



## INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

Farmer's Name: Roger Piper  
Age: 60  
Location: Tatnam Farm, Romney Marsh  
Size: 200 ha.  
Type: Arable

Interviewed by: Katy Sharpe  
Date: 14<sup>th</sup> September 2015

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*Katy: So, could you just tell me about the farm please?*

Roger: We're now an all arable farm, combinable crops. We used to have sheep, about 15 years ago, but I mean, they weren't paying at all, so they went and now we're all arable. oilseed rape, cereals, harvest peas, ...hasn't changed a lot over the years. We did have potatoes, but they didn't pay either so they went. , we've had a few dabbles in different things, we had lupins the other year, very unsuccessfully, cause there was no chemistry to keep them clean. Or, well, not here to keep them clean and....years ago, we was growing a lot of sugar beet. But then when there were the beeching cuts in the early 60s, once we lost the railway at New Romney, which used to take them all to the sugar mills, which I presume were in, up the East Coast somewhere, I don't know where it was

*Katy: I don't know either to be honest!*

Roger: That was the end of that as well, Sugar beet. But if, it's closer to French coast for a sugar factory than what it would to take them the other side of London!  
[laughs]

*Katy: Yeah [laughs], cause you're pretty much...you are on the coast here aren't you?*

Roger: It's just the transport costs to get them over the other side really. But ..... we haven't had a great change in our agricultural practice.

*Katy: Right. Has machinery and that kind of thing changed...? Has that...*



Roger: Oh yeah, well we used to have, well quite a few year ago we would have had 5, or 6 staff. And you would have had smaller horse powered tractors. 50 horse would have been a big tractor. Now I've got two tractors, both over 100 horsepower. and the kit is graduated in size to accommodate the bigger vehicles. So...

*Katy: So you don't need as many staff to work it cause you're kind of..*

Roger: Well, your output per man, per machine is say 10 times more perhaps than it was in the past. Cause you're using a narrow machine, and now you have something that's 6 metres and you obviously get over the ground a lot quicker. Doing the same sort of thing.

*Katy: Have you managed to grow your farm because you've got bigger machinery? Or is it just making what you have more efficient?*

Roger: No we haven't, I can't see us growing. The cost of land at the moment is about 10,000 plus an acre. It isn't viable for agricultural return! [laughs] Unless you've got large pots of money to invest and turn it into the asset, you certainly couldn't put your head on – not in my position, no one seems to be taking over after me.

*Katy: Oh right*

Roger: My children – son's not really interested, my daughter has got other career plans, and there's no one to do it. And to put such a millstone round your neck. Cause you'd have to borrow the money to do it, oh yeah let's borrow half a million pounds

*Katy: Yeah, you'd have to pay it back*

Roger: It would never be viable on agricultural return, so I can't see us expanding at all. We're not – don't own all ours anyway, 2/3 of it's rented.

*Katy: Oh ok, who's it- what rented from another farm?*

Roger: Well, a land-owner, locally

*Katy: Oh ok*

Roger: And , so we own a bit of ours. All this block here round the farm is ours, we've got some more down the road, and the family's mixed up in caravan parks as well

*Katy: Yeah I saw the name Piper*



Roger: That you come past - Yeah it's half and half, it was one site. But when my grandfather died, it had to be split because him and his brother couldn't get on very well [laughs]. So it's split between the two families, hence the two sites. But a much better proposition than farming.

*Katy: So when your farm- when you, when you said you rent out the land now, when your Dad started did you just have this plot?*

Roger: No, we had a farm at Ivy Church, Which when he got land here, one cropped up at there as well which is about 4 mile away, And that was sold; that could have been 20 odd year ago now, perhaps even more. Cause agricultural was such a boom in, we had such a boom time about, we had such a hole [laughs] that had to be filled up. And the only way to do it was to sell the other farm. Which was a shame, but it's the way things had to go you know.

*Katy: So how come you then decided to start renting out the fields?*

Roger: well it was the opportunity to, this was, goes back early, to obviously to increase your acreage, you can't, didn't have the funds to buy at the time, therefore you rented what was available. It's all fairly local to us. Even though we're spread out a bit, St Mary's Bay to the reed out really, in, bibs and blobs around, you know. But we get by [laughs].

*Katy: [laughs] So, was it very different when your father was working on the farm?*

Roger: I presume so. I don't know. But you know, you had far more staff, ..... [pause]

*Katy: Or even when you started was it much different to now?*

Roger: I suppose so. I, you know, I wasn't born till 55. So it was going beyond then. But you're, you're out of your ... your returns, of variety wise from I don't...when they started I should imagine...if they had a 3 ton crop of wheat it was a damn good crop. Whereas now you're looking for perhaps 4 and a half, perhaps to 5 on variety plant breeding, you know. And we're growing oilseed rape now, which we didn't, years ago.

