INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

Farmer's Name: Tony Redsell
Age: 82
Location: Redsell Group, Nash Court, Faversham
Size: 2500 acres
Type: Hops and Arable

Interviewed by: Anna Durdant-Hollamby
Filmed by: Joe Spence
Date: August 2015

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Tony: Well my first hop-picking was 1948.

Anna: Wow, amazing!

Tony: At the end of the forties, things were very different, obviously. First of all, there was lots and lots of labour and a lot of local ladies would be employed for hop training, that's putting them on the strings, back in those days. There would be an enormous amount of hand-labour within the hop garden itself. Hops would be ploughed in the winter, they'd have farmyard manure spread on them and ploughed in. Then early spring/late winter, the lists, that's the actual narrow bit where the hills are growing, would be hand-dug.

T: Then a little later on, the individual hills would be trimmed, because in those days, the hops were earthed up in the summer. And so all that soil had to be taken away. The idea of earthing up was mostly to control rubbish, because we had virtually no weed-killers and everything had to be done by cultivator. As far as pest and disease control; for fungal diseases, we used handmade bordeaux mixture in that we would have a large tank and mix up hydrated lime in water and then boil up some copper sulphate and pour that in the mixture. So one had one's homemade bordeaux mixture which was very good for controlling the downy mildew, which is one of the fungal diseases we have. And also, surprisingly, because it was very abrasive, it acted as an acaricide as well, we didn't seem to suffer so much from the

two spotted mite that we do today. As an aside, it was also pretty severe on the wire-work, because it took the spelter off the wire and it rusted fairly quickly.

T: For aphid, we had only nicotine, which was very strong, you could use it on a hot day and the aphid would drop like flies, it was incredible to follow a sprayer, you could literally see the aphid falling out of the sky, almost. And you have to realise there was no such thing as air conditioned cabs for the chaps to be working in. I can remember working in a tractor and spraying hops and went down with nicotine poisoning for a couple of days! My pee was brown [*laughing*]. Today there would be shock-horror everywhere, in those days the cure was to sweat it out, so it meant going to work even harder on a hot day to sweat it out. But I survived!

T: The other fungicide we had of course was sulphur which was sulphur dust and we used to put that on with the dusting machine and would go through on a damp morning blowing the sulphur dust up through. So that was how we did it then! And then of course when harvest time arrived, swarms and swarms of people would arrive from London, mostly from London, we had a few locals obviously, again and a few from local towns such as Whitstable. But the main bulk would come from London and they would live in the huts on the farm, which were fairly basic living conditions I can tell you. One of the jobs was to go and dig a series of holes in order to put the thunderbox on top, you know a corrugated iron shed [*chuckling*] and that was the sanitary. But there we are, that's how it was. Today of course, it's very different!

T: We have, surprisingly as fungicides, we still have sulphur and copper. Mind you, we don't make our own Bordeaux anymore, it comes in proprietary packs and is far less abrasive. And there has been a continual development of the various pest control methods, because soon after, I suppose, early fifties, then all the organo-phosphorous pesticides appeared. Now that basically is what a gentleman called Mr Hitler used in his gas chambers, it was a sophisticated version of that. And for a while, it was a very efficient insecticide in the hop gardens, but the Damson-hop aphid has got an extraordinary capacity for building up a resistance and gradually, either the dose had to be increased dramatically or it just wouldn't work anymore.

T: So there's been a continual movement, a new insecticide tends to come out every five-ten years, something like that. And it's absolutely necessary, otherwise the aphid would just be running rampant. Some people have tried to grow hops organically, without any artificial pest control; they're not terribly successful

because to tempt a predator into the garden, you have to have the pest there and if you've got the pest, there you've got trouble. Because they usually explode in their population rather more than the predator does. I did say to one lady, a lady MEP, I won't mention her name because she's still around that when she told me it was possible to grow crops organically, I said "Yes, true, but," I said "when we grew hops truly organically 200 years ago, some years we got a crop!" [*laughing*].

