INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

Farmer's Name: Pete Anderson
Age: mid 60s
Location: Woodside Farm
Size: 220 acres
Type: Arable

Interviewed by: Anna Durdant-Hollamby
Date:

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Anna: What got you into farming initially? Was your dad a farmer?

P. Anderson: Inbred, [chuckles], inbred into farming. My grandfather's great aunt bought the land just round here in about 1840/45, something like that. And each generation has added to it, so we've ended up with something like, I don't know 170-200 acres, but unfortunately I have two daughters and they're not interested in farming. One's a teacher and ones a physicist, she lives in Germany, but there you go.

Anna: And what is that you farm here?

P. Anderson: All arable, it's pretty tough old dirt here. Have you got a list of questions?

Anna: Oh these are just a guide to just generally help me. We can ignore it at our leisure, it just helps me to go 'oh yeah.'

P. Anderson: So you cover most things. Alan's handiwork is it?

Anna: Yeah, all of us actually, we all kind of collaborated in the preparation of the project in the first term and were just like 'oh that might be a good question to ask' [laughs] but Alan would point out that some questions would be difficult to get answers on. But um...

P. Anderson: You'd like to know what it was like fifty years ago?

Anna: Yeah over the last fifty years and how it's changed

P. Anderson: How everything's changed?

Anna: Yeah.

P. Anderson: When I started work - sorry ? [Anna moving voice recorder to a different position]

Anna: Don't worry I'll just put it over there, it picks everything up very well

P. Anderson: Does it?

Anna: Yeah

P. Anderson: It can tell my dicky heartbeat as well, can it? [Anna chuckles] Um, when I started work, we used to have on the farm. We had about 100 acres when I started work and then we had two combines, very small ones. Father, grandfather and I were on the farm in the winter. And in the summer, we had another two chappies to help with the harvest, and we grew peas, garden peas, wheat, barley and a few potatoes and few other odd vegetables. Because my grandfather really started off, he used to do a lot of market garden stuff, you know? And when I packed up, I was the only one left, it's all packed up really, I'm the only one left, it's all done. I do it all by contractors. But we just grow, basically, one crop per year. It's not monoculture, but each, each year the farm goes down to one crop, but the EEC have now screwed that up, because you have to grow three crops.

Anna: Yeah, I was gonna say, the new three crop rule…

P. Anderson: Yeah, which has shot everything, has put crops up, put everything up. I don't know, well, we've done it, but it's so inefficient. It's alright - I think, really it was basically for places like, say, Poland and Hungary where they have a 200 acre field perhaps and trying to split those up. But over here it's, you know, our biggest field is 60 acres and it's surrounded by two woods and grassland. We get the same biodiversity. What else have we done? Got rid of all the combines. And basically, that's all that's happened, really. Start asking me questions, I'm starting to run out of ideas.

Anna: Okay, yeah [laughs], that's fine. On that whole EU thing, has it brought up other challenges alongside the three crop rule?

P. Anderson: You probably don't want me to go down that route. We haven't got time. The trouble is the EEC is a big, big area, and when you think about it, Britain is the only maritime climate. If you think about Britain, its stuck out there in the sea. Alright, you have a maritime climate down the western side of Europe—I suppose

that might be as big as Britain altogether —but it's a completely different climate to the rest of the EEC. The EEC is basically continental where as I say, you've got extremely cold winters and warm summers - but Britain, as we are, we have a temperate sort of thing, we don't get too much. And they are, on the whole, trying to make one thing fit everybody. It's like the Chinese trying to have one timezone right across six or however many they've got. It means some poor devils get up at 3 in the morning and it's bright, you know, or it's dark and it doesn't work like that.

Anna: Yeah, exactly, I mean I've only talked to one other farmer this week, but definitely the EU and its restrictions seem so, often so irrelevant.

P. Anderson: The trouble is, it does seem to, but I think it's a British problem as well. They come up with a rule and the civil servants or whoever at DEFRA, or whoever it is, gold plate it - they tack on so much else, you don't know where to start. When I started, fifty years ago, I remember talking to someone two or three years ago, and he said, (we started about the same time, we're about the same age), and he said when he started he was a fruit farmer. He had one lady come in one afternoon a week to do the books and the health and safety and everything. Now, alright he's probably doubled in size, but he's got two women working fulltime doing it.

Anna: Oh my gosh, because of the way that regulations have changed?

