INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

Farmer's Name: John Paterson
Age: 80s
Location: Adisham Court Farm, Canterbury
Size: 600
Type: Arable

Interviewed by: Anna Durdant-Hollamby
Date: 19th May 2015

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John Paterson: …its 1600's, always farming within about 50 miles of Glasgow. My great grandfather came down about 1885 to East Kent to farm on there. He had 4 sons, the eldest of which was my grandfather. My grandfather took a farm near St Albans in Hertfordshire. I never knew him, he died in 1913, my father was the only son of that marriage. My grandmother carried on the farm after her husband's death and was actually a very efficient farmer, I think she was a very tough character, what I remember of her. My father didn't want to farm, he wanted to do law but anyway, he was told after the Great War, you're going to run the farm. He did it for a few years, then he broke away and started a business on his own. And when I was a kid, I always used to go and stay on relations' farms and farms of friends and father said '*there's no way you can go into farming*!' And he pointed me in the direction of engineering which I always liked, so I left school, went to work at an engineering works, then I joined the army, became a vehicle mechanic in the army. When I was in the army, I thought '*I'm going to get into farming*' and basically, I enjoyed engineering, but still wanted to get into farming. And so when I came out of the army, the army gave you a grant to get further education. To get to college, one of the things you had to do was to work for at least a year on a farm, so I did that, worked on a farm up near Royston in Hertfordshire. Then I went to college and went and worked for somebody, and I managed to get the tenancy of a small farm in North Essex, a heavy-land farm, where I really majored mainly just had pigs. Because you could get a quick turnover and they were profitable. And the arable side couldn't be altered round; it was in very bad shape.

John: So, that was, I was there for 16 years,….17/18 years probably, and then I could see that it was going to be too small, by that time we'd got quite a large family, a family of 5 daughters. So they've got to be supported and I put in, more farms came

on the market then to rent. I put in for one in Wiltshire, which I didn't even get shortlisted for. I put in for one in Dorset near Blandford, which I was shortlisted for and then went back and looked at it and thought '*no, this is more than I can tackle*', it required 2 dairy herds and borrowing a horrendous amount of money!

Anna: Oh wow, that is big!

John: Then my third effort, which was the farm I eventually got, which was in Adisham which is 3 miles away from here, which was a church commissioner's farm. And a very nice arable farm. So we came there, and then my second daughter Fiona was the one who showed an interest in farming and went to college and worked on farms in New Zealand. Then she married a young fella, who was an assistant farm manager and he'd got no farming background, he'd gone off and done similar things to Fiona. Then they got married and I could see that they were okay and I said 'what about coming here and taking over?' And so they did and that was about…15, my late wife and I moved here about 12 years ago, so they took over the farm then. But I still wander up there most days and see that it's still there and hasn't run away. Keep an interest.

Anna: See how they're doing.

John: It's nice and I do still a little bit. I was quite pleased with myself last year, they'd arranged to go for a week's holiday before harvest and they'd got it all booked up and everything. And then I was driving around the farm one day and I came back in and said that the oilseed rape would be ready to combine in a few day's time and they said '*oh we'll have to cancel the holiday'* and I said '*no you don't, I've done 1 or 2 harvests, I think I might do it again*.' So when they came back, I'd got all the rape in [*chuckles*].

Anna: Ah that's amazing, brilliant!

John: So that gave me a little bit of a boost, yes. Anyway, what can I tell you, social changes? Practical changes?

Anna: Yeah all the kinds of things, I mean it's wonderful that it's still in the family, it's lovely to hear that. I've been talking to quite a few farmers whose children aren't interested in taking it on.

John: Yes that's one of the things now.

Anna: Yeah exactly, it's quite sad, because people have so many different things they want to do. It's lovely that you can go up there and still have active involvement. So yeah the changes is everything, from the EU to the challenges you would have faced in

terms of weather or climate or disease, and stuff like that. So it's about what you would have remembered of the big challenges that you faced?

