



INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

Farmer's Name: David Keir

Age: 72

Location: Hothe Court Farm, Canterbury

Size: 20 acres

Type: Dairy till 1989. Arable.

Interviewed by: Louise Rasmussen

Date:

David: Well in fact my year was the first year, 65. I left school, but I did actually know one or two lads that were there from year 1. Then I suppose it was 3 years later, we used to have an aunt who lived...they used to call it Eliot roundabout, but you know where the Venue is, it used to be just a rough car park, there used to be two houses there. An aunt of mine lived there, my grandfather used to live there, and she took in students, and one of the first students she took end up being my brother in law. My sister was forever disappearing through the woods. He would be coming...I'm sure he'd love to come back, but poor bloke is at a very nasty stage of Parkinson's. That's sad to see. Life is difficult. Yeah...

...

David's wife comes in, and offers tea. We then talk briefly about their dogs...

David: Ok, well, Hothe Court farm, which is where we are, it was my grandfather who was a Scot, came down. He was in Kent for 4 or years prior to moving here in 1910, when my father was 5 weeks old, and that's when the Keir family started at Hothe Court. But that is obviously going back. If we head onto the 1960s which is really the era that you're more interested in, and we were still, my father was running the farm. I was last year at school when the University opened. But we had then Hothe Court farm, and there's Brotherhood Farm, which was a small farm, which is now completely under the University. It used to go down the hill, St Stephens Hill, below Eliot College and in that area and the woods where the Sports Hall is. And we were - until I got involved - a dairy farm, a dairy farm, breeding Ayrshires, which was a lot of which we brought down from Scotland, in fact twice, because I think the farm had foot and mouth in the 1930s, and they restocked from Scotland in the 1930s. And we also had a flock of sheep, which were mainly at the



Brotherhood farm, which we gave up as soon as the University started taking over the land, and just concentrated on dairy and arable. Arable was rather secondary and it was very much providing feed for the livestock in terms of barley, oats, and salt the weeds, and use the straw that we bailed up from the necessary crops. My first move when I got...I went away to a college in Bedfordshire, to do agriculture, and one of the first changes I made when I was involved was changing the Ayrshire cows breeding them, rather than replacing them, with Friesians to get black and white and potentially more milk per cow, which worked. In those days the milking was done at the old Hothe Court, until 1969 when, although the University started sort of 64, 5 - started taking our land - they then decided they needed playing fields. And the original plans for playing fields for the University would have been at the bottom of the Eliot Hill, on Forty Acres Road area on some nurseries down there, which they couldn't get cause the previous owners decided that they wanted housing prices rather than agricultural prices for the land. So they then, plan B they then took over the fields around our old Hothe Court. Hothe Court was a damn great house, and things in those days were not terribly mechanised. The milking was done predominantly in cowsheds with pipelines so, the cows used to be sort of, they were sort of 20 in one shed and 10 and 10 in two others, so we had about 50 cows milking. But the milk just went from a pipeline and then into churns and up until just before that, we used to have our own milk rounds, but in the 60s the milk was just taken in churns to a dairy in Canterbury. Then, when the University decided they wanted playing fields around the old farm. Our landlords, I should say all of this land, well 90% of this land involved, we were tenants of as opposed to owners. But there was an agreement from our landlords, who were Eastbridge hospital, that they would rebuild the farm that we're at now, and it gave us an opportunity to bring the, well, the farm into the second half of the 20th century shall we say. And, when we came up here we had a milking parlour, which originally you could get ten cows in at a time. We used to milk 5 at a time originally and then later in days, we made it so you could milk all 10 at the same time. And the milk went into bulk tanks and tankers used to come and collect the milk. And that was the way forward there. In the early years, from the 60s until early 70s, we had grass. We used to just make hay, we weren't brave enough to make silage. So everything was, winterfeed was hay time, and I think we used to, I'm sure we used to get better summers sort of July in those days, cause I can remember some very, very hot days as a youngster going out, pitching bales and stacking those away. We then, when we came up here with the Friesians, we then converted to silage, and, a clamp of silage and more latterly, forgot the clamp, and had round baled silage as the main feed for the cattle. We gave up a flock of sheep when we lost the initial land to the University. And then we acquired a few more acres north of here and the arable side of the business got more involved, got bigger, which was ... Barney! *(to the dog)* stop it! ... Then...we kept going...Now we...the dairy side I gave up in 1989. Excuse me...