T: So there we are, that is how the methods of pest control and disease control gradually developed and our sprayers, we would use hydraulic sprayers, which would throw up a lot of water, whereas now the spraying machinery is far more sophisticated and one can direct and can control the amount of water that is being used to carry the various treatments up into the top of the hops. Another change is we used to grow hops in this area on what was putcher work, which was developed in 1870 I think, to replace the pole-work, because hops were just grown up poles themselves, where the term pole-puller comes from, the person who looked after the baskets of the ladies in the hop garden. It really went up and then across so that was probably about thirteen foot high, now we string the hops in what is called Worcester fashion, which means like that rather than up and like that. It's more efficient too, we use more plants per acre and we string today with a long pole, a hook in the ground and a hook on the top, up and down an endless string. Whereas when I started, we walked stilts and tied the string on the top wire and we tied the string on the bottom wire and it was quite a skilled art to walk stilts. I walked stilts, not terribly well but I walked stilts.

T: And then of course, in the early 1950s, I came home from the army and the old man had bought his first hop picking machine, this was a Bruff. And at that time, this country was almost leading, certainly leading Europe as far as manufacture of hop picking machines, because the Bruff company were exporting to Germany in the 1950s. Whereas of course today, Germany and America are really the only two countries who manufacture hop picking machines. The last brand new hop picking machine I bought was in 1964, since then I have bought many second-hand machines as perhaps growers decided to give up and cannibalise them. Because after all, they're only like a meccano set, it's a case of how you use a hammer and a welding iron. That's another general thing that I've noticed, back when I started, the farm handyman was quite useful at welding and quite handy with a hammer and perhaps a little bit of rough carpentry. You had an all-round, odd-job man. Then of course tractors became more sophisticated because when I first started, we still had horses as well as tractors. With the early tractors, we had horses and then tractors

became more sophisticated, so the odd-job man became the farm mechanic and he developed skills to look after diesel injectors on tractors and things like that. Well I've seen the whole circle now is that what has happened is that modern tractors and machinery are so sophisticated that they have to have computers to tell what is right or wrong and no farmer or average farm is going to have one of those. So now, we have to go back to the manufacturer or the agent to get the necessary done to the machinery and my mechanic has now become a skilled odd-job man, who's good at blacksmithing work on the hop picking machine and that's the change.

Anna: [laughing] that's the change that's come back around.

T: Right the way around, absolutely. We still need a certain amount of labour to get the hops to the machines and to man the machines. In more recent years, they've tended to come from Eastern Europe rather than Eastern London. The last of our old hop picking families, they tended to work in dynasties, Grandma would come down as a babe in arms and so on down. The last I think was about fifteen years ago, the last of the old families died out as it were. I was in a local pub about three years ago and somebody came up and said 'my grandfather would like to buy you a beer" and I replied "well that's jolly nice of your grandfather but why does he want to buy me a beer?" He said "well he's sitting over there in the window and he recognises you," so I went over and it was one of our old hop picking men who had been working all those years before and was now a very, very old man. But he just happened to be on a tour with his grandson and we happened together, which was rather a nice little moment.

Anna: Really nice story and he recognised you and knew you!

[Pause]

Anna: Sorry, I have to be quiet because of the filming! [laughing]

T: Oh right!

Anna: I always want to prompt but I shouldn't be doing that!

T: Right, well, I've very swiftly gone from 1948 to 2015 and told you that we started with hand-pickers and now we've got the same picking machinery that we bought fifty years, yes fifty years ago. So you know. One day I'm sure I will go to Germany, if

I'm around and if not, my grandson will have to go to Germany and buy a German hop picking machine. Always a difficult thing, because a manufacturer or somebody running big business, would think it's absolute nonsense. Spend a lot of money on a piece of machinery that's in work for three weeks a year! Seems crazy! I suppose a combine is a jolly expensive piece of kit, but with any luck, you'll get six weeks work out of that. But a hop picking machine, you have to think very hard about getting.

