should think he did yeah

(JJ) So, the cats were pets rather than..?

Well, no, farm cats, obviously some you could get hold off but when they were kittens you could pick them up couldn't you and he thought he'd dip the cats, didn't work.

(JJ) Fish!

Ah, these were the people that used to come to the farm to, you know when mum couldn't get out, we used to have things delivered, we used to have the Corona come round and he used to live...

(JJ) Fizzy pop!

Fizzy pop, he used to leave us a couple of crates of Corona, he used to come round. We had er, the green grocer man called Cudmore from Wakes Colne or Colne Engaine area, he used to come round with all the green grocery stuff, we had a fish man come round, we used to call Coddie, with the fish and also we used to have Jimmy Brown come round, you know Jimmy, Jimmy? no not Jimmy Brown, Charlie Brown.

(JJ) Charlie Brown, oh from..

Jimmy Brown's corner, Charlie Brown, yeah he used to come, 'oily oily' man, we called him with his paraffin things hanging on the back...

(JJ) Tilly lamps.

Yeah, and he used to come round with the tins of, this was I think before Cudmore came round, this was the early days and we used to have the butcher, was from Chappel.

(JJ) Butcher, yet you had your own pigs!

Yeah but, after a bit, you know, we used to have the butcher come round after that, this was later on, he used to come round and that was from, that was Beddett from Chappel. Urm, the Co-op used to come round with the bread, he used to come round with the bread lorry,

bread van. The Sunday papers were bought by the milkman, he used to come, we used to have the churns of milk, he used to bring the Sunday papers um, there's nobody else is there, there's no other things to eat is there?

(JJ) Candlestick maker?

No, we never had one of them, yeah so we had, everything was sort of delivered, so that, you know um...

(JJ) Very much a 50's activity, I remember it well.

Yes, Coddie came for a long time, you know, Coddie, but he came for a long time with the fish.

(JJ) Final item I've got on my list is Bill Lake.

Yeah, Bill Lake used to own Aldford Garage in Eight Ash Green and he had a bit of a taxi, well I don't think he had a bit of a taxi but he did take us, not me, 'cause I'd left Fordham School by then, dad used to take me, later on they got the taxi service for Fordham School to pick the children up from the outskirts which would be us from the farm, erm, I don't know, I think, Shelagh Tronic, but I think she was later...

(JJ) Considered too far to walk by the look of it?

Yeah, erm, Bishops, they used to go on it and then when mum used to go to town, she used to phone up Bill Lake and he used to come to take her to town then pick her up bit later on and then after Bill Lake packed up that's when the Windmill Coaches started and Windmill Coaches erm picked up my children then from Wash Corner. There was a coach from Wash Corner which went round all the outskirts, down Penlan Lane, Chappel Road and completely all the way round again. But Bill Lake, I've still got, at Christmas Bill Lake used to give us all gifts, to his customers, and I've still got one of the clothes brushes with the garage's address on it and his name on it, he was a nice chap was Bill.

(JJ) It's nice that it's still going.

Yes, it is, yes but I just said to the chap in the garage the other day, this is the first time that I can remember since my dad was alive that I'm not a user of the garage for petrol cause it's so much dearer than what Sainsbury's is now. Sainsbury's used to be, they used to keep up with Sainsbury's. If Sainsbury's went down, Aldford Garage went down, doesn't now 'cause they're not in the price watch scheme anymore, so quite frankly I'm not going to pay 78p a gallon, whatever it is, for petrol when I can go to Sainsbury's for 73p or 74p, so now, I thought no I'm not, until you put your petrol down, you can, you can stick it..

(JJ) That's right, another character, that we've recently got to know is Peter Nice, is he somebody that, he was recently killed on his bicycle.

Oh yes, Peter.

(JJ) Was he a Fordham chap or was he..?

No, he used to live at Eight Ash Green and he came on all our walks with us when Sylvia and Nigel Gaspar used to, you know, and he was quite a, very knowledgeable chap, he used to spend loads of time in the library reading the books and he used to come on walks, you know, he was a, he used to bike for absolute miles, I mean, particularly up on a bike for twenty miles and then walk ten and biking back again and I'd just seen him in Sainsbury's

the week before he got killed and told him that David Baker was doing a walk this month and he said thanks very much and he'd be coming but unfortunately he got killed, he's being buried on Friday, I think.

(JJ) Is he, do you know where, where the funeral is?

No, I don't but I'll find out 'cause I'd like to go to the funeral.

(JJ) Absolutely.

We thought, I don't know what, if he's being buried or he's being cremated but I thought it would be a good idea to have his ashes scattered on the Essex Way or somewhere but, I don't know, that's up to his family isn't it? But perhaps we could plant a tree or something, you know, or a seat's probably a bit expensive.

(JJ) He'll be sadly missed.

He will, good job his pictures been in the paper, because people, so many people knew him, you see his picture, and they know him and they realise now they won't be seeing him anymore, he just gone. I just, I don't know what, you know, he said, in the paper I think they got it wrong and I think he hadn't gone to Walton and walked and was biking back, not at quarter past ten in the morning he was obviously going there I would have thought perhaps.

(JJ) Going to see his mum, somebody was saying.

No he hadn't got, his mum, didn't mention mum in the paper, it mentioned two brothers and a father.

(JJ) Ok, well that concludes our interview, finally. Thank you very much and we'll finish the tape there.