*Katy: How come?*

Roger: Er..well I suppose....It's suddenly come into, into British agriculture I suppose...25, 30 year ago, and you see a little bit of it about And it grows well, and it's got quite a good return, gives you a good entry back- into a rotation, back into cereal, as a break crop.



*Katy: Yeah. Cause I've heard now, isn't there a new kind of rule, that's been brought in about a 3 crop rule?*

Roger: Oh yeah

*Katy: Where you have to rotate*

Roger: Yeah. Which we did anyway

*Katy: Did you? Ok*

Roger: So that's all to do with the single farm payment, and Europe

*Katy: Has that affected you much?*

Roger: No because we were already doing it. There are some that just grow oilseed rape and wheat. And they've had to, well bring another crop in. But we were already doing it anyway, so it didn't affect us at all. As long as your percentages are right, which they are. So it was no great change. If it wasn't for the single farm payment, like, us and lots of other small farms, would have gone to the wall. Cause you return, if it wasn't for that...Europe money. You wouldn't have been, we would've gone to the wall. Cause that's what save, that's what saved you really. You know that income from that.

[pause]

*Katy: So have you sup- so... a lot of farmers I've spoken to have kind of.....had quite strong opinions on the supermarkets and the price that they've been giving. Has that affected you at all?*

Roger: Er..... [sighs]. Well it must do to a certain extent, but we aren't producing anything direct to shop. You know, we're selling cereal, oilseed rape, goes to a crusher. Cereal to wherever it's going, who we're selling to. There ain't many left now. You know, there's Glencor, Allied, you know buyers for cereal. And that'll go, well virtually anywhere in the world. Once it goes to Tilbury, or wherever the boat is... Lydden, another one, Rye... the little boats, Rye and Dover, near Europe, but we put some of that went on a boat to Australia I think last year. That was a big boat, they were loading with grain, But it goes anywhere in the world

*Katy: That must have changed, surely. There must have been a time when you weren't exporting all over the world?*



Roger: Oh it was all local market. You know, your price would be set, in Kent, And it was a fairly stable price, but now, if it drops a point in Chicago in the morning, by lunchtime it'll reflect in the English price. Do you know, you know it's Global market. Nowadays. All depending on, it usually works out that we get a better prices if there's a disaster somewhere else in the world With their harvest, do you know what I mean? Drought in the states, or Australia, or...somewhere in the world You know that's depleted their harvest. And it's all dependent on, on that really. You know, there's different crops go, lot of beans going to Egypt

*Katy: Really? Oh anything, what you..*

Roger: Germany as well. Think they have quite a few. Lot of our cereal goes... I don't know... to feed chickens or pigs I think In Eastern Europe. Do you know what I mean? You know...

*Katy: Yeah, so it's.... I think it's interesting, cause I think, a lot of the idea of farming is that it's very local when it's really not anymore*

Roger: It's not anymore

*Katy: Is it? It's so global*

Roger: No. You know, we haven't got produce to sell, but then if you've got apples or vegetable, you are governed by what the supermarket or the...hope if they're gonna buy it. That you're, that's what they're gonna give, that's it, you know if you say "oh no thank you very much", they'll go somewhere else. And they will also as well, after using you for along time say "we don't want anymore" and they'll just cut you off, you know, that'll be the end of you finding a home for your produce. That's happened locally to firms.

*Katy: People..yeah.... cause the farmer's I've spoken to...that's pretty much the consensus between them really..is the, it's just kind of..dictate, you know kind of tell them what to do...*

Roger: Oh yeah. Yeah there's no, there's no.....

*Katy: Give and take*

Roger: No, they will say x, we are gonna pay X. And a lot of them are paying 120 days as well to get your money. That's a long time, and of course they're sitting on your money, they've turned it over. You know. And dear oh dear, they've had a blip in sales. They haven't lost money, but their profit is down. You know what I mean? They holler and shout, that their profits are down...



*Katy: But they've still got the money*

Roger: 6 million or something. But they still 25 million in the h- you know, the right side of profit, but their profit is down. It's your....well, should it keep going up and up and up and up and up? Cause it reflects in...what they're selling to the customer doesn't it? You know, but you've got no control over the supermarkets.

*Katy: No, so it- sorry..*

Roger: Well I was gonna.... Meat-wise, they've got it taped really. The independent butchers disappeared virtually from the high street. People are buying blister packs of meat, that have to be red because if it isn't, if it's a bit dark, ooh they won't buy that, even though it's better. You know, its k- wherever it comes from. Lot of chicken comes from all around the world. Beef – Ireland, Europe, Scotland, and it's not long before it's packed up, before it's butchered. You know, it's not hung at all anymore And there's no local, abattoir anyway now, I don't think.