John: I suppose you can divide it into 2 parts can't you? The social side and the practical, physical side. On the social side, the obvious thing is that farms have got bigger, small farms have been swallowed up. The number of people involved in farming is a fraction of what it was. I mean the farm I went to work on in North Hertfordshire was really a Victorian farm in as much as there were quite a lot of people still working there. It wasn't a particularly big farm, about 400 acres and we had the grazing rights over an aerodrome, that was 1 part, that had about 1000 sheep and a shepherd. But on the farm, the first year I went there, because I did 2. I came out of the army in April and went to college the end of September the following year after harvest, so that was quite good. But the first year, everything was done by hand, we still had a couple of teams of horses and when I say things were done by hand, there was no combine, so all the wheat and barley was cut by binder and stacked. We grew potatoes which were handpicked by casual labour and stored in clamps outside and then dressed out during the winter time. Sugar beet, which was all hand lifted and cut the tops off by hand, and load them into the lorries by hand, unload the lorries by hand.

Anna: It's so much more labour intensive isn't it?

John: Yeah, the nice side of it was that of course you worked as a gang, chatter went on, and of course nowadays the chap sits in his cab, he's got air conditioning but he doesn't have that interaction. Nothing's ever straightforward but it was very hard work and a lot of the old men were damaged by it, bad backs, broken fingers, things had been cut off in machines. So that particular farm has been swallowed up with 2 others, and the next one to it a beautiful 700 acre farm, a German bought that one and this one and another one and he's running the whole lot with 2 men.

Anna: Really? Wow!

John: There were 9 on the 400, and the 700 acre farm who again grew a lot of potatoes and beet and a lot of peas grown for the fresh market, so you had a big gang of people come in to pick them. I mean he probably had 30 people employed all the time, so they've all gone. So that's socially, and of course many fewer farmers so that's the social side I've seen.

Anna: And on your farm, did you have a lot of staff when you had your own?

John: When I was farming in Essex, I had 2 people fulltime on pigs, that was quite a big, we were running something like over 100 sows, and taking everything through to slaughter.

Anna: So breeding them for pork?

John: A few would go to the local butcher for pork, some would go to the local bacon factory for bacon, and the big pigs would go to Walls for pork pies and sausages and things. They were my biggest customer and they were good people to deal with. So that was that and it was a unit on its own. And I had 1 man on the arable side with me; and I spent quite a lot of time with the pigs, but also on the arable side, we grew a few potatoes which we dropped after awhile, but they were quite a good way of earning a little bit of money. But it was quite strong land and you had to choose the fields, and if you ran into a wet autumn, it was a nightmare!

Anna: A nightmare, a bit similar to here in terms of the heaviness?

John: No my farm here is different, it's a beautiful farm, it's loam over chalk. Very free-draining and yet it holds moisture, it sounds a contradiction in terms but it's not. I think drought affects loam over chalk at Adisham less than it would on the clay because the clay cracks up and breaks roots. So, I'm sure everyone will tell you this is the huge difference in the number of employees and conversely, of course, those who are employed now are much better off. I mean they were very badly paid farm people. They got perks, they got their housing, potatoes, but it was a very rare thing for a farm worker to have a car, they might have had a motorbike. And all the farmers had cars. In fact one of my early memories when I took this little farm on and the house had just been used just as a bothy for I don't know what, it was a nice house, but it was in a pretty awful state. And I took it on before I married as a young man and keen, and about 5 o'clock in the afternoon, I don't know what I'd been doing, I hadn't employed anyone at that stage. And I'd just gone into the house to make a cup of tea, the house was barely furnished, my mother was horrified, I was camping really. And there was a knock on the door and it was this old boy and he introduced himself and he was a neighbouring farmer. And the foot of the farms backed onto each other, to get to them, it was a 5 mile route.

Anna: Oh wow really?

