

Dick Burrow interview.

Here we are in the house of Dick Burrow and I am Carol McNeill with the help of Roger Layfield doing the recording and I am going to ask Dick how much he remembers living here as a child and the history and what he remembers about that and how things have changed over the years. O.K Dick, right, so we were talking about how your family arrived here they had come into Rusland.

D.B. My mothers side did come down into Rusland and ended up at New Close Farm for a while and then after the first world war, when agriculture was allowed to slump, they moved to a poor hill farm over in Woodland called the Hill and nobody in those days concentrated on one thing. They did a bit of everything, 5 or 6 milk cows, shorthorn variety, which weren't very heavy milkers but it was all they could afford to buy at market, they wanted a new cow an' uncle George landed up here on the scribe because the horse had died. Well they couldn't farm without a horse but they never had a top quality horse, it was a ten-bob-job, if you know what I mean, that was how it was in those days. Before things became mechanised you used to get quite a lot of help from the farmers round him and of course he helped back and they did in those days and the farm workers from this farm, when they had finished the hay making, for example, they'd go and help someone else who hadn't finished or was struggling to get on, or as ill health had held them back or something. It was how it was done. The farming side of the youths came down from west coast, it wasn't Cumberland then, it was Westmorland, and they came down, I believe they came down Hawkshead, sort of moved slowly down hill. My parents and ancestors on mother's side they petered out of agriculture over at Woodland because they only had one son and umpteen daughters and daughters were not, nowadays they would be land girls and they would step in and do but they weren't expected, dairy work, yes, but to go out and spread muck and things like that, they weren't, they weren't expected to do that. They would do dairy work and perhaps look after the chickens but there'd only be a handful, there wasn't a concentrated lot where they'd make a decent amount of money, and also the birds only laid in the spring and summer because they hadn't got them under artificial light in those days, they just had to go with the natural length of day. So things weren't very easy for them in those days. They were mostly girls in mother's family and they married away and disappeared, so to speak, and I know I have got relations around Warwickshire. I've a brother, brother George, and he's in Australia. He went into, in the early days of television, that side of the industry.

I was born here, born in the village down there.

C.M. Lilac Cottage. Lilac Cottage.

D.B. I was born there. In 1939, the day war broke out we moved into this, I always remember that the day war broke out we moved across the road into here. I think we were about the first to have electricity, one bulb, that's all we had. It was massive, the pylons that brought the electricity across the fields then things changed and they altered the direction which the line ran to shorten the length of cabling and the poles that held it up slowly got smaller and smaller. That's the final one the gate at top there. Started school at Colton, that building opposite the church there, started school there. We did have two teachers, a young trainee teacher came and took the infants, the starters for some experience I suppose. The other teacher was Miss Dixon who lived over at Bandrake Head. We had to walk to school across the fields if it was wet we kept to the road 'cos we'd have wet feet.

C.M. Were obviously mainly residential now.

D.B. Aye.

C.M. Can you remember about what else there was here.

D.B. Who lived there now just across the road

C.M. Where Charlie lived

D.B. Well! That was Elwoods, Mrs Elwood and two brothers, Charlie, and they kept two, three cows and that. They were charcoal burners basically, 'cos charcoal was one of the main fuels, I remember my mother had a charcoal burning fire. We used to heat the charcoal up in the fire, get it red hot, pick it out with tongues, put it in the back of the iron, pull the flap down. You could regulate it a bit with a cover so if it was getting a bit low she'd open it up with another load to get it going again and that was the way she did her ironing. They were flat irons but had to stand in front of the hearth for quite a while to get hot. I'll never forget the charcoal burners, they had huts in the wood, they used to have to sit virtually on top of their fires to stop it flaring up otherwise it burnt stuff away to ash, and it just didn't have the sticks of charcoal they would've parcel burnt.