*Katy: No, yeah someone...*

Roger: Charing packed up

*Katy: Guil- It's Guildford I think, is where they now have to send it*

Roger: A big one, yeah, there's an independent one over, back of Dover, but they're..... got a hell of a waiting list, apparently, to get animals booked in because there isn't anywhere You know, for private kills, There's nowhere to take them. Not that I do it, But I talk to friends that do You know, to find a home for it

*Katy: Yeah. So do you feel quite lucky that you're not in that, you know you're not in the fruit, you're not in the beef, you're in your cereals, you don't have to deal with that.... Side of it?*

Roger: Well that's changed a lot of legislation as well, all the hoops you have to jump through. For 'em to belong to schemes, which is fair enough, you know we belong to the, the accredited...farm assurance.... It's the way to go, to give confidence in what you're producing, you're doing it to a playing field. You know, they keep moving the goal posts every year. Yeah, the customer or the public have got to have confidence in what you're doing which is right, you know, because farms didn't have, haven't got the best reputations in the world, never did have. Some of them still haven't. But most people want to have you know to show that they're trying with everything. Cause we all do a bit, you know you might think we all plough everything up and spray everything to an inch of it's life, but that costs more and more money to do it.



And it's lovely to see wildlife, out in the field, and I find, I think I am very, very lucky to look after a part of this country. You know, the marsh especially, cause, well, born, bred here, family have been here for generations, and it's...unique. And I'm very lucky to look after it, for somebody else. Cause what I do now, in, generations to come, is gonna affect, you know, what's er... how it is, in, in the future. Unless the sea wall falls down and we're all in 6 foot of salt water, farming prawns!

*Katy: [laughs] gone back to the...Cause it used to be, didn't it used to be ... years ago obviously*

Roger: What the marsh?

*Katy: Yeah, yeah, sea wasn't it?*

Roger: Get back... well pre- well the Romans did some of It It was marshy, tidal marsh land

*Katy: Yeah cause I know Rye was...*

Roger: Yeah that's the newer side of the marsh, that was in the , in as they call it – they used to drive walls down. Mother church did most of that. And that was er the middle ages. But this part of, the older part of the marsh here is a lot older. Where they kept the sea out. But it still used, at high tide, because by a, using an eddy system with the water, which will break it, as it, but they're still tidal, but it didn't inundate if you know what I mean.

*Katy: Yeah, so it would just come up then go back, Rather than..yeah*

Roger: Yeah. So which is still rely on now, we've just had a lovely sea wall which is be right for 100 years or longer apparently. Lovely sea wall, brilliant asset for the, the coast, here along our bit. And the, and the you've got tidal gates, from the tide comes up, the gates shut, but they've got provision to pump if it's ever so bad.

*Katy: Yeah. Cause do you get affected badly in the winter?*

Roger: Er..we've had three very wet winters, which has, is, it's not been, there hasn't been a flood for decades. Yeah, the sea wall's nearly fallen down a few times back in the 50s and 60s. But it didn't breach, you know, but then again the tide goes out again in 5 hours. You know, if it was that bad they would very soon get, you know [laughs] lots and lots of lorries of infill to plug a breach, cause tide's gonna go out. You've got 2 tides a day and it'd give you that chance, if there was a breach, but I've never seen it.



*Katy: No. So going back to what you were saying about how you now have contract work, is that....cause another thing that lots of farmers have picked up on is the use of migrant labour.... Is that?*

Roger: No, we haven't. But when we.... It's all gone automatic now, you've got harvesters, and if you were doing root crop, potatoes, you'd have a harvester now, but for what area we were growing the capital investment in a harvester would cause, you'd never get- we used to have hand-gang, picking, you know, local, housewives, women. Mostly. You wouldn't get it any more. They wouldn't pick potatoes. It'd be too hard work I think.

*Katy: [laughs] not glamorous enough!*

Roger: No! Well, no it is hard work. You know, and you're bent double all day, picking potatoes, either boxing them up, or bagging them on the field. But now it's harvester bulks take back to your processing grader, and it's bagged and sorted undercover and the rest of it's mechanised.

*Katy: So the contractors, is that like you have someone come in to harvest it, and somebody to do something else?*

Roger: Yeah we've got our own machine, harvester, which for 8 months of the year sits in the shed, for it's capital investment, but you've got a machine to do your own harvest. Er...I say contract, we're contracting, my drilling, re-planting, there's a friend farms just up the road, he brings his big drill in. He could plant the farm up in a day, if we were ready. And he does my spraying as well. I haven't got a spraying ticket to be able to do the job.

*Katy: Oh you have to have a licence or, er a licence?*

Roger: Oh yeah you have to be yeah you have to have a PA1 PA2 to do agricultural spraying and I work... I could do it, if I ...but we needed a new machine a new sprayer, and it wasn't worth the capital investment to get that sprayer and for what it costs to get someone in cause you can spray the farm in a day as well, with a big machine, You know, we still, I still have me agronomist, and we get the chemical and then I give him a phone call and say "ooh hello, when you're got a gap, can you do our bit?" and he'll spray but fertiliser wise, I put my own fertiliser on, my fertiliser spreader. So I do that, ground-work, do our own ground-work.