T: In another fairly sophisticated area today is of course hop drying. Now we still have an oast that works fairly conventionally in that you'd have. Now behind us, we have an oast house that we sold for building, to be turned into a house forty years ago and reinvested the money into a modern, as it was then, drying system. The old system was to have heat at the bottom and a tall cowl with a turn to draw the air at the top with holes in the bottom. And the hops would be tipped out of green bags onto a floor and levelled, the plenum chamber underneath and the hops would then be dragged off onto the cooling floor on lifter cloths as we called them and put into a heap around the press. And that still does apply to a degree, I've got an oast where we still do that. But we've equally got oasts now, I mean the one that we replaced, the one behind you has a series of bins and there are six kilns in a row with three bins on each kiln and they're all joined together. So the first one is loaded with green hops, when the next one is ready to be loaded, so the whole thing moves down, there are six burners so by the time we've loaded the first six kilns, that one is green, this one is nearly ready to come off. And then when they come off and the bins are cooled down. Probably overnight! And pressed the next day.

T: We also have an oast connected directly to the hop picking machines so that the hops are elevated up into the drying plant, I won't call it an oast, the drying plant and there's a continual belt that goes along, gradually with a magic eye to tell it to move every so often - self-loading. So it is quite a change and there will be two men then operating that kiln and probably turning fifty/sixty bales a day. Whereas the oast that I've just mentioned behind you would have had staff of a day-stoker and a night-stoker, because of course they had to stoke, they were coke ovens when I was a boy. And then there would be four press-hands and there'd be the dryer, so there would be seven people employed and and I suppose they would produce half what the drying plant with two people. And they would all work very hard, the two people in the drying plant don't work very hard at all, they just have to be there, because in those days, we pressed into pockets. I don't know if you know what a pocket's like, a long tube that weighs about a hundredweight and a half with the name and probably the invicta horse on top or if you were in Sussex, it would be the Sussex Martlets or

in Hereford, it would be the bull and it would have the variety and the year and the pocket number on it, so there was a record. Nowadays, we press on an automatic press into what are called socks now, they hold rather less than a hundredweight and a half, but they do fit the containers that were exporting hops to America. And so they have to have a nice pack that would economically fit a container.

T: Marketing now is of course very different, when I started it was the Hops Marketing Board, which I think came into being in 1932, the same time as a lot of marketing boards came into agriculture. That lasted until 1982 and that controlled the production in the country, you had a quota of how many hops you could grow and it was a very strict costings operation in those days. The brewer society and the hops marketing board would have a firm of accountants who would nominate people and literally cost production, a variety and number of farms, labour, fuel, everything! And that would be worked out and then it would be what it cost to grow the hops, that's what the quota was and that was divided into that and then we were told that would be the price that year, which was a nice cosy arrangement and everyone thought that was lovely. But of course while that was going on, there was no scope for export, because the home market was taking it, I think in those days, there were more than 500 growers in the country.

T: I think the acreage hit peak in 1870 with around 77,000 acres of hops but of course in those days, hops were used in beer as much as a preservative as anything else. Then some blasted Frenchman called Listeur came along, Pasteur not Listeur came along and introduced pasteurisation so that brewers didn't need as much hops in their beer, so their acreage declined from then onwards. Today, it's stabilised, we're in a totally free market, we have to satisfy our domestic customers but of course again the British beer market has dropped considerably over the years. There's not the amount of beer drunk, there's the pressure of imports, there's beer such as lager that uses less hops anyway, a lot of lager brewers prefer to use this seedless type of hops from the continent. Whereas we have males in our hop gardens, so our hops are very satisfied and they are seeded.

T: So anyway, we used to have a factor, so the factor was the man who looked after the hop grower, would pat him on the head and say "your hops are looking very well" and would take the hops away to London and they would be weighed and sampled. The samples would be laid out and then the hops marketing team would come round and value the hops. And the brewer had a merchant who would look after him, so the distance between the farm gate and the brewing gate was quite a

long way. You had grower, then you had factor and you had merchant and hops marketing board over the top and then you had brewer. Now you've got grower, merchant, brewer. And although brewers don't want growers to sell directly to them, they do know growers and they come on the farms and they see what's going on. We do know a lot of brewers and we can talk to them, but we don't sell to them, there are always merchants fulfilling that function in between. So that's how the market has changed, the actual trade is pretty good now. We probably export I would say, UK probably exports 40%, a good 30-40% of its hops. We certainly export, particularly to the craft brewing trade in America, that has made the big, big difference. And aroma hops at the moment are sort of, in the market, very trumpeted.