John: And at the age of 83, he had cycled round 500 acres, he'd never had a car or had never learned to drive anyway. So Mr. Brand came in, and I said 'come in and have a cup of tea,' And he said 'well boy (that was what they always said), you've taken on this old farm that's hard won, and he said 'I've seen this farm go down to scrub 3 times, the depression of the 1880s, in the depression after the war and the depression between the wars.'

Anna: Wow!

John: Yes, they'd abandoned the farm mostly in the 1930s and I thought that was an encouraging start. Anyway he said 'I wish you well,' and got on his bike and cycled off. So that and materially, I mean when you entered a farm worker's cottage, you never saw a carpet, you might see a small rug in front of the fire and very often, it was a corn-sack. So materially, they have become much better off.

Anna: But again there was that community factor I guess, wasn't there?

John: The villages were based on the farms, there might have been a few chaps in the building trade who went off each day, but otherwise they worked on the farms or associated with the farms, might be a blacksmith, still 1 or 2 carpenters who could do a bit carpentry repairing and that sort of thing. All that's gone. Not strictly farming I suppose, but…

[INSERT GRANDFATHER CLOCK]

John: Sorry, that noisy clock. So that, it happened very rapidly when it happened. Going back again, sorry. My father didn't want me to go into farming because, he said, 'after any war, farming goes downhill' and he said 'you're coming in after a war.' And at long last, they realised we couldn't depend on always bringing stuff in from overseas, and we got the 1947/48 Acts which did give great security to farming, great stability. And then that promoted investment in machinery, modernization, and also things like plant breeding, and… I think plant breeding in particular. Its a fact that I found out not long ago that between 1850 and 1940, there was no average increase in the yield of wheat in the country. And even by the time I came out of the army in 1950, it had only gone up a very little, because there had been no investment.

Anna: Yeah exactly!

John: The NIA, National Institute of Agriculture and Botany in Cambridge, that was started in 1915 and got off to a great start and then of course, after the war was starved of funds. And then it came back in again. And in my time, I think one of the most spectacular things has been what the plant breeders have done for us.

Anna: Ah really? That's really interesting. I haven't heard much about that.

John: I mean when I came into farming first, most harvests, half the wheat was flat on the ground.

Anna: Okay, yeah.

John: You never see flat wheat now! That is also chemicals but mainly it's the plant breeders and the yield has gone from, gosh, what? 1300 wheat an acre to not far short of 4 tons!

Anna: Wow! That's huge!

John: And that is a huge difference and the quality's better, you know. I mean all the milling wheat that was used in 1950, 90% of it was imported, and now it's all virtually homegrown. A wee bit comes in from Canada still but not very much.

Anna: Oh really, that's cool!

John: So we've seen a decline in people employed, whether it's farmers or farm workers. I think there's another side to that coin though and that there are more people employed on the side that is supplying farms, I mean people making machinery, making fertilizer, and people making chemicals, so how you add those up those up, I don't know.

Anna: Ah yeah, that's a really good point.

John: Workers on farms as we all know has gone down and is still going down.
On the agricultural side as I've already sort of mentioned, the advance in the technology of growing crops and the greater knowledge of how to manipulate, (I suppose), plants and keep them healthy. We had virtually no fungicides, we had no fungicides for anything except potatoes when I came into farming. and we used the old French wine growers' thing, Bordeaux mixture against Blight and that was it. The introduction of fungicides into plant diseases has, I think, been spectacular. If I had to pick any 1 thing and you can't really, it's like taking a link out of a chain, you've got to have the whole chain, but…

Anna: Sure yeah, I can imagine

John: but I think the most dramatic change has been the control of diseases.

Anna: Sure, amongst plants

John: Say at this time of year, you look at the fields and think '*they look jolly good*' and then a few weeks later it's yellow with rust and you can do nothing about it.

Anna: Devastating, I can't even imagine!