*Katy: What does an agronomist do?*

Roger: Er..... well plant health. pests and diseases, what's there, you know, rely on his expertise to tell you what's what, then I buy the chemical from that firm.





*Katy: Cause that reminds me, it's got..it's kind of got a little bit more technical hasn't it, since... well I mean like pests and diseases, and schemes*

Roger: Your armory of, of chemistry that you can have is very wide. You know, and that changes a lot, you know new products come on the market, old ones superseded, licenses run out on chemicals, bans are imposed for different chemicals, with sea dresses, with nickeloids, on lot of it on oilseed rape which they said was detrimental to – still questionable on whether it is detrimental to the bee population, cause I thought it was flawed research that caused the ban in the first place, because they're starting to think twice about it now. And they, because the amount, by not including the nickeloid as a seadressing, the amount of chemical you have to put on to avert the flea beetle which is what it's all about, you're using 4 times more chemical to keep the flea beetle away than what one sea dressing application did. Do you know, do you know what I mean?

*Katy: Yeah, I see*

Roger: But that's the way it works, and they're starting to question because you, apparently there's a limited, it didn't bother us this time of year last year. This, south east. But you go up into East Anglia and other place, and it was absolutely decimated. The crop, they lost it. Because of the flea-beetle. On all the plants coming up.

*Katy: And was that, on oilseed rape did you say*

Roger: On, yeah, yeah. And then you've got slugs with formaldehyde, in slug pellets, which is understandable because they can't get it out of water.

*Katy: Yeah, and then it goes into the water system*

Roger: Yeah, yeah into the water cycle. And there's, I think some of them are being banned, this is the last year you can use them, I think. But there's been quite a few chemicals that we've lost. And so, I've been reading about research in the states about glycosphates, which we use a lot of, market to us we call it Round Up, and it'll kill all green, anything green, you spray it on, it'll kill it.

*Katy: Sounds a bit...*

Roger: But, it's a very safe chemical, because once it hits the ground it's inert. But they're starting this talk in the States, they've been doing research about perhaps carcinogenic properties of glycosphate. And if they take glycosphate away, I don't know what... cause we all use it as a sweep clean,



*Katy: To, what, to get rid of weeds?*

Roger: Yeah. You know, you'll spray Roundup, and that's all the weeds and self sown cereal, whatever it is, that kills the lot and you're starting with a clean field. So if that's ever taken away I don't know what everyone will do [laughs]. Cause a lot go to min till now, you're not doing a lot, you're not ploughing so much as you used to, you know you're working in the top, this is why a lot of people are getting a black grass problem, which is the scourge of cereal farming because they, it produces so many seeds one plant. And you'll get an absolute take over. And it eats, it, it just uses up all the nutrients.

*Katy: What was it called?*

Roger: Black grass

*Katy: What, so how do you spell... r-a-s-s.... how do you spell it sorry?*

Roger: Well, black as in grass. But that's come in more prevalent because of 'min till' you're only working in the top bit of the dirt. If you get any, it's instantly in the seed bank in the soil. And it's very hard to get rid of it. Chemistry is expensive, And it's becoming resistant to a lot of things as well. Lot of chemicals.

*Katy: Would the glycophosphate have killed that?*

Roger: Oh yeah. Yeah. Kill the ones, green ones that are coming up. I've got a field out here that is quite bad, and there's a sea, it looks like a lawn coming up. Where the black grass is coming, but you'll spray that with roundup, and you're starting, a fresh start. Even though you've got to stir a lot more up when you work the dirt again, cause it's in the seed bank in the soil, but you know you just keep trying to get rid of all the flushes. Just to get rid of it.

*Katy: So does that just come in from the wild, does the seeds just come in..blown in*

Roger: yeah it ism it's a natural well it's a grass weed. And in the past when everyone used to plough a lot more, used to bury the seed deep and it wouldn't come back up again. But since a lot went to min till which is, well, minimal cultivation to get a new crop in. You're only working the top inch or two

*Katy: Is that better? Like why did you, why did people change to?*

Roger: Well obviously it's not using a lot of horsepower to pull implements about You can use a big wide machine, not too hard to pull cause you're not working any



depth. Cause you want more horses to, you know, as you get deeper You know and narrower. Whereas might sub-soil, you might....tractor's up the field, in sub-soil somewhere.... [?] I hope. Cause it rained quite a bit last night, if it's not making a mess, we'll be he can carry on doing that. , and then getting it ready to put cereal crop in, again.

*Katy: So you say, you don't think that you're, well you don't think it's gonna carry on after you, this farm?*

Roger: Don't know. Don't know...farmer's don't retire, they get carried off! [laughs] It is, I don't know what the future holds. You know,

*Katy: Fair enough*

Roger: ..and lots in the same position as well. We've got neighbours, two brothers, one's 70, the other one's late 60s, haven't got children to take over. They're talking about selling. And there's some that joins onto us, I'd love to buy it but I couldn't put meself out to, put that much of a...