P. Anderson: Yeah!

Anna: Oh my God, that's crazy.

P. Anderson: Yeah and then, you're expected to compete against someone like Canada or Australia and you just can't do it.

Anna: It's impossible isn't it! Size difference and capacity.

P. Anderson: Then they decide that they want, you know… Britain is the only place in Europe where badgers are protected. Nowhere else in Europe are they protected. I mean, I've got no axe to grind…

Anna: They pose a threat to cattle, don't they?

P. Anderson: Well, I'll now tell you another little story. Three years ago, two or three, maybe four, I forget now, I kept finding holes dug all over the farm. I couldn't think what they were, I thought first they were foxes. But I got on my hands and knees and they were bumblebee nests and I thought that's strange - they'd been destroyed. And it was only afterwards I found that they were badgers. Now I found a hundred

or so odd in that year, the following year I found fifty, all ripped out. Now you don't see any, because the badgers have just wiped them out.

Anna: So is that the bee thing you might have wanted to talk about because Alan said ask Mr Anderson about bees. That reminded me.

P. Anderson: Yeah that was the story he was saying - but the trouble is that my father and grandfather never saw a badger, only dead ones. All three of us in the winter, tend to wander out in the middle of the night, when you see badgers, shooting rabbits and that sort of thing. We're quite used to seeing at dark, but I had never seen a badger until about three years ago.

Anna: They are really hard to spot.

P. Anderson: Yeah and then there was one in the garden, and my wife was nearly run over by one hurtling down a tramline in the summer.

Anna: Oh no, really?

P. Anderson: She saw this thing hurtling towards her and she managed to get in the other tramline and he just shot straight past.

Anna: ...that must have been a shock.

P. Anderson: Well you don't want to meet one, they've got very big teeth and very powerful claws.

Anna: They can get quite aggressive can't they?

P. Anderson: I don't know about aggressive.

Anna: Yeah, not sure about towards people but perhaps other animals...

P. Anderson: Yeah anything when it's cornered might have a nibble.

Anna: So with the bees' nest, were they destroying them for their holes?

P. Anderson: No, no, they were digging them up for the honey

Anna: Oh the honey, okay, like honey badgers.

P. Anderson: Yeah, well, same sort of thing.

Anna: Yeah, same species I guess.

P. Anderson: Yeah well that's what I presume they do. And the RSPB, although they don't put it out, apparently they put cameras on about forty skylarks' nests and they lost twenty through, that's just normal wastage, but the biggest reason they lost them was badgers. They're like hoovers, they do the same with grey partridge, anything on the ground, they'll have a nibble at. I mean you can't blame them, but the trouble is, the more badgers you get, the bigger the pool of disease. That is the problem.

Anna: Sure, yeah.

P. Anderson: I mean I haven't got stock, so it doesn't really worry me, but I was a bit fed up about the bees because I quite like bees…

Anna: Yeah definitely, bees are great and when they're on the decrease anyway, you kind of don't want extra...

P. Anderson: Yeah anyway that was one little tale about bees.

Anna: That was a great story - so thank you for sharing. So with your arable crops, what kind of thing have you been farming recently? Has it been a big change over the last fifty years?

P. Anderson: Not really, varieties have changed and of course we can't use half the sprays that we did when I first started - you know, they've all gone, which makes life difficult. It does seem… I think the problem with Europe is, how shall I put it, they've got full bellies. If you were in Africa, you wouldn't be so fussy. You eat anything - you know, when you're starving, you're starving aren't you? I'm not saying it's wrong.

Anna: No, but there's a complacency isn't there?

P. Anderson: Yeah, but the trouble is, I can't help but feel...it's a bit like climate change. If they're wrong, Birmingham will have about 300 foot of ice on top of it if we get an ice age. Well you can still farm when there's no ice, but it's very difficult under 300 foot of ice. So I don't know if they're right or wrong, don't get me wrong, but if they are wrong, we're spending a hell of a lot of money to dig ourselves into a load of ice. So, I don't know, the trouble is…and Alan will tell you the same: what is correct now, it'll be exactly the opposite in ten or twenty years' time.

Anna: Yep that's a good point.