John: That breaks your heart you know. But now, it costs a lot of money and a lot of people don't like us doing it ,but it is fantastic and aligned with that, I mean I'm

talking about arable farming here. Our main crop at Adisham is wheat, so that's the one I tend to major on, and plant breeders have given us plants which are capable of yielding more. They've brought in genetic material from all over the world and I think they've done wonders with it. The greater knowledge of fertilizers and a greater understanding of what we can do with them. And they're all vital, you take any one thing out, fungicides and weed-killers also. I mean the old boys, it was the hoe when I started, and the very first weed-killers came in which killed things like poppies and charlock, very simple things. And the old farm boys would be hoeing away, we'd be hoeing out wild oats a lot of the time, and they'd say '*they'll never get anything that takes wild oats out wheat will they?*' And of course they have.

Anna: They have! And so quickly as well, once it all started, it must have been escalated.

John: Yes and of course, it all came back to the fact that the government had put a base in agriculture so people had got the confidence to invest. And the chemical companies…a total sideline, but the chemical companies are now saying well they're not spending money on antibiotics because they don't get a return on it. So now they're thinking out other ways that they got give them out, because the antibiotics we get after a while resistance sets in and if you don't find more antibiotics in 20/30/50 years time, you ain't going to have them. And by gosh to go back to when there was not antibiotics, it would be pretty horrendous wouldn't it?

Anna: It would be regressing definitely. It must be so similar with fertiliser I guess because I've been talking about black-grass with quite a few farmers and the fact that it's so resistant to so much, and they have to use the really strong stuff and the immunities.

John: Yes, yes, that's a classic actually, black-grass. When I took on this farm in Essex, black-grass and wild oats were absolutely endemic and we had no chemicals for either of those. But by cultural methods, we got on top, you know, late drilling, spring cropping. But even black-grass has evolved, because if we put in spring barley, we never had black-grass, no. But now it does, it comes, you see it in the spring. It had to vernalise like wheat, but it doesn't have to now, and so you know, it's evolved.

Anna: Evolved and mutated [shudders] scary stuff by the sound of things.

John: Yeah, yep, because it's a big seed producer! And we've never had it here, but we've seen the last couple of years little bits and if we spot em' we just burn 'em out with roundup. Its a constant battle, and if you get a free-seeding thing like black-grass, you've got a chemical which is absolutely marvelous and 1 seed out of a

million isn't effected. And then in 3 year's time, you've got a field full of resistant black-grass.

Anna: Very challenging! So at the Adisham farm, you've got wheat, rapeseed, have you got a third because of the EU restriction?

John: Hmm?

Anna: I've heard about this EU payment restriction in terms of you have to have 3 crops to get it.

John: Yeah, yeah, we've got no problem with that one. Half the farm's wheat, basically, it doesn't always work out, because of field sizes and things, but 50% is wheat. About 20% is oilseed rape and that leaves 30% and that'll be made up of a mixture of oats, peas and beans.

Anna: Okay, yeah.

John: I used to grow quite a lot of grass seed and that was quite good but there was a local merchant who closed down, and it then became too difficult, because we could haul it in in the winter time as they wanted it, clean it and get it ready. But once they'd packed up, we packed up growing grass seed, so it's all goes with a combine. There's nobody employed on the farm. My daughter and son-in-law run it, they have a helper, a very good chap who comes in and he takes on the combine at harvest time and he will plough for us or cultivate when we're busy drilling, and he's quite happy to go off and do his own thing. It's a really nice arrangement, very good. And they usually employ a young student or something at harvest time just to ride trailers up and down. And my son in law works at grain barn, which is a job I used to do so, because we store all our own grain, we have dryers and things. And my daughter will fill in wherever there's a gap at that time of the year. But she basically does all the books and things, and runs the house and 3 boys, who are all away now, the last one's at university. And that's pretty typical of what things are now. It's a 600 and something acre farm and no doubt when they retire or fall off the pig, whatever they do first, that'll be broken up by the owners, the farmhouse will be sold off for a vast sum of money, and the farmyard will be filled with houses and the land will be broken up.

Anna: So sad isn't it?

John: Yes very but it's what happened in the retail trade shops, all the shops are gone but it is sad because it's a good social structure, I think.