*Katy: Investment*

Roger: ...as I called it, a millstone, which it would be. Oh yeah, like I said earlier, if I was to borrow half a million pounds. Yeah, you could borrow half a million pounds, but you've got to get return on that and pay it back. On a great big unit – [looks out of window] – dustcart, they're early! [laughs]...you can obviously spread the cost over, but the institutions are buying, again, up in the east coast, I think there's... Mr. Dyson

*Katy: So what are they, kind of bigger businesses?*

Roger: Yeah, insurance companies...

*Katy: Oh, they're buy farming land?*

Roger: Oh yeah, church,

*Katy: Why? Why would insurance company – sorry....*

Roger: It's an asset, isn't it, you know, it's not going to go down in value, do you know what I mean? Colleges, big colleges, Cambridge, Oxford, lots of institutions, church.

*Katy: I had no idea..huh*



Roger: And they would buy, and then they'd rent it off

*Katy: Oh I see, yeah so they'd own it and then, yeah*

Roger: So Mr Dyson up the east coast, I think, what'd he have, 22 million? And went to somebody and said, now there's the pot of money, but farm growing land. To turn it, that's what, saves the tax man having it, doesn't it? If you can afford it as well. You know, if someone's got a large pot, they would, you could invest in farm land, and still got your asset, and it'll earn a bit for you, but without farming it. So it just, rent it out to somebody else.

*Katy: Because a lot of..... a lot of people I've.....yeah a lot of people, a lot of people are shutting down really....because of....*

Roger: Oh, well yeah, the.... on paper, and us at 200 hectares, isn't a viable farm

*Katy: Oh would you count as a small, like a non-commercial farm, cause it's so small? Or..?*

Roger: It gives, it still gives a living. You know, it's, well, my family, it keeps, hopefully keep me in quite a comfortable living. You know, I've got, you know, nice car, I've recently got married. I've not been far, for the past because we hadn't had any money. And all of a sudden I've got someone to go with, and there's a bit of spare, funding to do these things. And, like I say farmer's never retire [laughs]. It I dunno....dunno what future wise, I don't know what. But, whatever, they shouldn't sell the land, cause it'll always give you an income And it's the asset as well If you know what I mean.

*Katy: Yeah*

Roger: Cause we've had changes, we've changed round buildings round the farm. We used to have an old grain store, which was a labour intensive old fashioned buildings. I've converted, I did one this winter, to an on the floor grain store, with vented floor. That I can, look out over the winter. Turn the fans on, if the weather's nice, big burners, giant gas cylinders .

*Katy: Sounds expensive!*

Roger: Well, yeah but you can't market it, without penalty to you've got to sell cereal at 14 ½ % moisture content. And most of it come in, in this harvest,.....17 to 18, 18 ½ %, so you've got to dry it down to sell before they'll take it, or they're going



to penalize you on moisture. So you blow warm air, or dehumidified air through it. And that obviously then takes the moisture away out of the crop.

*Katy: Cause what do, what did you do before, would it always have been a big drying building like that?*

Er... no we used to have a continuous flow dryer, where it goes, down through say a tower, and the heat's introduced at the bottom. And as it comes down through, depending on the speed that you let it come through, it'll dry as it goes down and when it comes out the bottom it'll be dry. So you put your wet crop at the top, and as it works it's way down, it'll dry.

*Katy: So is this new one better than that, or?*

Roger: ..... [sighs]. I don't know. It done in one step with a continuous flow dryer, a batch dryer, where you would put X tons in it, dry it, fill it up again. And less a continuous flow, it just keeps flowing if you know what I mean. And it takes ages, or seems to when you're blowing it with the air. But it's a way, it seems to be the way people have gone to do it, away from a continuous flow dryer. Because you know, your combine bringing stuff in far quicker than what you can dry it anyway.

*Katy: Oh is it quite slow then, that old/*

Roger: Usually, it's....unless you've got a great big continuous flow dryer which it's output is, it's tonnage, I don't know I've not used one, so I don't know, but it's like watching paint dry sometimes coming out of a, a you know, if it was wet going in the top to get it actually dry....

**Would it take days, or would it just..**

Roger: Oh no,

*Katy: Hours, kind of*

Roger: Yeah, yeah. But your daily output and tonnage wouldn't be a great deal. Whereas now we combine, I don't like combining above 18% moisture, because we've obviously got to dry it, you've got to dry it, which means more gas, if the air's damp, or electricity, fanning it, you've got to vent it somehow or it'll go hot

*Katy: So is that why you were waiting... or is that why farmers don't like to, or can't combine when it's wet, because*



Roger: Yeah. Well the machine don't like it either. It's just got to keep dry to go through. And so when you're combining you can tip, if you can just keep going And then you tip in the, in the, whichever shed it's going in, and then every evening, or morning, I'll lump it up, so you can get more in. Cause you know, you can only tip it to about 4 feet, I'll put it up to about 10. 10, 12 feet deep. And then the forced air, great big electric fans, force air through the bottom and then you vent it where you want the air to go underneath.