T: Probably the biggest single effect on the reduction of the acreage in England was verticillium wilt, verticillium albo-atrum is a soilborne disease and it struck the Weald of Kent in the 1920s and 1930s. To begin with, it was just a nuisance and then literally, you could describe it as the foot and mouth of the hop industry, it really did absolutely devastate the hop growing in the whole of Kent, particularly in the Weald of Kent. And then it moved into the West Midlands and there's no cure to it whatsoever, you just have to grub and put it down to grass. If you have grass and no weeds for a number of years, then you can go back into hops but you have to be sure you've starved out the verticillium. That was a dramatic, that really did, because in 1950, 70% of the English acreage was a variety called fuggle, now that is an old English variety discovered I think in Paddock Wood round about 1860/1870. And it was wilt susceptible, it had a 4-5% alpha-acid, that's the bittering value of a hop, when you think there are hops today with 16/17% alpha-acid, you can see how simple mathematics show you, you need less hops. But apart from anything else, verticillium wilt devastated the acreage of fuggles and they dropped away to nothing.

T: We grow mostly goldings here, the East Kent golding was developed from the Canterbury white-bine around 1790 and very careful selections were made from it: Early Birds, Cobs, Eastwell Goldings, Bramblings, tended to be named after the person that selected them like Mr John Cob, who selected the hop that became the Cob. The Brambling no doubt was grown in the village of Brambling near Canterbury. There's the Canterbury Golding, there's the Rodmersham Golding, that was no doubt selected up at Rodmersham. So that's how the Goldings developed and a couple of years ago, I took the East Kent Goldings case to the European Commission and managed to get this protected designation of origin for East Kent

Goldings, because I think there are seven farms growing East Kent Goldings down this line of the A2 through to Ash. So we have a rather special aroma hop there and it is well known now throughout the world and I think it is also subject to a little bit of piracy and that there are more East Kent Goldings sold than are actually grown.

T: Now, probably the saviour of the English hop industry was Wye, Wye College. The hop research department Wye was, I think started, in 1913 and in the 1930s, when it became obvious that there was this devastating disease in verticillium wilt, going through the country, particularly in Kent. They started a programme of hop-breeding for resistance or tolerance of verticillium wilt and a number of varieties then came out of that stable. Thank goodness, because it saved the industry, albeit a much smaller industry and the first high alpha, (that is high bittering value) hop was bred at Wye, a variety called Target, which had a fantastically high alpha of about 11% which in those days and I'm going back perhaps thirty years, was tremendous. Of course nowadays, it's been superseded, it's like the Austin Seven, [*chuckles*]. Now of course, with this demand for aroma, there's two things that happened. One is that we had the historic collection of varieties at Wye, that is a number of varieties, some from other parts of the world, others bred in this country, that were not wanted particularly at the time they were around, or something better came along.

T: So the brewers said "no I don't like that,' and moved on. Well of course with this burst forth of craft beers in this country, following the Americans, they want something different. It's no good producing the same beer as Marston's or Shepherd Neame, they've got to be different. So of course, one way they're going about it is going round the historic collection and sniffing to see if they can find an aroma that perhaps was discarded as being too American, too this or too that, twenty or thirty years ago, today 'oo that's a novel aroma, yes we'll have that!' Equally, although the government withdrew funding from hop research in 2006, myself and the other growers came together and transferred the Wye operation to China Farm at Harbledown. And we have been breeding ever since and now specialise in new strains of sniff, of aroma, and there are several very interesting new hops have come out. One in particular and I think the Wye Hop programme is the only one with it, has aphid resistance. So you don't have to spray for aphids, because the aphids don't, I think that's called Boudicca. Nevertheless, it may well be that the aroma of that may not satisfy. So you can understand you may get a hop that has got superb aroma but might not climb the string very well or is prone to a particular disease. There's always something! And so the perfect hop has never yet been, and I'm quite sure that the day the perfect hop is produced, there will be someone saying "Ah yes

but I think I can find a better one in a couple of years time." Now I have to draw breath and you'll have to tell me if I've missed anything out, because I have tried to cover everything.