Anna: Everyone still needs to eat! [laughing] people seem to forget and eat locally, ideally.

John: Yeah, yeah.

Anna: And your grandsons aren't so interested in it at the moment?

John: No…1 of them, their youngest boy, because I've always been gardening up there, I've still got a little vegetable garden up there.

Anna: Ah lovely!

John: And he was the one who would come up and ask what I was doing and that sort of thing. And he did work a couple of harvests for us and then he worked a couple of harvests for the Velcourt company, you know Velcourt? The big farming company? He went and worked for them because he'd get more money there. He's up at Cambridge now and he's doing, oh hell what's he doing? He started off doing physics, maths and geology.

Anna: That's impressive!

John: He's dropped the maths and he's doing physics and geology and in his final year it'll just be geology.

Anna: Well, he's interested in the land.

John: Yes, yes, but you know he certainly shows no inclination. And my daughter down in Sussex, they've got 1 boy and he's got no interest in the farm, no, no.

Anna: Oh really?

John: No, no and they own that farm and they've got only the 1 boy so he'll probably inherit it 1 day and he may go and retire there or something. But, it's interesting, you see, my daughter took over and neighbouring farmers who we were very great friends with, like us they had a family of daughters. And their eldest daughter has taken over, and I've just heard of another church commissioner's tenant on the other side of Canterbury, whose certainly got 1 boy because he was in the RAF for a while, and his daughter has taken over.

Anna: Oh, the girls are taking over!

John: Yes!

Anna: That's really fascinating, because I've talked to a few farmers and they've all had boys I think, and none of them have been interested. It's new women farmer generation [laughing].

John: Yes!

Anna: It's interesting though isn't it? I wonder if there's something because women have more equality and everything now, whether it's an interest in what was quite a man's world, and understanding that the land is important, which men may be being less involved in. That's really interesting!

John: I was telling you, my grandmother was an old lady who lived in a house on her own, apparently when she was farming. She grew up on a farm in Scotland, and, of course you wouldn't do any work, farmers didn't do any work.

Anna: Yeah it was more a figurehead.

John: Yes, you paid someone to do that. But you know, she was I think, a very good business person, and also technically in her day, very able.

Anna: A Bathsheba Everdene type!

John: Yes, that's right! Yeah.

Anna: [laughing] I am going to call all the women farmers I now hear about, Bathsheba

John: When I was in Essex, there was a nice farm, not quite adjacent but not far off, the lady there was widowed quite young and she just carried on and ran it jolly well. There was no reason to stop it. It was traditionally a man's world. And what else have I seen? We've discussed the social side...

Anna: Alan talked about the fact that obviously decimalisation happened, did that have any kind of an impact?

John: 1975 was it?

Anna: Yeah the early 70s

John: No, everything went up in price I think, I mean you said the 3 crop rule.

Anna: Oh yeah that's quite a big thing with the EU

John: Yeah, no that doesn't affect us because we're already growing more than 3 crops, so that's not a worry.

Anna: Ah okay yeah, that's good.

John: I think it's a damn silly thing

Anna: Yeah, a lot of the EU restrictions seem like that.

John: Yes of course they are, they're thought up by people who've no idea what they're talking about. Some of them are quite good and some are absolutely stupid.

Anna: Yep.

John: What else?

Anna: Let me see in my Qs…

John: We were always, right through that time, we've been dependent basically for our profit, on subsidy in some form or another. And whether that's been a good thing or a bad thing, I don't even know. If we hadn't had it, would have the market prices been better? Or would we have adapted to keep our costs down to make a profit? I don't know, is the answer. Is it a fact of life that we would have been better if we could have managed without them? But they were there so obviously we would take them. I think most years at Adisham, while they take in subsidies, their profit is about the same, usually…

Anna: Yeah, yep.