*Katy: So when it comes to actually taking it to who you sell it to, does it go off in lorries?*

Roger: Yeah, and they call when they've got a campaign on wherever it's going. Say most of my wheat I'm growing is a feed-wheat, so it's not a milling. If it's milling it's going to a mill somewhere for whatever it's being used for. We don't, I don't grow a lot of quality wheat, I go for quantity. I always find it hard for quality [laughs] [coughs], so, yeah it goes, as I say, mostly Tilbury, it goes to in bulkers, 30 tonne bulkers come round and fill them up with a loading shovel. And away they go, give them a passport. Oh there's paperwork to go with it as well!

*Katy: [laughs] I've heard of passports for cows, but not grain..you have to you have to give passports for grain as well?!*

Roger: Yeah, yeah.

*Katy: Ok..right...could you explain?*

Roger: And you have to belong to the farm accredited, the ACCS, and you get your little stickers to say you're a member, which means you fulfil the criteria of membership.

*Katy: Ok, and do people then come round and audit and check?*

Roger: you have a, you have an audit every year to make sure you are still within their guidelines. And once you've, once you've passed all your bits, ticked all the boxes, you will pass the accreditation and you will get passport stickers.

*Katy: So what is a passport for grain? Is it just saying, information*

Roger: Haven't got one here.. it's obviously where it's from, er.....saying that you haven't treated it with anything since harvest. You can, but you just have to declare whether you have or not. And then you sign it, it's obviously signed and dated and then you have to tick the box for the renewable energy thing as well, and off it goes, with your passport. But you can still, that's it, if you're not accredited you can still



market your produce but there's a lot fewer outlets for it to go. And in fact, oilseed rape, the crusher at Erith, will only which is the only one in this corner, to serve all East Anglia, Kent, all south east England. There's one in Bristol I think, and the other one is in Liverpool. And that's the only one that will take non-accredited oilseed rape.

*Katy: Liverpool?*

Roger: Yeah. A crusher. Which to get away from this part of the world, your haulage costs would be enormous. So all ours goes, but if you're accredited you get your...passports and you've got your sticker on it to say you are accredited, and we've never had a problem with it

*Katy: So do you send yours to Erith?*

Roger: That's where our crusher is yeah. It didn't this year, it's all gone into store at Stanford. Where there's a giant store, there's a mountain of oilseed rape, and then we deal with United Oilseeds, and then they will draw on it when there's a crusher campaign on, because they'll do a rape crush for a few weeks, and then sunflowers will come in, or something from abroad, for crushing and they will do sunflowers. Or, linseed, I think they do linseed, I'm not sure. You know, depending on what campaign they've got at the crusher, what they're drawing on to, crush, grow, oils obviously.

*Katy: So it's kind of, it's not certain, you don't know whether it's going to go into... it's not like a fixed, it's not like you know it's going to go here, here and here*

Roger: No, just depends where, who you're selling it to, where it's going. You know, most of our, my cereal goes to export. Mostly out of Tilbury, or Lydden, sometimes at Rye, or Dover. Just depends where the boat is, and who's filling it up. But you've got no choice over it [laughs]

*Katy: I was going to say, did you actively choose to start exporting it?*

Roger: Oh no, that's where it's going. You know, you're selling to one of the bigger merchants, as I say now there's only a handful left, whereas used to be lots of little local ones, they've all been swallowed up. And now you've just got big, you know Glencor is one. A giant international, multi-national, and agriculture is just a little part of their remit. You know, Glencor, mining, enormous company, you know they're mining. You know, and others are just agriculture, or we do a lot with Agri chemicals and that, and they're an American based firm.

*Katy: Oh ok. So do you send some to America then?*



Roger: some, sometimes, depends where the cereals go

*Katy: Do you get told? When, where...*

Roger: Sometimes I ask,

*Katy: But...*

Roger: But I had a, we had a visit, cause Glencor are, or they were, don't know if they still are, were running Tilbury and we had a day trip there. It was lovely [laughs] just to see how it works.

*Katy: Yeah, it must have been really interesting*

Roger: Because you get the lorry drivers and they come in: "Oooh we had to wait so many hours to tip" and all this and that cause they have terrible problems sometimes, you know, there's lorries coming in from all SE England to Tilbury.

*Katy: Oh so they're queueing*

Roger: And if one of the big elevators breaks down, or something. You know, that holds it all back. And when we see, when we had the trip there and we see how it worked, you understood when the lorry drivers said "oh we had to wait so long" Cause you knew what the situation was.

*Katy: And what, was that, like was it an elevator that needed?*

Roger: Oh they'd tip, and you know they'd tip in out in 5 minutes, but these giant elevators take it away to holding silos. So, cause they fill 'em all up before the boat comes in, cause that boat, obviously the shortest time it's in filling, is how much they pay. All the time that boat is parked there, they're paying.

