



INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

Farmer's Name: Robert Warnock and Jim Warnock (father)

Age: Robert: 43 Jim: 70

Location: Capel Church Farm, Folkestone

Size: 650 acres

Type: Mixed (Dairy, Arable)

Interviewed by: Anca Mamaische

Date: 21 July 2015

*Anca: Right, so first I would like to know about your farm at the present moment.
What type of farm do you have?*

Robert: Ok, yeah. We have... it's a mixed farm so we have dairy, sheep and arable.

Jim: Mainly dairy now.

Robert: Yes, mainly dairy, yeah. The farm is about 650 acres in size.

Anca: And do you own the land? Do you own it all?

Robert: Yeah, we're owners, yeah.

Anca: Ok. Could you tell me what's a typical working day at the farm for you?

Jim: [laughing] Depends on the day doesn't it?

Robert: [laughing] It does.

Jim: It's a lot, you know, we have... our days are quite long. If you're milking, at the weekends we start - whoever of us is doing the milking - we'd start about 3:30 [am]

Anca: Wow...

Jim: And in the weekdays, 4 o'clock.

Anca: Ok.



Jim: Milking takes roughly 3 hours in the morning and 2 ½ hours in the afternoon. The actual milking. But then you got to wash through all the equipment when you're finished and you know, make sure everything it's running. So yeah...

Robert: The day finishes at about 6 o'clock in the afternoon so... so 4 'till 6 the weekdays and 3 ½ 'till 6 the weekends.

Jim: It gets busier now, because we should start combining probably next week some time and then well, we'll go as long as we can go. So the combine tells us -it's getting too dark, then we stop.

Robert: So that could be 8 o'clock or 9 o'clock in the evening in the next month. So the day's even longer still.

Anca: So how many people work on the farm?

Jim: Well it's myself and Robert -who's here - and William -who you haven't met. That's basically the partners, and my wife as well, on the farm and on top of that we have 2 to 3 regular individuals

Robert: Yeah, yeah.

Jim: Sometimes we work with 2 extras, sometimes with 3. This time of year you need extras around.

Robert: Most of the time there's 6 of us on the farm, on a day to day basis.

Jim: Mhm. But it's 400 head of cattle.

Anca: 400?

Jim: 400. Isn't that? Dairy.

Robert: Yeah.

Jim: That's from baby cows, dairy... dairy baby cows up until the cows that we are milking.

Anca: So that's just dairy. How about the sheep and the arable?

Robert: Yeah. The sheep, we have around about probably 200 sheep at the most, sometimes it might be near 150 but sometimes... yeah we can have as many as 200



and on the arable side we've got about 150-200 acres of arable and then sort of... yeah 400 acres of grass.

Jim: It's the dairy side that takes all the labour.

Anca: Ok.

Jim: Because people have to have time off as well, you can't keep doing the times that we've given you on there, day after day. Sometimes you have to -if somebody is off sick or on holiday - but yeah, we try to work it a little bit, you know, you need a life as well.

Anca: Yeah.

Robert: All the staff will have at least one day off a week

Anca: Right.

Robert: Some of them maybe a day and a half, but myself, my father, my brother William you know, we have less time off 'cause it's our own business so...

Anca: Right. So what happens to your produce, who do you sell to and how? Now let's refer to the dairy.

Robert: Do you want to talk about it? Who do you sell the milk to?

Jim: You can go on.

Robert: Ok. Well, the milk we sell to the Danish co-op called Arla, they're a farmer owned co-operative, there's... we're one in about... how many members in this country? 3500?

Jim: Yes, about 3500 dairy farmers. It's the biggest of any of the co-ops in this country. We're the 5th biggest co-op in the world so...

Anca: Do you also work with the local market, do you also sell locally?

Robert: No, no.

Jim: No.

Anca: May I ask why?



Robert: Well, I mean you could set up a retail milk round and deliver locally but the cost would be quite significant and then we can't guarantee that we're about to sell all the milk because lots of people now for convenience will buy their milk in the supermarkets when they do their weekly shop.

Jim: And the thing is that we can't compete with the supermarket price because they deliberately have a low price to attract consumers into the supermarkets and that. I mean, we get four pints of milk for...

Robert: 89p

Jim: For less than a pound. I mean, there's no way, we can't ... we can't produce it for that.

Anca: Right. So then, why not working with the supermarkets? If... is it because they don't offer the prices or...?

Robert: I mean, we tried to...I mean we're working with the supermarkets through the co-op.

Anca: Right.