P. Anderson: It does seem to be… a lot of the techniques we were using in the 50s and 60s, like green crops and different things like this, because we didn't have the sprays and now they're coming back in fashion, because we haven't got the sprays so we have to think of ways round it, you know. I mean, this is more than fifty years ago, my father he went to a demonstration at Spencer King, Lamberhurst Farm, right over there, where they're building Victory Wood now. He went over there, and one of the first sprays they had was MCPA, don't ask me to tell you what the initials are, cause it don't know…

Anna: Yeah don't worry about that

P. Anderson: They came in crystals, and you were meant to mix them with water. No one… they just gave him a bag with no instructions on it. So, we had it on a trailer and every time they saw a bit of… you wouldn't call it king… *charlotte*, a plant, they got a handful and went whack! …so that was about 2,500 times the proper dose and you know, didn't worry about using bare hands or anything. And dad came out, dad said he went along a fortnight later, there were all these big holes in the field where all the … had died, and there was nothing there…

Anna: Nothing, oh wow?

P. Anderson: …and it was only sort of six months later that they bothered to send the instructions and they realised that you were only meant to put about half a pound of crystals to twenty gallons of water you see, and then spray it on. So that was you know, and as dad said, alright next year some of the crop looked a bit sick, but after a couple of years it all went.

Anna: It got over it?

P. Anderson: It got over it so you know....I think, the other thing that always sticks in my mind, is that nature is a very forgiving thing and it can get over nearly anything. I mean, look at Chernobyl!

Anna: Very true, forests and stuff there, aren't there?

P. Anderson: All been killed and everything, but now something's growing up there. Look at Hiroshima, they had a bomb there and they've got a city there still. You know, how anybody's living, I just don't know.

Anna: It's extraordinary isn't it - it's amazing.

P. Anderson: Right, sorry, well I digress

Anna: No not at all

P. Anderson: I've filled your thing up with absolute drivel

Anna: No not at all, the whole idea of this is that it's very kind of like free-flowing and you know, the stories that come out are the ones we want to hear. So that's great. So you started out, you said that you, your father and grandfather and you had some labourers, but not many? Has that changed and increased?

P. Anderson: Some what, sorry?

Anna: Have you got more workers and labourers?

P. Anderson: No, no, all gone.

Anna: Wow, okay? All gone now?

P. Anderson: All gone, dad and grandad have died and I'm the only one left. I use contractors mainly.

Anna: Contractors mainly, sure

P. Anderson: The problem is, I'm too small really, to be efficient you want 1500 acres and I've got 220, something like that. It's just not…

Anna: …viable, to do it like that.

P. Anderson: …not really viable at all, so you know it's a bit of a bummer. But we still we produce enough and I still earn a very good living out of it, but I've had to rethink things, you know. So that's the way life is, but then everything changes - I mean probably if you add each one of those farms I mentioned, employed 2 or 3 people, and they've all gone.

Anna: Yeah sure.

P. Anderson: Everyone's disappeared…

Anna: Ah, it's hard isn't it? This area or...

P. Anderson: Right down this road

Anna: Right down this road! Oh wow, really? All those have gone…

P. Anderson: Between there, there was Gollop…

Anna: Gollop, that's a great name.

P. Anderson: You might know of William, he was a racing driver.

Anna: Oh, okay…

P. Anderson: William Gollop, he used to have a Saab...are you local?

Anna: I'm not. My dad's from Kent but more West Kent, Tunbridge Wells/Sevenoaks rather than up here.

P. Anderson: Where are you from then?

Anna: I'm from East Sussex, I grew up in Forest Row/East Grinstead, Ashdown Forest.

P. Anderson: Ah well, Gollops used to have the Saab garage in Canterbury where Barrett's Citroen is now, but they've gone. Sorry, I've forgotten my thread.

Anna: No, that's fine.

P. Anderson: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 [counting the names of the local farmers that he'd written down]. Yea, there are fifteen.

Anna: Wow, that's amazing, just on this bit/stretch of road?

P. Anderson: Just from Canterbury to Whitstable.

Anna: Wow… it's depressing isn't it?

P. Anderson: Well, I dunno. You see, years ago there was a farmer called Pelt, somewhere between 1900 and 1930, and he was working… his main farm was on the Thanet Way down there. And he built in his lifetime, up to 3000 acres.

Anna: Wow that's huge!

P. Anderson: And then within one generation, it had all gone, because nobody wanted the farm.

Anna: Oh my gosh!

P. Anderson: …because had some land out here, grandad said, so they used to come right over here with horse and rolls and used to roll the grassland out here. So things change, don't they?

Anna: Yeah they do, they do...

P. Anderson: You can't...I mean if you look at the FTSE 100 now and fifty years ago, I don't suppose there's one company in it that's the same.