Black Lion Cottage now that was a pub, it was private owned, brewery took it over eventually and that was when the Gibson's moved over eventually and Bob Gibson ran it, he wasn't really run as a pub. Forget who was there before the Gibsons, I was only about ten when they arrived, but they only had a little bar at this end isolated from the other end where they took with residential holiday makers and during the war they had evacuees who stayed there virtually permanently if they could afford it to avoid the air raids in Manchester 'n Liverpool and things like that. Quite rich families they were. Casson's had the forge, Mirus Casson. In the end there were three generations of Cassons, old Mirus, middle Mirus and baby Mirus. It died while the middle Mirus was there but it was pretty active till then because there was a lot of forestry work going on, taking out trees, they wanted this wood. They thought they would need the wood to make those slats and laths that went into the trenches during the First World War because everybody thought that the Second World War would be run on the same lines but it wasn't but that's what they wanted the wood for so they devastated woods round here taking the timber out. They said "what you doing that for" you know well you know there's a war on. That was the main phrase in those days you know. A lot of forestry disappeared in them days and hasn't got replanted. That fell there, Bandrake Head, that was a lovely larch forest, just wiped it out and never replanted but they were going to replant it but it never got done.

C.M. Did you go off to play in the woods

D.B. As soon as we could get away, as kids, me and my brother, Bert Gibson, any evacuee who was willing to be trained! Furthest we got as ten/eleven year olds was that black rock on the horizon, see it's on the horizon towards Coniston there. That was an aim if ours to eventually climb the black rock, did do it but, you know, it's further than you think. The ground goes up and down and you think over the next one, no, it was up and down an up. It was terrific really the amount of distance there was there which we didn't realise was there with this undulation of the ground, but we did it. Peg Lane, how it got it's name I don't know, New House is along there, it must have been called New House because at the time it was a new house you see, then you've got Stony Lane down that way up to Bandrake. Now I can tell you now that was stony, before tarmac came into being most of these roads were pill, used to have places at the sides of the road where you could go and dig this mixture of soil and stone and rock and used to break it up to fill these holes in and tamp it down and that was how they dealt with the roads and tarmac came along, well we thought we were in heaven, really did. Stony lane was Stony Lane when it was christened, there used to be a beck running along side of that, it got to within a few feet of the beck that come out of the woods up there so in the end they joined them together. They had what we called the beck watchers in those days, especially during the season when the spawning, when the trout and the salmon were coming up we could nip down there, keep an eye open for the beck watchers, we could get a fish out we were happy. We can't eat those dad used to say they're out of season. I'd say to dad they're perfectly fresh just because it wasn't the fishing season we fed them to the chickens, put them in a pan, boiled them up and fed them to the chickens, good protein for them and in those days, war days, chicken food was hard to get of any quality, you could get the rougher stuff, the

house scraps went to feed the chicken. Up behind the Manor garden we had a couple of huts where we reared the day old chicks in there, and then we had a couple of huts in that field down there. Dad rented them for ten bob a year or something like that.

C. M. So were you expected to help your dad?

D. B. Oh yeh, that's were I got into poultry. I had a little hut in the corner where I had bantams in for starters till war came. You've got to have something better than that now help the war effort so I had half a dozen real hens you know to produce eggs, household scraps went to feed them. You got a food ration depending on the amount of chickens you got and how many eggs you produced but they weren't all the year round layers like they are now cos they weren't under artificial light. Dad made battery cages on the loft there, mother and my brother put them together cos dad and I struggled but they were good at jigsaws so they helped dad to put it together and up there we could give them a lightbulb and we managed to produce more eggs that way which went to the packing station registered against our name, consequently we got chicken food, maize, grain and that sort of stuff.

C. M. So you must have known all the young farmers round here.

D. B. Young farmers, there weren't many

C. M. Henry

D. B. Henry was a baby. Cos his mother was a daughter of mothers cousin so his mother used to go down to help on New Close Farm, cos they was expecting again, chapel and the dairy and things like that cos they used to separate milk, cream and Chrissy Gibson used to make butter and every Thursday go to Ulverston market and what is the market hall now was a rougher example of what it is now. Farmers used to hire a stall on which to put their produce, eggs, butter, whatever, fruit when it was in season and anything that was in season they could turn a bob or two.

C. M. So you were away for awhile and then you came back here. What sort of changes did you notice when you came back.

D. B. Went away to agricultural college near Preston. What changes were there? The horses slowly disappeared, I know the Watsons had three, you can only work a horse for so long, you're only allowed so many hours a day to work a horse the you had to rest it. That's why the richer families had more than one so they could swop over, carry on, till the tractors came in.