Robert: So no, that's the middle... that's a middle man then isn't it? Because they need to process it and pasteurize it and then sell it to the supermarkets hopefully for a good price...but...I don't know, it's just not really the done thing. I couldn't think of many farmers who are processing their own milk and sell it direct to supermarkets. Because they'd have to pay more for it.

Anca: Right.

Jim: Yeah, we are in a no-win situation with milk at the moment because the milk is disastrous, the price we're getting for the milk now....Every litre or pint that lives the farm in the big tankers it's losing money at the moment, because it's costing us more to run the business that what we're getting back from the cost because the price is so low, I've never known a price as bad as what's at the moment.

Anca: So, it's never been like this. What... what would be the reason, why is it like this?

Jim: Why is it bad. Well, there's too much milk about, worldwide

Anca: So over, surplus?

Jim: Yeah. And they're telling us now that we're in a global market and that we have to... obviously we're influenced by that. Because, if... China is a good example. I mean,



they've been buying a lot of product. Well they'll buy most of New Zealand and Australia output of milk and milk products and all of a sudden they said: "Oh, we're getting too much now" and over night the New Zealand milk price collapsed.

Anca: Right.

Jim: And the farmers, I think some of the farmers are going to go bankrupt and nerve wrecked but the knock on effect has hit us as well and the fact that we've got an embargo on Russian produce, our produce going into Russia, it's not there, so we're gonna... to sell that milk now. So, what we're having to do is make more cheese and skim milk powder and what I'll do is I'll store it until the price hopefully gets better. With that overhang of the market, it's... I can't see how we can get out of it. You know, not for... you know, not for some time and the UK I think there's about 9000 something farmers left -dairy farmers - for the whole of the... the country and they're leaving the industry 50 a month nowadays. Roughly 50 farmers a month are leaving the industry because the price is bad.

Robert: Over the years... there's not very much money in producing milk. It's always been quite hard to get a good price, but particularly... I mean now, it's probably the worst it's ever been but if you went back to 1930s which is more than your 50 years, but in the 1930s the Milk Marketing Board was formed and that was a group of farmers who'd sit around a table with the dairies and they would agree a fair price for the farmers, because back in the 1930 the farmers weren't... you know, sometimes they weren't even getting paid for their milk.

Jim: No price at all.

Robert: But...

Jim: You see, the reason why the old Marketing Board finished was because they said it was a monopoly.

Anca: Right, so when did that happen? When was it?

Jim: ...Thatcher. When was Thatcher...?

Robert: 80...'84?

Jim: Yeah, it must be about that, right when...

Robert: It was 1984...

Jim: When Thatcher was...



Robert: Yeah. Margret... Maggie Thatcher the prime minister.

Jim: Prime minister, yeah. She was the one who said that we got to do away with it.

Anca: Mmm.

Jim: But we weren't ready for it, that was the trouble and all of a sudden, you know, farmers were left to do their own thing. They did form a thing called Milk link...

Robert: It's very complicated [Laughing]

Anca: It's very interesting.

Jim: We decided to form our own...

Robert: The British Co-op

Anca: British Co-op

Jim: A British Co-op and we called it Milk Marque but quite a lot of farmers said you come and sell your milk to us, and we'll give you a penny a tons a little more than what the new co-op will pay you, you know. And a lot of farmers fell for this. And there was a lot of trouble, it went on for years, demonstrations and all the rest of it but... and then the milk, the new co-op fell because... partly because it wasn't supported well enough and partly because they said it was a monopoly again you know. So then they had to start again right, form some new convies. Ourselves we formed the one... it you think London, M4 right through to the other side of the country, Cornwall. That was what we called Milk Link. That was a company that we set up, in fact I was, I was actually on, involved quite heavily with that at the time.

Anca: So when was this?

Jim: It's about 20 years ago now almost, isn't it?

Robert: Yeah I'm just trying to think when that was...

Jim: Yea, we could have this looked through for you.

Robert: Yeah.

Jim: Yeah, it must be about...



Robert: In 1991?

Jim: Because I was chairman in 2001...

Robert: Yeah. So it would've been about...

Jim: I was chairman.

Robert: It'd be about '91 or that's too...

Jim: 15 probably. Probably 15 years when we formed our Milk Link and we had to start from scratch, altogether.

Anca: Yeah, yeah.

Robert: You weren't the first... you weren't the first chairman, right? Were you?

Jim: Yeah, pretty well. Yeah.

Robert: So do you reckon that was about 2000?

Jim: No, I'm sure that it was 2001 when I took over and I was in the chair for 5 years and that was very difficult, we had some hard times.

Anca: So let's...