Anna: That's true, things do change and things have changed so particularly in recent times - I guess that's kind of why we're doing the fifty years thing. Obviously it's to do with the university, but because of technology, the EU and decimalisation and all those things have changed so radically in the past fifty years.

P. Anderson: Lets face it, when I started work, there wasn't such a thing as a computer

Anna: Exactly!

P. Anderson: I remember when we had the first handheld calculators, that was a bit of a shock!

Anna: It's always wild isn't it? When you think, even in the last ten years, things have changed massively.

P. Anderson: A black and white TV

Anna: Yeah exactly [laughs]. It's amazing - it just blows my mind I suppose, being one of the technology generation, how radically it has all changed and why we don't know how to do shorthand and stuff is because...

P. Anderson: Yeah, I can't type very well - although I can use the computer. But, yeah it's, everything changes doesn't it? I can remember some of the fields they [the university] bought - I ploughed one year and when I think, that's all gone. In fact one of them I think, is a car park now, over at the university. If you go down in the deep dip towards Tyler Hill, I ploughed one of those fields in the sixties...

Anna: And now it's a department or housing or something!

P. Anderson: Yeah, something or rather, but it's all changed.

Anna: That is strange, definitely. Do you deal with supermarkets for your stuff?

P. Anderson: No, no.

Anna: Because it's arable?

P. Anderson: I think, I wouldn't want to touch a supermarket unless I had a deathwish!

Anna: Definitely, from what I've been hearing, that is understandable…

P. Anderson: The trouble is you can make a lot of money, don't get me wrong. But I know of several farms where they've said yes, and have spent all this money putting in graded nines and then two years later have been told by the supermarkets that they're moving everything up to Norfolk. And they've said 'what are we supposed to do with all this?' and the supermarkets say 'oh we're sorry,' and the farmers are left paying it all off for another three years. I know several farms who have gone broke doing it.

Anna: That's horrific!

P. Anderson: So I wouldn't want to get involved with supermarkets, but I'm not big enough so it doesn't matter…how Mansfield's keeps going, I just don't know.

Anna: Is that another farmer?

P. Anderson: He's one of the biggest fruit, pear-growers in Europe.

Anna: Oh yeah actually, Alan's mentioned him I think!

P. Anderson: Yeah, how he keeps going and keeps on the right side of them, I don't know - because they can get pears just at the snap of their fingers you know - or is it cherries. He's one of the biggest fruit producers of one type, I forget, it might be plums I don't know. But anyway…don't touch supermarkets, don't want to know.

Anna: [laughing] good. Oh what else shall I ask you? You were talking about the EU and the challenges - what other challenges and threats have you faced over the last fifty years… like disease?

P. Anderson: Weather! Weather is the main curse - if you haven't got weather with you, you may as well give up, you know. This year's not been good, we've had on our ground, we've had cold, not extreme cold so it probably hasn't been below freezing but it's been close to it and it's been very damp, wet. And our ground can't take that.

Anna: Is that the clay, the London clay?

P. Anderson: It's so clay yeah, on our ground you need a nice heavy frost because it does better than anything at breaking the soil up. And if you have a good frost in the winter, it cracks the soil up and makes the top friable. So that when summer comes and it cracks, all the little bits fall into the cracks a lot more and therefore the roots don't get damaged so much. If you can imagine the cracks and you've got to plant there, and it goes out that way and the crack comes there, you've chopped half its roots off, the poor old thing's roots off. So that's the biggest problem! And we didn't have the frost, which we desperately need.

Anna: That's so true, there was hardly any frost this year was there?

P. Anderson: No, no - I love a nice steady fifteen degrees but we never get it

Anna: Wouldn't we all?

P. Anderson: No ideally, what you want is you want a nice, about the beginning of December, about my birthday, you want a nice fifteen degree frost and about a thirty mile an hour wind and that kills off all the charlot and all the weeds off. Then you want a foot of snow, and it wants to melt about the end of February. And then that'd be perfect.

Anna: And that would be ideal [chuckles].

P. Anderson: The rest of the country would grind to a halt

Anna: [still laughing] that would be the trouble - no trains! Good for the farmers, the farmers in this part of Kent anyway. That's really interesting, the weather's been so dry the last few weeks which must have been challenging too?