...(He takes the dog into an other room)...



...Where was I getting to? Yeah, milking became...we sort of, in the 70s, we tried to raise our herd size to about a 120, which we did. We went onto computerised feeding where the cows used to have some transponders on their necks, they could walk into a unit, and they were programmed that they would have so much concentrate food pro rata according to the milk that they could potentially and were giving, and also the state of their lactation. And we were getting lots of profit. Then all sorts of things happened really; we borrowed quite a lot of money to set this up. Then the powers that be decided we should have milk quotas, which meant that we were going to be able to produce only, initially 90 per cent of what we had been producing, and subsequently less and less. And things got tighter and tighter, and the price of milk even in those days was not really enough to make a living out of it. So it was in 1989, we said goodbye to the cows. And concentrated more on...all the grassland was then – nearly all the grassland – was put under the plough. And I just ran a small beef herd in the stock side of the buildings of the farm. Basically store animals and got them in as young calves, get them for a year and move them on. It's... Yes it did work, it was...it was not quite the...it didn't involve the same work commitment as the dairy cows. It was still sort of 7 days a week, 24 hours a day feeding, checking, all the rest of it. And in my case I then sublet the livestock site to a friend who's actually still here, who...because he purchased a pedigree herd of Sussex cattle, cows and calves. And so there is still livestock on the farm. And the arable side of it... Predominantly wheat, oilseed rape, beans and barley were the crops involved. We haven't got the best of grain storage but we did our best to convert the spaces available out there to control, contain as many tons as we could. And that kept us going really from the...through the 80s and 90s. And then the situation came in 2004 or 5, when our landlords had decided that they wanted to sell the farm so they...An interesting package was made between us whereby I still had the farmhouse but had no interest in the farm. And we as a family got out of farming. Sad in many ways because A) we'd been here for 100, no 95 years at the time. My...I'm blessed with 4 sons, 5 sons. The eldest one of which is in agriculture, he is a grain buyer. And the 4th one was always going to be the farmer. It would have been very difficult even if we'd kept going to get him under the tenancy because most of the old full-farm tenancies would not lend themselves to 3rd generation. That's treating me as the second. So, at the same time, he went when he was when he left school to work for a very good friend of mine, who is a big and very efficient arable farmer the other side of Canterbury based at Chislet farming very efficiently with mega equipment, which he loves. I'm sure he has the biggest combine in East Kent, biggest sprayer in East Kent, and state of the art equipment, which is a pleasure to see them working when the sun shines, when that allows. A part from that, I probably missed an awful lot, but go on. Start popping questions, what have I missed?

Louise: When did you start getting involved in farming?



David: I left school at 17. I went straight to Shuttleworth Agricultural College in Biggleswade, Bedfordshire, for 2 years and you know, I was involved in the farm, I was never going to do anything else. So when I left there at the age of 19, I came in the farm. And I was 21-ish when stage 2 at the University had taken over the old farm building scheme and I went into partnership with my father when I was 21. And you know, basically my father, bless him, he was very much sort of the old school farmer, and he wasn't too keen on getting involved in the newer equipment. I mean this is something, in the 60s and 70s tractors were – by today's standards – all relatively small, they were nearly all two-wheel drive in those days. I think the first 100 horse power one came out ...wellm sorry we acquired our first 100 horse power tractor probably mid 70s and quite honestly, I didn't get much more than that. 140 was my biggest one when I actually gave up the arable side. But there's son Tim driving potato and cultivation equipment with a caterpillar that's 450 horse power. And this is how things have, I mean, in their case they're carrying a vast acreage on less than handful of staff by virtue of the fact that mechanisation has increased. To such a point that, I mean their combine, which has got sort of a 36-foot header – my biggest was 15 – but they can combine 70 to 80 acres per day, on a good day. Whereas I used to think I had done well with 24 or 25. That's how it is and how things have changed. And yes, also I mean even with man staff, 50 years ago I think we probably had 6 full-timers on the books; 2 cowmen, 2 tractor drivers, myself – who did a bit of everything – and then 1 if not 2 odd-jobbers that used to just come in, if nothing else, to do sort of fencing and gardening and do sort of tidying up and little bit of seasonal work. And my final days...it was probably myself plus one and that one was invariably one of my sons doing a gap year between school and university. With the 5 boys, they all worked for me at the end of school and did a gap. A bit of travelling in the middle...and often, yes that was literally consecutive years, which is nice to keep it in the family.