Anna: Ah you're doing amazingly! Thank you so much, that's an incredible, you know, analysis.

T: If there's any area I've missed out, I've tried to be logical.

Anna: You were, it was brilliant. I guess, because that's such a fantastic broad picture that it would be amazing to hear more about your own personal experience of the whole thing and how that started for you and what it was like seeing it happen around you as a little boy and what made you go 'yep I'd like to spend my life doing this as well?'

T: So you'd like a little bit of me.

Anna: Yeah, a personal slant on it would be amazing if you're happy to share that?

T: Yeah, indeed. Well I stood outside, it wasn't this office then, these two are both new buildings, but I stood just outside there, having just left school with the old man in September 1948. He was handing out the tally-cards to the pickers and giving them a talking to about how they weren't to do this and they mustn't steal apples out of the orchard and that they must behave terribly, terribly well. And I was looking round with wide open eyes thinking that this is tremendous and a dear old senior pole-puller called Nedda Wanstall I think, he'd worked on the farms since he'd left school at the age of ten and he was then in his sixties. So, talk to him, you'd go back into the century before last, he would tell me "ah yes back in the twenties, old Mill's lad used to want to know if any of the pickers had been in the South African War, because he wanted to talk to them!" Anyway that was my first hop picking and I must confess to being rather frightened of these Londoners, because they were rough/tough and all from around the Docklands area and the Docks were in full-flow at that time. I think the hubbies were on strike half the time and would appear at the weekends and the local pubs, they didn't have many carpets but what they did, they would take up. And although there weren't plastic glasses, they'd bring out the very thick glasses rather than the ones that were liable to break, because the whole area, you can imagine and in those days, hop picking would last four to five weeks. The local school, seeing the diary of the headmaster up at

Dunkirk School, just at the top of the hill, outside the village, saying that the autumn term would not be resumed for another week, because hop picking has not finished at Harbledown. Because in those days, holidays in the country was geared to the seasons, because the family and children were an important part of the seasonal gang.

T: So that was my first hop picking. As far as working the hop garden, I told you I got some nicotine poisoning and that was rather unpleasant. The old man thought I was slacking because I kept falling asleep - I was taken to the doctor and I was told I'd got to sweat it out. And we had a haystack that was going to catch light, you made hay in stacks and if you carried it a little too green, it would heat up and so it had to be moved, taken down and rebuilt.

[*phone ringing*]

T: Sorry about that!

Anna: No it's fine, if you need to get it, it's fine.

T: Shall I answer?

Anna: If you'd like to, it's fine! It's not a problem!

T: Oh nice, I thought the secretary had gone to walk her dog or something. Sorry about that.

Anna: No that's fine, it happens!

T: So anyway, I had the job of rebuilding this stack and that was very, very hot because it was about to catch light, so I did sweat it out.

Anna: Sweat it out, properly! Yeah, definitely! It's impressive.

T: One, at weekends, you had to be very careful. We kept chicken in those days, producing eggs and fattening chicken for Christmas. You had to be very careful because chicken had the habit of disappearing back to London, if you weren't on the ball. And the orchards had to be routinely patrolled, because again, I suppose if you'd lived in tarmac streets and rows and rows of houses and you see an orchard

with apples hanging in it, well why not? Why not have one? So that was a couple of interesting things. I suppose in a way, agonising moments, I did tell you it was fairly spartan, the conditions that they were living under. We had some huts on a slope and it was terribly wet one day and of course, although September's hot and cold in the mornings and this sort of thing, this day was terribly wet. Water was literally running down this slope and I came back indoors and said that the rain was running into the front of the huts and he said "well tell them to knock a hole in the back to let it out!" [*laughs*] so it was, as I say, rough going.