P. Anderson: Yeah they say it's the driest April for a few years but the trouble is I've seen it before - I used to laugh at grandad when he said…my grandfather always used to say—'If it's happening and you've lived long enough, you're bound to have seen it before.' And it's true! You don't realise, you know - it doesn't matter what it is, everything comes round in a circle - a lot of the time!

Anna: Definitely!

P. Anderson: In fifty years time, when the next generation's worth of students come along and ask the next generation of farmers and they say 'ah yeah, yeah, we did that fifty years ago!'

Anna: [laughing] we've got the record of the first one that did it

P. Anderson: 'We've got this wrinkly old creature in the corner there who was talking all about it fifty years ago

Anna: [laughing] Cool, what else have I got to ask you about? Have you got/would you like to share your views on organic farming?

P. Anderson: I have no views - what worries me about it is, are they going to genetically modify the workers to pull the thistles out?

Anna: [laughing hard]

P. Anderson: That's what I think!

Anna: That's a great line.

P. Anderson: That's what I think, when I started off, we used to grow lettuce and there were no sprays in those days, so we shimmed - you know, a cultivator going in the rows and then we hoed between the rows. When I was a kid, twelve or thirteen, we used to get stinging nettles like this [indicates large size with his hands] and my grandad used to say 'just treat 'em rough' and would rip them out with his hands. And of course, I thought 'how the hell do you do that' but I do it now, because I did it then - you just rip 'em out with your hand. Now, I haven't got any arthritis, whether that's because of all the nettle stings, I don't know. So it might be good! But I don't think it does your complexion any good - still look a bit wrinkly – but I can just grab stinging nettles and just rip 'em out but if I said to you, you probably wouldn't be able to bear to do that. My grandchildren are the same, 'how do you do that?'

Anna: Exactly - I think that's a really good point about organic - that sort of level of labour that's involved.

P. Anderson: I had a little argument with the Green Party…we had the members, prospective MPs/councilors gave us a little talk, and I said to him: 'If all these sprays are bad for you, how come we're living longer?' And he said, oh well, he said something to do with the NHS, and he said 'well we know how to make people live longer', and I didn't get a chance to say 'well you're using chemicals to do that.'

Anna: Yeah exactly!

P. Anderson: …I was reading in the New Scientist four or five years ago - yes we're all living longer but the age where we all develop problems like high blood pressure, all the other things that tend to kill you off, that's only gone up by a year. We're

living to 84 say, but we're developing high blood pressure and cataracts at instead of 48, at 49.5 years old. It is chemicals keeping us going, if you see what I mean.

Anna: Yeah, well I mean exactly, that's the thing - although the life expectancy is extended, the quality of life is vastly reduced.

P. Anderson: When I said to the poor chap, I said 'there is only one pollutant in this country worth thinking about,' and he looked at me and I said 'that's you and me - there are just too many people!' And he said [incoherent muttering] like this and I said 'well you know, you got to keep the population down!' But he said 'nah, it's far better to recycle!' And so I nearly said 'it's very difficult to recycle babies', but I wasn't quick enough.

Anna: [laughing] Definitely, overpopulation is such an issue.

P. Anderson: On organic, …if you could use a mechanical way of getting rid of weeds, without yourself, you know you could rovatise it? Is that the right word? Mechanise it - that would be a good thing, and the same thing for caterpillars and pests. I cannot see how you can mechanise… diseases. The only way I can think of doing it, possibly, is using different forms of light, I don't know.

Anna: Oh, that's interesting.

P. Anderson: Years ago… this nothing to do with farming, but it comes back to farming…

Anna: That's fine, I'm interested!

P. Anderson: In the 1800s, they became quite good at controlling things like cancer, syphilis, which in those days was quite a lot of it, it was a disease everyone was scared of, like smallpox but couldn't cure. And they were using different types of irradiated light…. And they were doing things like that, but unfortunately at the time in the states, in the early 1900s, 1910 before the first war, the chemical companies were stronger than the manufacturers of light, and they got a law passed that it was illegal. And that cut it off dead. And it might have been better to use that instead of chemicals, if you see what I mean, and I always think about light, and perhaps if you could put light onto…say foam, or on the leaves, perhaps certain kinds of light, going over it very slowly, that might kill all the different diseases. I've no idea if it would work...

Anna: They're using sort of laser type technology aren't they, for more and more so that makes total sense…

P. Anderson: That's right, there is a theory and it's fairly well proven, if you drill the crop in in the dark, a lot of weeds can't germinate, because they need a burst of something like half a second of daylight, to set their germination thing going. And the old cooperative farms did quite a bit of work using infrared lights on their tractors to try and do that - whether it worked, I don't know.