Louise: Can you explain a bit more about how the University started taking over the land?

David: Well, yeah. The first bit was a straightforward compulsory purchase. They had decided they were going to build the university on top of the way between St. Thomas and St. Stephen's Hill. And so we had...the farm we lost, the first one we lost to the University was Brotherhood farm. Not very good ground, it was grade 3, but had the most – as you can appreciate – the most gorgeous setting and views over Canterbury and the old railway line on which the University sits was...cause that is another thing, the railway, the Crab and Winkle line ran right through the farm. Before the...I mean the train stopped 52, 53, apparently - I like to think I can remember but I can't really, I was too young to remember them – and ... it was, you know, it wasn't really a love-hate relationship, you know we accepted that things were going to be changing, and it did happen. As we lost that first bit of land, I



acquired some north of the village for a few years, which meant that we were still farming a similar acreage and get, turning things over. The second bit, which was where they bought the old farm for the playing fields – supposedly the playing fields, of course it's now predominantly housing, there's still a few playing fields there, but... - and they did initially use our old farm house for accommodation. It has not been used the last couple of years, but I do understand that there's work being done on it and once again I mean the old buildings, it's ... it's a lot of history, a lot of ... the house you grew up in. Despite being cold and draughty, means a lot to us. And it would be nice to see that restored to its health again. With that lot yes, we lost quite a lot of useful land but it did give us the new, I'd say 20th century buildings across there, which...so we didn't really mind at the time losing that bit of ground. And generally had quite a good relationship with the university. I think most fathers of...befriended a few other people that mattered and became sort of an honorary member of Keynes Common Room, I think. I've known people, I used to – believe it or not – be quite sporty, and I used to use the sports facilities in the Sports Hall, the squash courts and things like that. So we had a sort of a working relationship between us... And this last one, when they took over the rest of the farm, I mean that was going to be curtains as far as David Keir and farming were concerned, but they took...this last batch was about 250 acres, and there was another 60 acres on top of that that I had farmed, and I still actually am involved in 20 acres, but that's let out to friends. The end of the mid 2000 and noughts to 5, 6, 4, 5, 6, we were not making enough money really to live comfortably on... and reinvesting the equipment needed for the farm. So in many ways it was a blessing for me, plus at my age, you know, I was coming up, I'm now three years into so-called retirement, and so it was a blessing in many ways, and the package that the landlords gave to us was well worth taking. The farm is, the land is still being farmed; there are 3 tenants of the University on that. There's the chap that had the beef Sussex herd, has got some of it, and south of the Tyler Hill Road there's another Whitstable farmer who is looking after the arable side, and north of the Tyler Hill Road, which was the slightly better soil, there's another farmer who is based at Hoath, who also does the arable on the adjoining land north of that. I'm sort of kept fairly well informed on what they're doing, how they're getting on. And you know, obviously, there are a few problems, drainage problems, acidity, we're forever having to bung lime on the ground to keep it going. We often sit down and decide on which way forward, but how those get...we don't know...the University bought this 250 acres, at the moment they've not done anything with it but they will do, might just let it out for farmland.

Louise: So the university actually lets out the land to other farmers?

David: Yes, yeah. I think they bought it under the understanding...it was the time and the opportunity was there. Grab it now and perhaps in 25 years time or 15 years as it would now be, they might decide to do something, but the amount of work and development that's gone on on campus is unbelievable.