T: Today, we look after them, the staff, a little better! In fact I've just been talking to my grandson saying I didn't like the type of cooker they've got in the huts and that I think he really ought to get them some microwaves, because it's not really safe to have cookers that might be left on. Anyway, that's then and now. Otherwise, as I say, growing up, I suppose I really found that hops grew on me, if you know what I mean. To begin with, they were just another job and then suddenly when we had the outbreak of Verticillium Wilt, which we had here and having to control that and having to deal with it, not an easy task. It's such an insidious kind of disease, at this time of year, you suddenly see a hop-bine, going yellow, just literally like that [*clicks his fingers*]. And you get out there and you control it and up to now, I've always made that my personal job to do that sort of thing. And of course you never know where the next one's coming, you're always looking and you start seeing things. The slightest bit of yellow leaf!

T: My worst experience actually was one Saturday lunchtime, I thought I would just walk a piece of hops to make sure there was no trouble. And shock, horror, I found what I thought was a verticillium hop beginning to go down. Well I've always had since those early days, my fire brigade, which is a trailer and on it, I would have diesel and disinfectant, some straw and some wood for a bonfire and some wire to wire off the area and a pitchfork and a ladder so I could control these things. Well this particular day, I very carefully got up the ladder, I picked up all the leaves and all the debris and made a little pile of it at the base of the hill. I got up the ladder and carefully brought the infected hop-bine down, lit my fire, got it really going, then thought 'right,' because obviously you don't just burn the one, you have to take out two or three. So back up the ladder, got another couple of bines down and onto the fire, got the fire really going well, went back up again. And the ladder slipped and slipped and I found myself hanging on the top wire, which was sixteen foot six off the ground, thinking 'now what shall I do?' I was a bit younger, mind you! 'What shall I do? I know, I remember in the army, when you had to go down, knees

together, ankles together, let go and roll when you get down,' I did that,' so I let go, down I came and of course there were still hop-bines growing of course and I landed flat on my back, on top of the fire! [*laughing*] which made me jump, rather! Anyway I got up, shook myself and finished the job. Went home and said to my wife "back feels a bit hot," and she said "well your shirt doesn't appear to be burnt," - took my shirt off and there was a large blister on my back, so very good shirt, that didn't get harmed but the skin did. So that was an unfortunate moment! And just as a footnote, we sent the sample of the bine I had burnt away to the laboratory to check whether it was verticillium or not and it wasn't, so I could have saved all of that trouble.

T: Back in those early days, when we had all those hand pickers, we had strikes, generally led by the London crowd. Obviously the local people didn't particularly want the strike, because of being a more passive, placid sort of people but they would be threatened to take the hops out. So then the old man would come out and he was rather bluff with his treatment of them and would talk them round, which generally meant giving them another couple of pennies a bushel or whatever it was we were giving them. Because in those days, we'd tally them into six bushel tally baskets and the tallying gang with the measurer or the tallyman who kept a score of what was picked, would stand there and the lady would very gently shake her hops down into the basket. And woe betide any little child who gave it a knock, because of course they would settle down a bit and so the basket would be beautifully done with a ring at each bushel and so the score would be entered up in the tallyman's book and then it would be entered into the lady's little blue booklet so the two matched. I've got them somewhere at home, a set of the old tally-sticks because once upon a time, the picker had a stick and the tallyman had a great string of sticks around hanging and when he got the lady, the two sticks were held together and the file would cut a notch and so the notches would match. Because that was obviously before the days of notebooks and pencils and pens. So yes, strikes tended to be a little bit frightening.

T: Weather has always been the key thing, we hate a wet hop picking! We hate too much wind. We've experienced several occasions when the hop garden has blown down and that can be pretty awful. In 1987 in fact, we had three hop gardens down and then you've got to try and salvage the hops, because if you leave them lying on the ground for long, they deteriorate very quickly. It's an awful job trying to get them, because do you cut the wire, you know when you put them up, it's going to need all new wire, is it possible to get the bine out without cutting the wire? It's very, very difficult and that is a nightmare. So the hops are just beginning to come

out now, if you get a good head of hops, well they reckon that a hop garden has got about thirty tons the acre of green matter hanging there. Well if you get a load of water, heavy rain on that and then a wind, there really is some tremendous pressure and the anchor poles are liable to go snap! Yes I have seen quite a few hop gardens fall over and they're not much fun!

Anna: Was it because of the, because there was that hurricane in 1987?

T: No, no…

Anna: It was well after wasn't it? Was it was a windy season?