Anna: Wow, that's interesting!

P. Anderson: It's not so much organics, but it brings down the cost of sprays and the less you are reliant on an outside source, the more the farm survives! If you see what I mean.

Anna: Yep, yeah, yeah!

P. Anderson: And if you're not bringing in chemicals to do it, if it works and there's money in it, it's worth doing. But if it's gonna cost you money, it's not so good. With small family farms, you look for ways of making money and the other thing is to save it.

Anna: To save it, yeah. Important to be seld-sufficient without depending.

P. Anderson: Right, that's how you survive - when we were doing it, I used to spend a lot of the winter welding plough points. We used to take the cultivator points and I used to go down the scrapyard and buy lorry springs, the big springs, chop them up and weld those onto the tips. Then I used to get them red hot and drop them into water and that would harden them to about twice as strong as the original point.

Anna: Wow, amazing, brilliant.

P. Anderson: That's the sort of thing you did in the winter, when it's cold, when you're welding, you're quite warm. Nice great big fire.

Anna: Nice not to be out in the fields!

P. Anderson: That's how we used to save the money, you know. We used to make our own trailers and things like that, but you can't do that now, because they won't insure you.

Anna: That's so frustrating isn't it?

P. Anderson: For the health and safety.

Anna: The way that that kind of stuff has limited people from falling back on their own resources and own abilities, it just seems so illogical. It makes me so frustrated because surely the aim is for everyone to be more self-sufficient, particularly with things like overpopulation and such like.

P. Anderson: Well that's right. I can't understand why the Green Party won't come up with a population-control programme…They're so left-wing, you know? I know that Alan's a bit more left-wing than me. I'm extremely right-wing financially, but extremely left-wing for things like Human Rights, if you see what I mean. To me, the police have far too many powers in this country, but I personally think it ought to be a lot freer market, financially. So, I'm not really politically involved - because no one will do what I want.

Anna:… because it's sort of like bipartisan - yeah population control, it's tricky I guess, they're scared of being too, I don't know...

P. Anderson: I must admit that I did think age would be the answer to everything, but it didn't kill enough people off… but perhaps one's not meant to say that. It's not politically correct.

Anna: Yeah political correctness is extreme, definitely.

P. Anderson: Probably in your university life, it's not so bad in farming. Nobody listens to you on fields you can say what you like!

Anna: Yeah that's true, at uni we do have to be careful, although it's pretty good, Kent, it's quite liberal but for things like that, they might be more like 'say what?' And it is such a problem on this tiny island.

P. Anderson: When you think I started work 50 years ago, Whitstable, I think had, 16 or 17,000 people in it, and now it's pushing over 40… and I know they're building.

Anna: Wow, yeah they're building everywhere, aren't they?

P. Anderson: And according to the local paper, in Canterbury, they've got to build 850 houses a year - where are we going to put it?

Anna: Whew! Exactly, how are we not going to completely run out of space?

P. Anderson: That's right, rivers can't put up with it - they won't dredge the rivers because of the water voles and they're building in flood plains, there's no logic to it. Well, there you go - anyway what's the next one?

Anna: We're getting through them great! We have just mentioned the University of Kent, but I'm a bit embarrassed about this question, as I should be really, it's about the impact that the university might have had [laughs] on local farming or on your farm in particular?

P. Anderson: Well, it's had no impact at all on mine, but it did on poor old Kier's because they lost their farm [chuckles].

Anna: Yeah, well I suppose that's a good point to have, as Alan said when someone came up with that question, he was like 'you do realise we've had no impact on most farmers unless we've used their land'.

P. Anderson: Actually no, I'll rephrase that, it has had an impact, it would have had a bigger impact, if I knew how to get into it. Because they used to have quite a good, I don't know if they've still got it, I'll have to ask Alan, they used to have a mechanical department.

Anna: Oh, okay?

P. Anderson: I don't know if they've still got it, but over the years, I could have done with someone who could do a bit more than count, and work out stress levels and things like that. But you just don't know, average people don't know how to get into that system and find the answers. The internet helps…y'know, I google it and it's remarkable what I can find, so that helps. I think the thing to say is that it's had no effect on me, but it could have had a lot, lot bigger effect, if I'd known how to access it.

….