Louise: I've only seen a few pictures of what it looked like back then, but yes...But did you not have a say at all when they said they wanted to buy the land?

David: Yeah, I could have been awkward, but it was made not in my interest to be awkward. It was made in my interest to play along and you know, subsequently, as a tenant of this house for 30, 35 years, I now own it.

Louise: And the land here, is that let by the university?

David: I've got an acre, of garden. The...one of the planning restrictions can you see right around the garden there's a belt of trees, no man's land as we call it? Which is a screen, which, whether it's university or whoever bought that land would have been required to establish that screen. I say for us, for them as well. There is one of the little, another little farm that we...just to the east of us here, Oakwell, which also lost some early land to the university, but that is now all grass. It's run by trustees of the family, who...The cattle do actually graze, probably 50% of it, the rest of it they just cut and tidy up for hay for horses. They have a few horses on the estate as well.

Louise: You know the smaller farms that you mention now, that the university lets land out to, were they there several years ago already or were they only established when the university came?

David: Sorry, you said the small farms, the...?

Louise: Those that rent the land of the university now?

David: Now, they are all established farmers elsewhere and the opportunity...One of them has got three sons in business with him and wanted to expand and he lives just the other end of Blean. And he also does with the, he works hand in hand with the chap who's got the cattle here, he does all the sort of silage making, dung carting, dung spreading... Because the couple on the farm are both mid 70s and they just got one or two little tractors; one for scraping out the muck and the other for feeding the bales of straw and silage into the animals. And likewise the chap over there who has got an established farm, the other side of Canterbury, he also keeps himself busy, and one side of his business does this contracting and he's got 4 or 5 other farms of his own, but he does a very similar business in fact to my farming son. They're not quite as big in scale but their home bases are...they live next door to each other.

Louise: Is there nothing left at all now from Hothe Farm?

David: I have 20 acres. Right, totally land locked by the university.



Louise: Pardon?

David: It's land let, the university owns all around this. I have got rights of access.

Louise: So the 20 acres are yours? Or...

David: They're the rented again. I mentioned the word Brotherhood Farm. This land is the residue of Brotherhood Farm, which St. John's hospital owns, it's a charity in Canterbury. And when the first compulsory purchase was made, this land was not of interest to the university, so we kept it. And, there we are, I still have it.

Louise: And what do you do with the land now?

David: I just...I let people take silage one side of the stream, and the fellow that has got...is doing the work on the university land, he just puts 10 acres into the same crop as he's got on the adjacent fields; a gentlemen's agreement. I can't make a living out of it, but basically I'm still getting RPA payments for farming it, keeping it tidy. And they hopefully make a couple of bob by farming it.

Louise: And how was it for you back then to see the university take over the land?

David: It's difficult. I would like...It would be nice to actually see a...I could of dreamed of what could have happened, had the university not arrived. We would be farming a reasonable enough size to be manageable and make a living. And you know, in those circumstances perhaps the farming son would have still been at home doing it, but progress is progress and yeah, it's a...If you want me to have one groan about the university, or one more groan, rabbits! You know, they're welcome on the campus but they used to devastate any crops that we used to try and grow. Literally in the neighbouring fields, so that's why we just kept it down to grass. They devastated that as well, but...

Louise: Is there any particular reason for why there are so many rabbits here?

David: Well, there's been no vermin control. I don't think the university both from the estate management side and I think probably more particularly the side of the students. They would probably be very anti... (laughing) the sort of extermination of the rabbits. ... And there was also, of which I don't think we are affected now, but to the east... we're the river Penn, the brook, the stream that runs through the farm, east of that the land is now owned by the various water boards where there were plans in the 70s to build a reservoir. We were not keen on it at the time, and the original plan in fact would have come into our land, the 20 acres I still had, as a sort of header tank for the reservoir. At the time, father and I were pretty anti A because



we were gonna lose the land and B you would have to be very careful with nitrate application, things like that, which would have leached into the water storage area. And that is still in hand, they still own it, and I wouldn't be at all surprised, it may not be for another 20 years, but at some stage there will be a reservoir down the hill. I think that's possibly, dare I say, one of the reasons why I did hang onto the tenancy of that 20 acres. They may flood it, but its underhand now, not this far up but the latter plans have been a slightly smaller scaled scheme further down the road. Yes, I think it's worked also sort of, as neighbours we have had, not nasty poaching situations, but people have ignored footpaths and trampled across crops, had parties particularly I have a probably an acre of copse or woodland, which, we call them the Bluebell woods, they are lovely in May, where they come and have parties and bonfires and won't say what else goes on there.