T: One, we had a lightning strike that literally went straight down the edge of a hop garden, hitting all the outside poles, right the way along and it literally went down and cut the wire, about a yard inside the hop garden, all the way through, bang! Fortunately that was insured, but normally when a hop garden goes over, it's not a question of insurance. And it's not much fun!

Anna: No definitely not!

T: We used to get tradesmen coming round the hop gardens as well because obviously these people were out in the fields and didn't have much opportunity to get out to the shops except at weekends. So itinerant tradesmen would come round in a pony and trap or van or whatever, selling certainly some normal groceries that one would have, tins of peas and tins of soup or whatever, bread, milk, that sort of thing. There was one old boy who would give me an ice cream for the privilege of bringing his van into the hops, so I got an ice cream a day as my fee. Many years later when he'd retired I saw him and I asked him about it and said to him 'you know you gave me an ice cream for the privilege' and he said 'yes, your neighbour, I had to give him five pounds,' he said so [*chuckles*], shows how I naive I was in those days, making a concession for an ice cream. I think now I've almost run out of things, I can probably think of lots more another day.

Anna: Yeah, the only thing I would love to ask is about how maybe you see the future of it developing, you mentioned your grandson, is he interested in taking it on?

T: Yes, yes it's tremendous, as far as I'm concerned, not just my grandson, but there are a lot of youngsters, particularly in the industry, because agriculture in general,

the average age is over ninety or something, we're all terribly ancient, which is probably true. Certainly in the last few years, there's been a great upsurge of young men in the hop industry. My grandson has just come back from farming in Norfolk, he's twenty five, once he finished university, he went off to Norfolk, farming. He's just come back to give me a chance to step down, he's twenty five. My nephew, my mother was the boss, she died about eight or nine years ago and at that time, we were farming some 3000 acres. My sister's got a family, so we thought it was the best idea to split the business, although mother no doubt would have hated the idea of splitting, it seemed sensible. Because two new families growing up, it's far better for them to have their own thing than all trying to sort of, there would be fault lines.

T: So we decided to split the business, so I've got my grandson at twenty five and my nephew is twenty seven and he's taken over. Next door, my neighbour has retired, his son's taken over, I doubt he's thirty yet, must be getting close to thirty, but not thirty yet. And his cousin, I should think is about the same age, perhaps a couple of years younger. And there's another young man I know in the Weald of Kent, who again is in his early thirties, so there is a good crop of youngsters coming through. And my grandson of course, who's been in Norfolk has been involved in arable and he's come back and he's looking after the arable at the moment but he will have to take over from me in the hops and he's beginning to get involved, as we speak.

Anna: Fantastic, it's really good to hear actually that young people are getting involved, because I've been talking to quite a few farmers who haven't got children interested and it's obviously been quite sad for them. I've heard a little more about grandchildren and a bit about daughters getting involved.

T: Well my daughter's the boss here now, she's the company secretary and runs the whole thing, I'm merely the old person they trot out for things like this and go out in the hops looking for trouble. But yes, my daughter is actively in the business although she's no longer a chicken, she's fifty something. She went to Cambridge and read Land Economy and then had a family, then got bored so she took a PhD in English literature at Kent and now she's settled down to running this place.

Anna: And is it her son who's taking this on?

T: Yes her son who will eventually sort of pick up the reins, is gradually doing it now. I told you that there used to be some 500 growers, now I think there are about 52 of us and the acreage is now down to 2500, a 1000 hectares and that has

gradually come down and down and down. Economic reasons, verticillium wilt, one of the problems is that most of the new varieties that were bred at Wye that were wilt tolerant were mostly bitter varieties, as opposed to aroma varieties. And of course, bitter alpha-acid is a world traded commodity, you can't build yourself up and say "I've got jolly good alpha-acid" - no alpha-acid is alpha acid, whereas I can build myself up a reputation for East Kent Goldings, because there is an aromatic [*inhales deeply*] mm yes that's lovely, you know if there's a chemical analysis, that's it. So there's no doubt about it that the craft brewing business, particularly in America has been very good for the aroma business. And there is actually just a little upturn, we've come down, down, down and then we plateaued, there's one particular fellow I know who thought he ought to retire, he'd had enough, he was a good grower, he had about 100 acres, his son wasn't interested at all so he just packed up. Well I reckon this last winter, I've planted twelve acres of hops, new land. And there are several others doing the same, because of this upsurge in the aroma market.