Anna: One thing I should have asked earlier, how are you selling your crops? Sorry, bit of a random jump, we talked about the supermarkets but I didn't actually ask.

P. Anderson: Purely through places like Delgetty's…John Foe, there are grain dealers and we sell through them, the price is controlled by world prices. I like fruit which is controlled really by European prices and to a certain extent, British prices. It's not very technical, you just take your samples in and they see about the protein level and whether it's good enough for bread, and you get that much extra. Or they say 'that's revolting, we can just about get that in as feed, animal feed' and you get virtually nothing, well not nothing but very low. We aim for high quality all the time and we put the nitrogen on to get high proteins in the wheat, but then all you want is a fortnight's wet weather just before harvest and it will stop, it will kill…. What happens is the wheat will try to germinate and the reading called a hagberg goes down.

Anna: Can you repeat that, sorry?

P. Anderson: Hagberg - you've heard of that before have you?

Anna: It's ringing a vague bell

P. Anderson: It's just the measurement of how much germination has taken place in the grain, and the effect of germination affects the ability to produce dough. You've got to have a minimum of 250 hagberg, anything less than that it goes down rapidly. If you'd had a really bad year, you might get down as low as 200, but they're a bit sniffy, millers. Then again it's their job to cut the loaves and things like that. It's to do with the rise and plasticity, yeah that's a good word, of the bread, so you have to be a little bit on the ball.

Anna: And does that go into the EU/global market? Like, do you sell into it?

P. Anderson: Everywhere, it goes everywhere! We grow spring beans some years, and they go to Egypt where they use them instead of peanuts on the bars; they soak them in olive oil and different oils. I tell you what, I tried one. God's truth, you've got to be desperate to eat a spring bean, you've got to have teeth like a cow and the tastebuds of an elephant, I reckon. They're just nothing, you know.

Anna: just bland

P. Anderson: I love nuts but that is beyond me.

Anna: What are they like, spring beans? I'm just trying to picture them.

P. Anderson: You know like a broad bean, they're a bit smaller but they're hard You put 'em on a hard surface and whack them with a hammer, they go almost like flour. But it doesn't matter how long you soak them in olive oil, because it's got this very hard skin with just one small hole in it. And you probably have to soak it for about four years to get some of the oil into the blessed thing.

Anna: Really? and they eat them over there?

P. Anderson: Yeah, yeah, I tell you they've got to have teeth like a Nanny Goat or something, or perhaps a badger, to chew through it. But you young things with decent gnashers are alright, but us old wrinkly things with a lot of fillings are in a bad way - it really would be hard work chewing some of that.

Anna: And not much to taste either?

P. Anderson: Of course, rapeseed that goes into everything - I think they do a bit of plastics with it - but mainly it's rape oil, you know, for cooking. In the old days, it used to go in the lamps, the oil. Because there was a big oil mill in Canterbury before it burnt down.

Anna: Oh was there? I didn't know that.

P. Anderson: Yeah, so you know where the Westgate Tower is - you turn left and then you can turn right over the bridge and there's an old people's home, not home, flats, on your left, right on the corner. That used to be a big mill there and they used to crush rapeseed there. There were three or four mills, Dalgety's Mill was there. They were there because of the water, they used the watermill. A lot of people forget, but before oil and electricity - there was a lot of rape growing.

Anna: That's true, people seem to think of it as a modern...

P. Anderson: …crop, it wasn't! It was purely to light lamps. The middle class could afford that - if you were really rough and destitute, you had tallow, which used to stink the place out. If you were really rich, you'd have whale oil, because it didn't smell at all.

Anna: Interesting, that's some really cool extra history… So you've got rapeseed, I was gonna say, I was talking the other day about the neonicotinoids.

P. Anderson: Neonicotinoids?

Anna: Exactly, has that been a problem? Because they've just been banned by the EU...

P. Anderson: No, it hasn't been a great problem this year, and funnily enough talking about bees, I should have taken you to the farmers' club on Monday, we had a beekeeper talking…

Anna: Oh, cool!

P. Anderson: …and he basically said he's not quite sure what all the fuss is about. He's got a thousand hives and he said "the jury's still out - nobody knows!" He said "the biggest problem is weather, if the weather's wrong, they won't pollinate." All the trees that are out in bloom, but a bee needs at least eight degrees centigrade. Bumblebees will come out, are meant to come out at lower temperatures than honey bees. As a rough guide, honey bees need ten degrees and bumblebees, because they have some sort of antifreeze in their system, come out about eight.