John: But I was very interested some years ago, I went to a talk and the chap had been to Canada and he'd looked at the prices of their sprays, the same ones we were using, with the same names and all the same chemical names, that sort of thing. And the price of wheat there was, I don't know, half the price of what it was here and the price of chemicals related to that, and they priced them not at a cost to manufacturer plus 20% or anything like that, but what the market will bear. So I think...I don't think if we hadn't had that injection of guaranteed money in the 1940s and 50s, there would have been people who would have just taken the 1930 attitude, because they were all 1930's farmers who had the defensive attitude. Trench warfare! Don't spend anything. And to break the cycle would not have been easy. The New Zealanders did it, which caused chaos at the start but has actually worked very well, but New Zealand's a different cup of tea to us. Certainly crops are ruled by world prices, you know, the price of wheat at the moment is not very good

because there's plenty of wheat floating about. But it only wants a tiny little shortage and it'll go banging up again.

Anna: Yeah exactly, it's all quite cyclical isn't it? I'm sure you've seen it all before several times.

John: I have. A chap I worked for, like all farms did then probably, not all farms, all mixed farms, had a farm lorry, and we used to take potatoes up to London and there was a lorry driver. But if we were lifting potatoes or sending potatoes up to London, we were lifting sugar beet and we were taking wheat into the mills, the lorry was doing 20 hours a day, so 1 driver couldn't do that, so I was the second driver and I used to quite often take a load of potatoes up to London. And you know, when the price wasn't very good, the governor said '*if there's one load of potatoes too many in London, the price goes bang and if there's too few, it goes through the roof*' and they're all sort of scrabbling for it. So there we are, any more questions?

Anna: Let me think, it's wonderful, you're covering many things, it's wonderful. Any particular stories or things you'd like to share that you don't think you have, I mean I can't think of anything specific that we haven't really covered actually. I would imagine…we have a question about the University of Kent and its impact [laughs] on any farms, but I would imagine yours is a bit too far out to have any kind of relationship.

John: I go up to the Gulbenkian occasionally and that's about it.

Anna: [laughing] Exactly, well I'm glad the university offers something! As Alan said 'I don't really want that question to go in because I think it might just come across as a little bit offensive really, as it's only been there for 50 years' and until now I don't think it's made any kind of effort to build relationships with farmers, even the outside community of them. So a bit embarrassed by that question [laughing] but Mr Brealy over near Herne said they'd often had students from the university work on the farm. We've covered disease – have you got thoughts on organic farming?

John: I got quite interested in the organic movement at one time and two things frightened/put me off it. One of the great founders of the organic movement was Lady Eve Balfour, and she was quite well-off and she put a great deal of money into the movement and she bought a farm in Suffolk, near Stowmarket…Haughley! And I went and had a look at that and it was a mess, and there were a lot of people working there, and I thought they're barely feeding themselves, it seemed and that's not going to work. And there was another chap called Frins Sykes, who farmed in Wiltshire, and who was storming round the country, and he was doing talks on it, and so I went down and had a look at it. And I thought, this chaps got something

going here. And then it was the fellow who was working for him blew the gaffe and said well you know at night we go out and put fertiliser on [*laughing*].

Anna: What? [laughing] complete frauds!

John: [*laughing*] total frauds, yes!

Anna: That's extraordinary! Oh no, how terrible, that's scandalous!

John: So I thought, no, no, because it's going to be a very expensive way of producing food. And wheat production is somewhere about 1200 tons a year and I think if we went organic, we'd be pushed to get 500.

Anna: Wow, yeah that's a pretty significant difference isn't it?

John: You'd have to alter your whole farming systems. The economics would not add up. It's quite a good fad for wealthy people, they've got their organic stuff in Sainsbury's, they pay a bit more for that. Great!

Anna: I think that's a fair point, and remember they could be spraying the fertiliser on at night [laughing]

John: Although there was a chap caught not long ago on the Isle of Wight, a big vegetable grower, selling all his stuff as organic. And he sacked a man, maybe a stupid thing to do, anyway, this chap then blew the gaffe. Did he go inside? Or was he fined anyway, because he was, you know, misrepresentation. I'm sure a lot of this stuff is imported, organic…

Anna: Oh yeah, yeah definitely.