Anna: I see, that's really good! So the future sounds really bright and hopeful and positive then.

T: The future is sound, there are some very good young people coming through. We've got East Kent Goldings as the backbone of the English industry and there we are.

Anna: Ahh, that's so brilliant, it's so wonderful to hear some positive stuff about the future, because I've mainly been talking to arable farmers, are often on the verge of retiring and don't have children invested or interested, they're quite sad about the future because they're either selling up the farm or make other arrangements.

T: Of course, yes. Hops are a particularly exacting crop to grow, a crop that can grow six inches overnight can very quickly, trouble can develop just like that. Whereas with cereals, well you get out a great big sprayer and provided you walk your cereals once a fortnight, you keep on top of everything. I mean, hops change every day! Literally I'm in a hop garden round here every day and yesterday I was quite amazed how the garden I was in last Tuesday, its hops had suddenly popped out and developed. Just in those few days it had gone from being in burr, which is just the teeny little flower, you can see it's a hop!

Anna: Did you have any questions Joe, before we wrap up?

Joe: The people hearing about the project were really, really excited when we said that Mr Redsell had agreed to have a conversation with us. They describe you as, one article said, as the father of farming in Kent, that was one description.

T: Not of farming, but perhaps of hop growing, I'll accept hop growing, but there are just as many experienced farmers as me.

Joe: And other farmers refer to you as uncle

T: [*laughing*] I've known them to refer to me as something ruder than that.

Anna: We've only heard good things! [laughing too]. Sorry, Joe, did you want to go on from that?

Joe: No I think it was just to say how excited we were.

T: I did see it in print once that I was the Doyenne of hop growers!

Anna: That's a great title, that sounds very sort of aristocratic and patrician, I like that. And is there anything else you would like to add, it seems like you've covered a huge amount.

T: Well I can't think of anything I've missed out, if I'm ever in people's company and we start talking and they ask what do you do, 'well I grow things, hops,' and they say 'oo,' and I say 'now before I start,' I say 'I will warn you, because your eyes will begin to glaze, because once I get started on hops, I find it very difficult to stop!'

Anna: So be careful what you ask [laughing].

T: Do get ready to walk away!

Anna: I'm just trying to think if there was anything else, I don't think there is, because you've covered so much!

T: I'll see if I can show you a hop pocket [*gets up to find photographs*]

Anna: Oh that would be amazing

T: Those are the hop pockets [*pointing to pictures*]

Anna: Oo, I've never seen them wrapped up, I've only seen them in the fields and even then then that's unusual, I'm from over near the Weald and obviously you just don't see them anymore, which is really sad. But you said there are some other people in this area that are doing hops, so you've got a bit of a community around you?

T: Yes, yes, we've SE Berry and his son Tom just here and over at South Street, there's JH Berry, so it's Tom Berry, Josh Berry and there's Ricard at Chilham, there's Clinch at Cindale, just up the road, just beyond Faversham. My nephew who's got some hops at Teynham and some at Harbledown, at China Farm and the Hulmes over at Ash. They're very good hop growers.

Joe: Do you mind if I film various things in the room, these certificates and stuff?

T: Well those two are the Order of the Hop, that is the international hop growers' congress, that is where all the hop growers in the world meet. If you are considered to have done something of merit in the hop world, you become a chevalier. Yeah that's right and then you get promoted and you become an officer, that was '82, that was '98 and I think there's one more!

Anna: The Doyenne certificate? Could I just ask, you do a bit of arable as well, is that right?

T: Yes quite a bit.

Anna: What are the crops you are growing there?

T: We grow wheat, barley, oilseed rape, onions and peas. Standard crops.

Anna: Yeah sure!

T: As I said, we grow at Boughton, we also farm at Reculver and in Thanet. So yes.

Anna: Dotted around, I see. Thank you so much for your time Mr Redsell, so appreciated and we will be in touch with film footage and the interview itself.