*Katy: Paying...the lorry drivers are paying?*

Roger: No, whoevers running the the harbor. Do you know what I mean? Like in there at Dover, they want it filled up as quick as possible, because that boat is charged all the time it's sitting at the dock.

*Katy: Oh, I see what you mean, now yeah*

Roger: Do you know what I mean, to park. They're paying like a parking fee.





*Katy: Right, and they want it to be quick, quick, quick*

Roger: And sometimes they [laughs], they're desperate at Tilbury to fill it up by such and such a time because of the tide. Cause if the tide turns, they have to wait another 8 hours before the tide comes up before they can get out again. So sometimes, they'll, pretty sh- they really want to get going, But then that's not our, that's nothing to do with us. That's their problem

*Katy: It's still interesting to see though,*

Roger: Oh yeah, it was too, cause I know, we were taken to a lunch, cause they have to go to a lunch at these things; go to opening of an envelope and there's a lunch. And it was right up in the top penthouse, on top of all the silos where the offices where. It was absolutely brilliant view up the Thames, you know, back to the bridge and back the other way, and out, into the Thames estuary. Oh was a fantastic view, it was! [laughs] So I remember standing there, all afternoon, or for the time we were there, just looking out the window, cause it was lovely.

*Katy: Was it Tow- what into London you could see?*

Roger: That was from Tilbury, So it's just south of the... Dartford crossing, where the grain place was. You can see it if you go over the bridge, it's down and out [laughs]

*Katy: Oh yeah, I'll have a look next time! [laughs]*

Roger: And I've never been to Erith, but they reckon it's awful. I've always said I want a trip there, but it was built pre-war, in the 30s, so it's pretty decrepit. Apparently, it's alive with rats everywhere.

*Katy: That's not good for grain is it? Surely...*

Roger: [looks out of the window] Damn, it's gonna rain But, yeah say outlet wise for our produce it's all big, like harvest peas, they go... we used to grow for Batchelors, and they used to go to Worksop for processing.

*Katy: Oh the mushy...*

Roger: Tinned peas, yeah

*Katy: So is it, what, so is it peas rape and wheat grown...yeah*



Roger: Yeah, basically that's it really. What the crop future holds, be the same. They always used to go on about growing sunflowers. But you have to go, you have to be south of Paris to find them in France.

*Katy: Oh is that*

Roger: A few people grow some, Quex park at Ramsgate, they were growing sunflowers for harvest because they market their own sunflower oil, and rapeseed oil as well. And there was a few, there's someone just over the fields here, they do their own rapeseed oil as well, they crush their own, for all the extra-virgin rapeseed oil.

*Katy: Yeah. Is that something you've not thought about doing?*

Roger: No [laughs]

*Katy: No [laughs] that's fine! Just something I..*

Roger: No, no I, I've been to a few meetings where people have talked about it But they've been a very, very small-scale, crushing outfit. You know to what they're actually producing. You know it's a very small scale, for a niche market. For an extra virgin oil. You know, to market it, I don't know how many hoops you have to jump through to do something like that, cause obviously the food standards agency would be involved for cleanliness and what, you know I don't know. You know.... But, I dunno, diversification or other croppings, I don't... I can't see anything at the moment...there's a bit of vine come in in the, not so much on the marsh, you get around the hills, Appledore there's some, Tenterden, obviously vineyard.

*Katy: Yeah. Cause does the marsh – being marshy – does that restrict what you can grow here?*

Roger: No, anything'll grow, we've got damn good deep dirt. You know, you got good, depending where you go, there's so much variation in soil on the marsh. You know in one field you can have four or five soil types.

*Katy: Really? Lay- in layers or just...*

Roger: ...no, across the surface. It all goes back to the when it was marshground, You know, you'd have a natural drainage gully, you would have as, a very light airy, you know as you go that way across the marsh towards New Romney, the soil gets lighter and lighter. You get Lydd, turn to shingle. You know, with virtually no dirt at all, it's very very stoney, light, and then it does go into shingle, Beach, you know. Then if you go north, towards Newchurch, they call it Newchurch series, and that's a



very heavy clay soil. And we're a medium soil. But you dig down about 10 feet you'll find a peat layer. You know, an ancient peat layer, where it was true marsh years ago. And certain parts of the marsh, there's, I don't know what they call them, other parts of the, in Ireland, they call it bog-oak. The, you know it's not that deep, but they'll dig a thing and they'll find a tree trunk.

*Katy: Ahh. Where it's just been preserved?*

Roger: Yeah

*Katy: Have you ever found anything?*

Roger: No...Never found that treasure chest, no. Funnily enough, I have a metal detectors blokes, a few come round who I know. And got one in me pocket, he found something the other day a hammered silver coin, he reckoned it's Elizabeth the I. I've got a few other little coins he's given me, about Middle Ages. But you have to have where there was centres of populations of whatever, do you know what I mean?