C. M. Dick can you remember anything that was really great.

D. B. Going down Rusland Pool swimming, it wasn't a very big pool, wasn't very deep. It was isolated, if you didn't want to put a bathing costume on you didn't, ha, ha. We used to disappear down there, we used to walk down or go down on bikes. The pool at the bridge was quite a good one to start with but eventually, like all these becks and with floods, the holes got silted in and another hole appeared somewhere else so we had quite a distance sometimes to find a decent length the held us up to swim. We used to go to Coniston lake sometimes, used to go fishing there, perch fishing mainly. I did try trout fishing down Rusland, there were some decent fish in there, but when there was a lack of rain it got very low and you didn't get the big fish then, only in spawning time but that was illegal that was poaching that was. Luckily we didn't mind doing any, yeh.

C. M. I that was your happy days what was the worst thing?

D. B. School was the worst, I don't know wether it got better or not because I'm not experiencing it. I did say to dad after I'd finished school virtually, I didn't know why I didn't like it you know, because I supposed I'd matured a bit I realised what good it was for. That's before I went on to agricultural college you see.

C. M. How old were you when you left school.

D. B. Fifteen, sixteen when I went to agricultural college, I was one of the youngest there. I was about the only one there, doing my course, that was doing it to earn a living from it eventually. The others were there, some of them to dodge national service and some

because they were the sons or daughters of rich farmers and they just wanted for them to have something to do. Probably got more than one son for the farm, two sons you know used to fall out. Yeh that was a good time was that, near Preston.

C. M. Did you put what you learnt into use? Did you come back here?

D. B. No, didn't come back here, went down to Warwickshire, Kenilworth, to a poultry farm there. One of my fellow students went down there to that poultry farm and he wasn't built for work. He was the son of a greengrocers, he had greengrocery shops in Barrow, Oliver Chokers he was, he used to sell vegetables, fruit and things like that. Why he went to agricultural college to learn poultry I don't know cos they only kept bantams and that's what he did when he came out, ran his shops and kept bantams as pets and exhibited them. He exhibited some good birds mind you, at agricultural shows. They don't have the shows like they used to, to have a tent full of poultry.

C. M. Westmorland county show is about the only one I think.

D. B. About the only one isn't it.

R. L. Did Rusland have a show.

D. B. Yeh, I think they had some poultry, not a lot, because not a lot of people kept poultry that was of exhibition quality, we didn't either in the end. Disappeared did the pure-breds, the Sussex and Rhode Island reds which the poultry industry tried to keep pure but they, the Americans again wanted something that produced eggs, not how pretty they looked so to speak. They weren't allowed to come in but they did, they got into Southern Ireland, across the border into Northern Ireland, nipped across from Northern Ireland into Scotland came over the border. That's when the hi-bred came about, we had cross-breds in this country, but they were pure-breds crossed together, not a mixture that the Americans brought in, there were three parents on one side. That ruined the poultry industry to some extent on that side. Used to be caged birds, battery birds, deep litter birds but you can't go intensive now though can you, you've got to keep them free range. You can't even keep straw yards now unless they have access to greenery. I rather like the idea of that, going back to my days when we kept them outside. Had trouble with the fox sometimes. I remember coming home from school once, we were in the school bus, came up Old Brow, over the top there and we had chicken in that field down there, as we came down this brow I looked across and there was the fox running away from the chicken hut. I don't know wether it got any, ha, ha. I said to the bus driver blow your horn will you. That's how cheeky they got sometime.

C. M. In broad daylight.

D. B. Yeh, in broad daylight, probably vixen with cubs to feed you see.

C. M. Do you remember there being any like shops here.

D. B. Oh yeh, when we lived down at Lilac cottage, do you remember Tony Ingram? Well that house where he lived, Miss Crotchet kept it, this door at the side here was the door into the shop. When you went in an a bell rang, kept quite a collection of sweets, jars of them which one do you want, oh lord I don't know, a penny worth, h'pth, if you could get two pen'th of sweets you were well away. Used to work it out that a certain sweet was a better value because it lasted longer, ha, ha, ha. Along there the old post office was, they used to run it when they went on holiday from there. They used to have a holiday, a sort of enforced holiday did the post office staff.