Louise: That's just next to the footpath, no?

David: How can I best describe it? You know the woods that come from the estate management, that come right down to the stream, if you go down to the bottom of the woods, cross the stream and you got this little acre of Bluebell woods beside, ...and keeps my fire going (laughing). At the same time, when we had livestock round the farm, fencing was possibly never brilliant but there were also instances where gates were damaged, fencing was damaged and we have had livestock straying on the playing fields. The funniest was actually some very wild beef animals I had, Limousin variety, that found themselves round the Chaucer College, and there we were trying to sort of herd these things up get them into a corner where we could get them into a lorry, and we had Japanese students with their cameras (laughing). Yeah. No harm done, but...

Louise: So how much are you still involved in farming now?

David: Not a lot, no. I mean only on sort of...the nearest I get to farming is sitting on a tractor once a week, looking after the village cricket ground, we've got a village green, but I'm very interested in what son Tim is doing on their farm and, ok, he's got manager status over there, and it's fascinating sort of the way forward and how the powers that be, the RPA's demands of varying your crops, monocropping is not allowed anymore, you can't just grow wheat on everything year after year, ...you have to split it three ways. And also the eco bits, we've had to keep the hedgerows, the verges clear. Fantastic, yeah, good idea, but I don't... you know, it's only by sort of by third hand that I realise why it's being done.

Louise: What do you think are the biggest changes more generally in farming?

David: Obviously, mechanization and also sort of the growth and improvement of the chemical world. And its not everybody whose accepting that. I'm not against



anybody who wants to grow organically but I do think the only way you can make ends meet commercially is to take advantage of chemicals and...I mean there's been a lot on the media lately about rape, oil seed rape. Up until 2 years ago you used to treat the seed...I can't remember the chemical name, but it was a blue seed dressing that controlled a very large proportion of the flea beetle that the rape first developed. And they decided, the powers that be, that that was affecting the bee population so they went 2 years without it. You still had to control your flea beetle but with chemicals, which in fact is was done last week on the rape grown across the road. But they've gone back on themselves and in three counties - Suffolk, Bedfordshire and Cambridge, maybe Norfolk, that area - they're allowed to use the dressing on seed again because they were losing an awful lot of rape and it wasn't making a scrap of difference to the bee population. They've been various tests to say that bees are, the bees were surviving with or without distressed rape. I think one of the saddest things is that obviously having milked a lot of cows in my life, the state of the dairy industry nationally is... Every parish around here used to have at least one dairy herd. There is none this side of Canterbury at all now. One in Barrow, there are some scattered about but they are struggling because they're, whatever they're doing and how they're doing, they're producing milk and they get a loss. And there's a limit to the ... another thing they built...when I was last milking cows, we sold to the milk marketing board, central, British managed, cooperative is not the word, but it's sort of business... and we also - in this corner of the country - because we have less rainfall than the west country and Cheshire, and we got the population, we actually got more pence per liter for our milk than the boys who...[unclear]. Then EEC decided that this is illegal, there can only be one price. It must not be a regional price, and there's regional and seasonal aspects to it too. And the marketing of milk went to the, it got to the stage where there was...our supermarkets buying and a few other, cause they were trying to compete with one another, but it rather seems to me that - and I refer to them as supermarkets - they will do anything to get their purchase price down regardless of what the effect is. If you can't produce it for that money, we'll import eventually. And...it is nice to sort of drive around the country side and every now and again you see sort of green fields with black and white cows in it. Brings back memories. But I don't, I certainly wouldn't like to be having that today off my own back. It's jolly hard work. There was one period, I think it's just before the quotas came in, we were desperate to get as much per cow as we could, and we milked three times a day. Sort of 5 o'clock in the morning, 3 o'clock in the afternoon and 8,9 o'clock at night, which, it only involved one person but it was still hard work. Cause it's not just milking the cows, you still had to clean up afterwards. It did increase the yield, but that's...after that the quotas came in and we had to sort of lose 10 per cent (snaps his fingers) like that, so we went back to twice a day. That was an interesting exercise.