*Katy: Yeah cause*

Roger: You'll find something in the middle of nowhere, wartime stuff, big bullets and stuff up still. But I've not got anything to retire on yet But, we'll just carry on. Not don't envisage, doing, unless they turn it all into a caravan site.

*Katy: So is that your brother, like it was your- what side of your family is that, is the caravans?*

Roger: my father and sister, are down the road. My brother's caravan site on the way to at the other end of the village which was my father runs it

*Katy: Oh that way? [points]*

Roger: Back towards Hythe we've got one out there. Which I think they were doing it, they were doing it before the war, and it all ceased war time. Started up again after. And it's just gone on from, you know where they were all little hard ball caravans, it's now all 60,000 pound mobile homes.

*Katy: Yeah..... I nearly turned in there... er.. yeah no*

Roger: Yeah. But well obviously it was farm land once upon a time but since then, it's turned into what it is now.



*Katy: I think it's nice, that you....like looking after the land, it's nice hearing you say how you like it, the wildlife and*

Roger: Oh yeah it is, you watch it change, ..... there's quite a few hares about, but we have trouble with illegal coursing with the traveller fraternity shall we say, to be polite, who I would be very wary on crossing. Because they know where you live and they will come back they'd burn the farm down, to spite, or slash all your tyres. They'd be very spiteful, vengeful, and what they could get up to. But over the years, I've watched the hair population increase. There's pheasants everywhere, but they were never endemic anyway, because they've come from shoots over the hills. There's pheasants all over the marsh now. Partridge, depending on whether, we've had some wet winters and they don't like wet winters, partridge, specially the young ones. That knocks them down. Birds of prey, they're coming back with a vengeance, they're nice to see, we've got buzzards coming down over the hill, and they're lovely to see flying round. Foxes, badgers, there's a vast increase in the badger population. Don't see so many foxes around. But,

*Katy: [jokingly] I think we've got all your foxes!*

Roger:...if you go went in the high street in the middle of the night. You'd find them up the high street, or on the beach.

*Katy: The beach? Oh scavenging*

Roger: They go through the bins [laughs]. People have told me, I've not seen it, but in the winter, you can put, they call them lay-lines on the beach, which is a long baited line, and people have known foxes have been in and eaten their fish before they've pick 'em up! [laughs] But there's foxes everywhere there's bins, they'll go through the bins. Badgers, when I first started work, at 16, I was taken into the middle of nowhere, in the marsh, right down the back of Brookland, and I was shown a badger sett, and that was very rare. I could walk to 4 setts, within quarter of an hour from here now, and they're all over, now, badgers everywhere.

*Katy: We haven't got many badgers near me, we've got quite a few foxes. I haven't seen any hedgehogs in years.*

Roger: Well funny you should say that, I don't see many either, but my friend who lives over the fence, she was on about her dog was going mental in the garden the other night, and he'd found a hedgehog in the garden But we don't see, you don't seem to see many around But I don't know...

*Katy: Do foxes eat them?*



Roger: Oh foxes will

*Katy: Yeah, well I mean maybe it's because the foxes and the badgers eat the hedgehogs*

Roger: Oh more than likely, I wouldn't be surprised, badgers they eat more than anyway. You guaranteed to see a dead badger on the side of the road nowadays. You know, you go up Stone Street to Canterbury, you'll find half a dozen every week that have been bowled over. But we had a deer the other year that was down, a roe deer, that was out in the back here, and that must have come from over the hill because there's no other deer on the marsh. So, that was nice to see it! [laughs]

*Katy: Did it stay for long?*

Roger: ...a rarity! No it, was there pre-harvest, and up through, but then I think once most people have com-, harvested, they'd lost their cover and it moved on. Where, it was a big roe deer, had full antlers on it, was an impressive, lovely hindquarters on it, thought it'd look alright in the freezer! No, it was nice to see. I like, I think, most people, most farmers, we're you know, tarred as totally unsympathetic to wildlife and everything, but I think most people, what with nowadays with your strips round the outside that you're paid to leave and stuff, it gives a lot more cover, for the birds and that, especially round the outsides.  
[pause]

*Katy: Anything else you'd like to..?*

Roger: I dunno. As I say, it's obviously changed over the years, but I can't see us doing other things, unless something suddenly appeared on the horizon that everyone's gonna swing to. I think oilseed rape is the one that came in over the past, so many years you know. Like I said everyone used to grow sugar beet down here cause it's the same sort of dirt as East Anglia. Good deep rich soils, grow a damn good crop of sugar beet. But you've got no market for it. Well there is a market but your haulage is just knock anything out of it, you know. So whether a sugar, I can't actually see a sugar factory coming closer, unless there's a method of transport that's very cheap to get it to a factory, you know. Can't see it coming back. And that's about it really.

*Katy: No, that's lovely, thank you for letting me speak to you.*

Roger: That's alright.