C. M. You must have been one of the first to get a telephone were you.

D. B. The first phone, public phone, still there the kiosk along there

C. M. Yes, still there.

D. B. That was the first public phone. When did we get a phone? We got a phone in when I went off to college so that I could ring home if I wanted anything, you know, for any reason kept in touch, made my mother happy it did. I don't think Bob Bell, he may have had a phone, he should have had a phone with that business he'd got running there.

C. M. Is there anything else you can think of about the area, the farming practices.

D. B. The farming practices compared to today were hard work. To make hay, for example, the stages you went through. They grew it, they cut it, you went along after a couple of days, if the weather had been right, and you turned it and you may do that twice, it was quite green underneath, it was nice on top, if you turned it over it would be green, just as if it had been cut so you had to do that and after you'd done that you'd go along and shake it, shake every little bit out, break it up into smaller bunches. After that you went and what you called, plaited it, and after that, cos it was in mounds. Well, if you were lucky and the weather was right, you could load it onto the horse and cart but if you come to the end of the day and the dew started to fall you'd have to do what what we called coppit, which you pushed some along and then put another heap on top so you got two sections and you raked the top bit so that if it did rain strands of grass let the rain run down it and off you sort of made a little hay stack of each. Hay stacks they were virtually. Then next day, if the weather was good, you'd used go and break them open, shake them out and leave them till afternoon, till the sun had dried them a bit cos the horse and cart was only limited to a number of loads a day you could use the horse for. How many loads that, another two and that's it for today and then when the next one comes in I'd go and get the milk cows in, I'd round them up and they'd be beginning to queue by then cos they wanted milking.

C. M. Did you milk?

D. B. I did do a bit of hand milking. Yes. It was just at that time that milking machines were coming in, so I learned how to do that. When the hay came in on the carts they'd be forked up and forked further back the what we got as children was to be in the barn and then when we were waiting for the next load we'd do what they called tread it, to squash it down. It was amazing what the amount of room hay took up when it was fresh in but over night it would sink, you could get another two loads in and of course if we children trod it we were already pushing it down and that used to be a job. The older you got, the stronger you got the next job you used to put it up on the fork and you have to take it off that fork and toss it back, ye gods! Then of course, cos of the war, a lot of grain was grown then, oats and mixed cereals, you had to stack in sheaths. Combine harvester, horse drawn binders cut and bound it into sheaths and you had to go and stack it in the fields like that you know. Like that, sometimes six either side, twelve sheaths to a stack. Now the combine harvesters thrashes it straight away and the grains bagged and the chaff and stuff is just chucked to the ground whereas it used to go into stacks did the grain and the threshing truck came round with a big coal burning, steam driven machine, you need somebody to look after the bags when the grain was coming in and then someone to look after where the chaff was coming cos you'd got a great mound if the stuff an I used to get that mucky job, bagging the chaff but the reward was I could have some of that chaff for my poultry floors, the shed floors we'd use it for bedding.

C. M. Where would they have grown that grain, which field?

D. B. The one out there, that was one. I don't think they used the one just out from Lilac Cottage, hay, definitely there, but no they didn't grain. The flatter fields in the valley and walls came down to make the fields larger for the combine harvesters. They widened gates ways as well, cos otherwise they couldn't get them through. When they first started they'd rip up the gate posts at one end and part of the wall to get them through. There were big changes then. I was nine when the war started so my formative years were war years. There was the camp up at Grizedale which was for prisoners of war, the Poles were guarding up there. Did we have some Italians up there? They were out working in the fields, some of the Germans they wouldn't let them cos the beggars used to escape. I'll never forget one did escape down at Stone Lane end, overpowered the guards in the truck as they were coming up, he jumped out and ran up Stony Lane. They caught him eventually well into the borders of Scotland, shipped him to Canada, cos they did with some of them that were hi- Nazis and things like that's. Get them as far away as possible so they shipped them to Canada. He escaped in Canada again, got over the border into

America before America came into the war and consequently you see he was shipped back to Germany. It serves him right cos he went up again and got shot down and killed. So if he'd stayed here he'd have been alright, what was his name, Von, Von it was Von something or other. We used to shout at them as they came up the road in the trucks up to the prison camp. Stand there and going "seig heil" take the micky out of them. C. M. Good, well that's really lovely Dick, thank you very much. If you do remember anything else that you think we should include just give me a shout I'll come and make a note of it.

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