Louise: Can you explain a bit about why the quotas were introduced?



David: I think there was over production. And they decided that one way of not letting it go completely out of hand was to establish a fixed amount that we needed per market. And there was also – and we were guilty of it – there was also a market in milk quota. We, for two or three years, we were buying in quota. So you actually had to pay a fair proportion of your income to whoever you were leasing or buying the quota from. In fact it was a leasing job you leased it on an annual basis, and there were agencies also taking their share of the profits from that. And then, suddenly people decided to give up and the quota was irrelevant because nationally we weren't meeting the markets and any value on milk quotas that we might have had disappeared. When we did give up our herd, yes we had, I can't remember the figures now, but quite a few tens of thousand pounds worth of quota to sell, which we did. Which was one of the bonuses and attractions really of getting rid of the hard work that was involved. It did mean that we couldn't – two years later – to start up again produce milk without, but you can do today because the quota system has been scrapped, but it was a rather ridiculous situation and that was, gosh, in the ...early mid 80s that was all happening.

Louise: Did you find it was harder to sort of, maybe not make ends meet but make it work when the quotas were introduced?

David: Yeah, I mean it did because if you stuck to your quota you would be earning less and as we had actually put various investments into the farm to cater with more cows and sort of more milk, potentially more milk, we didn't meet that because quotas of fifty one minus ten per cent initially and it came down further than that in the subsequent years and if you, I mean people were literally turning the taps on the tanks and letting it go down the drain because you were effectively fined for over producing. And it was a ridiculous situation and I'd say that's when it was...yes, late 80s early 90s that's when most of the local East Kent farmers decided to knock, knocking on the herd. Sad that it is.

Louise: Are there any other ways in which the dairy industry has changed particularly? Now in contrast to perhaps other ways of farming?

David: Well, I mean I don't know whether...There was also a, I mean, when dairying was good to us, there was also a very good financially market in the off spring. I hate to mention it but the, a good strong Friesian bull calf, which was no good to the dairy herd could have gone to market, raised a hundred and fifty quid, give or take, at three weeks of age to go on the exported bull market. But nobody particularly liked it and that died a natural death I think through public pressure. So once again your bull calves from being 150 quid one year were down to 25 quid if you're lucky the next year. And all these things were sort of ...the quotas, the actual potential income of milking and, I'll say it again, milking is hard work, it's not just getting up at 5, you're on duty 24 hours a day because it is so important to keep the health of the



animals. The calving index; the constant is you're trying to have a cow calf every 365 days, so you have to keep your eye on her fertility and whenever you see them sort of bulling at the right time you ... which can be half past ten at night, walking in the fields with a torch or just looking at the sheds...it's ... yeah, it's a labour of love. I've always had somebody working with me who has been more dedicated to that side of it, and I've always sort of been a relief cowman, holiday man. I didn't mind at all, but when we were doing the 3 times a day, yes I was doing one milking per day and if either of us wanted to have time off three times a day that was incredibly demanding on the body.

Louise: Now, you mentioned the EC before briefly, or the EU now, how has that had an impact on farming, on your farm more specifically?

David: We can't complain. The support we've had from Europe has been good. Yeah. Whether it's right or not...we would be, I think without the support of the EC payments we would be struggling. Yeah, definitely. But again the cereal market is another thing that has fluctuated. Wheat prices this year are a fraction of what they were 2 years ago. There are various reasons but I think one of the biggest ones is once again the political situation with the Russian embargo. They, most of the East, used to take a lot of our grain. Particularly if they had a bad winter.

Louise: Just coming back again to the university and your farm in particular, when did the farm really disappear? Because you were talking about 24...