Anna: It's because they're so big.

P. Anderson: It might be just because they're big and they can hold the heat better, I don't know. Anyway, he was saying that neonicotinoids…he doesn't know. And this business about hive death, that they keep on about, he said he's never had it. He loses bees, but last Christmas he lost twenty hives because the wind had blown them over and he didn't see it until the next day when it was too late, the rain had got in there and killed them. So that's more of a problem than anything else – he's not sure about anything. He said "I can't put a finger on it", and that this hive death is more to do with poor management, he's convinced.

Anna: I'm sure that's a really good point.

P. Anderson: Well it's different if you don't look after them, bees are no different to a cow, if you don't look after it, they tend to die. You've got *varroa* and this other disease they've got down in Italy—I can't think of it, forgotten the name of it—but it will come and the trouble is we, Europe, is now one and we're in Europe, whereas before, we didn't have rabies because of the channel. But having seen rabies, it's not something you want to see. We bring in these things. Alright, if it's airborne, it can come across the Channel, diseases will travel hundreds of miles on the air. But we had a certain amount of control over it, but we don't get it now, which is annoying, y'know. We don't have Foot and Mouth, unless the government decide to set it going as they did last time.

Anna: Yeah I was hearing about that the other day - I think it was Alan who was talking about the government and how it all interacted. Because you obviously don't know at the time and I was quite young when it was going on, but I remember seeing the news all the time and thinking how awful it must be.

P. Anderson: Of course, if you're in your twenties. Well everyone was saying about all these poor cows being shot, what was it? Half a million? Two hundred thousand a week are shot to eat.

Anna: Yeah it's true, people's ignorance isn't it? Thinking 'oh poor animals' but the meat industry, dairy industry. People are so selective about the information they hear.

P. Anderson: I'm afraid that's right, if there's one thing you learn if you can from university, there's always another side to every story. I think that's the best bit of university education, as long as you can look round the corner. You must think about those things. But it's so strange, I don't know if you were around, they were shipping sheep out from Ramsgate, one of them died and the RSPCA came in and basically said all the sheep had to come off. They had no way to get them off, poor old sheep were going berserk so they got them onto the beach, some of them went

into the water, this, that and the other. A. they didn't have enough people, B. there was no way to control them, and yet a year later, this report came out and said that the RSPCA did their best. Well they did, because there was no one else. And then they got a commendation for it, a year after that and yet it was their fault that the poor old chap had to go down there and shoot half a dozen, because they'd broken their legs.

Anna: Oh that's horrible!

P. Anderson: Yeah!

....[pause]

Anna: I was hearing about travellers the other day actually - they said that was quite challenging, fly-tipping and suchlike?

P. Anderson: Ah yeah, fly-tipping drives you up the wall! We used to get a lot of cars dumped and then when the price of steel went up, it stopped! It's that sort of thing, and as I said to the liberal candidate the other week because the problem is they don't dump it in the road, they dump it in your field. And once it's in the field it's my problem and I have to pay to move it. But if you're surreptitious and cunning and get there before it's started to settle, you push it out onto the road and say look someone's dumped it in the road. I mean I'm committing an offence doing that but it saves you a small fortune and that is the biggest problem with it. But well the EEC again, they have made it law that you have to charge to go into the dump, before we didn't and as I said to the liberal chappie "there's only one way to stop this, it's got to be free!"

Anna: Yeah?

P. Anderson: And then when they dump it on someone else's land, then you wack 'em! Because now, they confiscate the transport which is a good thing. But all they've done is transfer the cost from the government to the private sector, which to me is left-wing! Sorry to say and don't get me started on politics, and it's very similar to this and you keep seeing it on the TV, if you've had an accident and these lawyers will come and claim for you. And the only reason that is, is because the government, whichever government it is, I can't remember, have tried to stop the cost going onto the government to keep somebody if they're smashed up so bad they can't work.

Anna: Yep

P. Anderson: And all it's done has pushed it onto the private sector which will insure against it and then you can't afford the insurance now because everyone's claiming because they say the insurance company will pay! So that's another tremendously large added cost. And I don't know the answer to it, there must be one - I saw in one of the papers near Southend there's a tip a mile long and about half a mile wide. It's just people dumping stuff because they don't want to pay for it.

Anna: Well I think that concludes us, thanks so much for your time and as I say if there's anything else you'd like to add, let me know.