John: …as long as people are happy with it.

Anna: Yeah, exactly, [laughing]. Right anything else, I think we're pretty much covered. Yeah I think that is almost everything, unless, yeah, there's anything else you'd like to share about the whole experience that you'd like to record for posterity? Sorry it's not very specific.

John: Well I've had a marvelous life! I've enjoyed it, I haven't enjoyed it all, but it's been a good life and I have no regrets. I have met 1 or 2 other people who went into engineering and made vast amounts of money, but I've always had just about enough to scratch by.

Anna: That's what life's all about, I think, rather than getting caught in the hamster wheel of wanting material things.

John: Yes course it is, yeah.

Anna: But with farming and having your family around, presumably it's much more meaningful?

John: Yes, a very satisfying life, it was a lovely place for the girls to grow up, they all went through the pony stage and it didn't cost anything, it was all part and parcel of... And my wife loved gardening and was a good artist, Jane, she used to love gardening and the garden at Adisham was quite a big garden, but it wasn't neglected, but it was quite dead. But she created a beautiful garden there. And one day she said '*I want to get a cow*' and I said '*If we're going to have any cows here, we're going to have 100',* anyway the next thing I know, a little Jersey's turned up and she used to go out every morning and milk it, and then she would keep the heifer calf in a separate pen, going out in the morning, milk what she wanted and then turn out the calf with the cow for the rest of the day. And she got vast amounts of milk and was making cream and butter and cheese and giving it away.

Anna: Mmm I was going to say, lovely Jersey cream!

John: It was lovely stuff, and that was nice. We'd always put her calf to beef, bull Angus. And when the animal was ready to go to the slaughterhouse, we'd have a bit back and put it in the deep freeze and forget about it.

Anna: Until you go 'oo some nice home grown beef!' Oh how lovely.

John: So, that was nice and natural, and it was a good place for children to grow up, I wouldn't say it was the best, but nice.

Anna: Oh I don't know, it's pretty wonderful to have that space, I'd imagine! I didn't grow up on a farm but we had very good friends close by who did and the way we could just run out into the fields for hours, you know and the grown ups doing their thing and not all that 'keep the children inside' business which goes on now, which is shocking really.

John: Horrible, horrible! And they're building houses now with tiny little gardens, I mean I've got a tiny little garden here, but it's ideal for retirement.

Anna: But now, all the new builds for families, no space at all, it's horrible. I think for a family, it's an amazing thing to be able to offer and experience and like even though

it's hugely challenging and complicated at times, there is that sort of more simple way of living…when I say simple, I don't mean to undermine it.

John: I know what you mean. I think it's a great thing. I would say that everybody should play cricket and farm for a bit. Because it's a great leveler, you know, you think I got this right, I know they are…bang! something comes along [*laughing*].

Anna: [laughing too] Keeps you grounded, both those things, I'm sure!

John: And the same with cricket ! [*chuckles*]

Anna: Keeps your feet firmly planted on the ground!

John: yea! Yup! One of my son-in-laws is an accountant and when I try to explain to him farming and what goes on, he just says '*I can't believe any business runs like that*'. And I say '*it doesn't really run, it just sort of totters*' and for him, he puts everything on paper and it's right you know.

Anna: And it's neat, farming is messy! It's real stuff of life!

John: So you plant a crop, you're not going to sell the produce for 18 months, you don't know what yield you're going to get, you don't know what price you're going to get. You've only got a rough idea of what it's going to cost you to grow.

Anna: It's a certain form of gambling isn't it? [laughing]

John: No, it makes gambling look soft! [*laughing*] Someone asked me once, I used to like going to races, particularly when I lived in Essex, Newmarket was quite close, and we'd go go once or twice a year up there, and have a day, I quite enjoyed it. But somebody said '*you're not much of a gambler are you?*' I said '*My whole life is a gamble!*'

Anna: [laughing] do you not know anything about farming?

John: 'I go gambling every day!'