David: There were 3 stages; first one was 1964-ish, stage 1 when they built Eliot and Rutherford, they were the first two colleges. But that was...I think sort of 150 acres of ours went then. Then there was another 80 acres, 3, 4 years later, but that was 69, 70 for the playing fields. I mean it was quite incredible; we were still milking at the old farm before they'd built this one, whilst they were building this one. And they started levelling the playing fields, the sports fields. And we had to troop a herd of cows across the muddy terrain, only for 3 months or so but there was a period when it was dry, no problem at all, but when that was wet, oh God! So that was the second stage and the final one was 2005 when the last 250 acres...basically that was very much the case of the landlords who have alms houses in Canterbury, quite rightly but more realistic, the money they could get for selling the land they could do something really worth while with the alms houses, whereas my rent seemed a lot to me that it probably would have done little more pay to a couple of gardeners down there, 2 man salary or whatever it was.

Louise: Could you explain a bit about the alms houses in Canterbury?

David: Yeah. I mean East Bridge Hospital it's, oh gosh, very old. The Archbishop's the patron and the master of East Bridge Hospital is usually a Dean at the Cathedral. But



there's, the King's bridge right at the end, or middle of the High Street, do you know what I mean? The building on the right is East Bridge Hospital. And there are several rooms at the back, which are occupied by worthwhile tenants. And there was always a very strong connection, East Bridge Hospital owned that land from 16th century. And I think in many ways they actually, any common land in the Parish of Blean was theirs, whether they wanted to admit to that or not; if it needed work on done, it wasn't theirs, but if they wanted to do something with it, yes it was.

It was an interesting... a bit of a shock, but as I was saying the timing of it in my life and everything else and the way we have come out of it, I have no bones at all about the way it went. And although I have been out working for the last 10 years, not in farming, it's very difficult not to drive around the countryside without looking over the fields, and I've still got a lot of friends, good friends in the farming world. And we sort of compare notes over a glass of beer occasionally.

Louise: So what do you do now?

David: I've been involved in storing cars for the motor trade. New cars that arrive, have gone to a compound I've been running, I ran for 10 years. And only this last year I've resigned from full-time involvements. I just avail myself as a driver. I've got the paperwork to drive a big truck and trailer, and I'm useful to them and I enjoy it. Working with a team of 4, and we get on very well, we've been exceptionally busy this last week or so, but I'm delighted that I haven't got the overall responsibility of running it now.

(...talking about cars...)

Louise: So do you miss farming sometimes?

Yeah, but that is why I am delighted that one son is very much into it. Yeah. He actually lives, got married in May last year. Chislet Church, ten yards that way is church cottage where they live. And it's actually fascinating cause although he's working for this particular friends of mine, a lot of my contemporaries have not got children to take on the farm and a lot of them said "what's your Tim doing? Would he be interested?" And not for me to answer, but he's so happy where he is. He's treated as one of the family. Mike who's his boss has got a son who's just a little older who trained for farming and then starting as an accountant and now he's a high-flying partner for an agriculturally connected firm of accountants. So Mike has almost adopted my Tim as his working son, they've got a fantastic working relationship. Yeah, it's just one big family.

Louise: Sorry if I jump back, I just want to clarify briefly, the Brotherhood Farm where is that situated in relation to Hothe Farm?



David: Brotherhood Farm is.. yeah. It is basically, you know where your department building is.

Louise: Yeah.

David: There. It was.

Louise: And Hothe Farm?

David: Hothe Farm is still part of the University through the playing fields, that's where the estates people keep their mowers. There's an old tithe barn there, some oast houses. And there was the Parkwood, which was all woodland, divided the two. We used to have a track between the two. There's only one bit of the university we haven't been involved in, and that was Beverley Farm. There's a small farm. We did actually own the field where Keynes College is, which was taken on day one when they made the compulsory purchase. So apart from the sort of 60 odd acres around Beverley farm, the rest of it was all either Hothe Court or Brotherhood.

Louise: Do you have any pictures at all from the farm back then, how it looked?

[Looking for pictures, talking about pictures and maps ...]