Robert: So let's just run over that one again anyway. Robert: So, in 1984... ah... say 1930 the Milk Marketing Board was formed and in 1984 our prime minister Margaret Thatcher did away with it. Dissolved it.... The farmers then started up a farmer's co-op, a British co-op called Milk Marque, then the government said that was too big and was a monopoly so that was split into three smaller co-ops.

Anca: Could we stop here a bit? What do you mean by too big and monopoly? Were they trying to say that you were creating a disadvantage for other smaller farmers?

Robert: A disadvantage, well I think they were trying to say a disadvantage to the consumer. We would then end up fixing the price too high, they wouldn't be... wouldn't be fair.

Jim: That was the wrong end of these things every time...

Robert: But that was never the case. We were just trying to get ourselves a fair price.



Anca: Right... but on the other hand the public also wants cheap prices. So...

Jim: Well yeah, yeah! They appear to but...what in the world can the public do, except buying British product.

Anca: Yeah.

Jim: We must encourage our people, the consumers to buy British. It's a logo, with a little tractor?

Anca: Yes. Red tractor?

Jim: Red tractor; to try and persuade our own people to buy our product and we won't be in such a mess if they did but...

Robert: Less of our income now is spent on food than it was 50 years ago.

Anca: Yeah.

Robert: 50 years ago it might have been...

Jim: 40%.

Robert: 40% maybe?

Jim: Nowadays is less than 40%.

Robert: Nowadays is about...yes... about 10-11% of our income is spent on food so we've got used to having cheap food...but realistically we should be paying more for our food to ensure that the people who are producing it survive... you know, make a living out of it and survive long term, because otherwise... I mean it's the most important thing in the whole world -isn't it? - that we all have food to eat.

Anca: Yeah.

Robert: And you know, if farmers gradually go out of business because they're not getting a fair price, because we want cheap food, it's not gonna do us any good in the long run.

Anca: Yeah. How about the subsidies? How... [laughing]

Jim: Yeah.



Robert: [laughing] That's... well...

Jim: Yeah, that's a big one. I mean, there's pretty always some form of subsidy which helps a bit. I mean at the moment they're sort of greening subsidies. So we moved away from the surpluses that we used to have 20-25 years ago, there was mountains of this, mountains of that. We moved away from that, there's no longer big reserves of any food actually. And as we moved away from it, they... the way they pay the subsidies now – we have to adhere to certain rules and regulations, we can only grow so much of this and so much of that and there's al... and the... they check the farms quite regularly to make certain that they're..

Robert: Adhering to the rules.

Jim: Keeping to the/within rules. But...

Anca: How are you feeling about this? Do you feel that you have a saying, are you being consulted when they come up with these rules or...

Jim: Yeah...but

Robert: Yeah... the... I mean the NFU do a lot of work behind the scenes and always send out consultation papers to the farmers to ask for their views but [laughing] the farmers quite often don't reply to the questionnaires and the consultations so I think half the time they get very little information back from the farmers but the NFU do fight in our corner, but, I mean, it's a difficult one. I mean, I think we've got to be careful that we don't go too green with all the regulations because...

Anca: Are you personally, are we talking about agri-environment schemes or...?

Robert: Yeah...

Anca: Are you participating in any of those and what's your general experience?

Jim: Only through the co-op, we participate through the co-op...

Robert: Well what do you mean, how, no, I'm talking about the, what Anca's talking about is like the HLS schemes and the habitat schemes.

Anca: Yeah

Jim: Oh yeah, yeah.

Robert: And habitat schemes, yes we have, we've actively taken part.



Jim: We've had to in some cases because some years they say 10% of the arable say will have to be in set-aside, you know that just an example.. and this year we've got changes again, we've gone from a single farm payment to a more greening payment now, to help the country-side, but..

Robert: But they're CAP reform things, I mean on top of the CAP reform you do have you know the HLS which Natural England run, habitat schemes, so you know we've had countryside stewardship land for 20 years which is just now finished recently, we've had habitat land again for 20 years on some of our land and now we're going to HLS next year with a slightly smaller, you know, a smaller acreage or hectareage, probably the smallest amount we've had yet, but we're still doing something.

Anca: So do you think in the long term this, this, I dunno', these types of arrangements, could they work, would you still be...?

Jim: Well if we didn't get the payments, and this is no exaggeration, I think half the farmers in the country would either have to get out or would be bankrupted, it's, it's yeah, without it, I mean we're in a position at the moment for example our monthly milk check is not covering our costs on the farm. Now we're due to have this payment in December, but I'll...

Robert: This, this is the basic payment, but we're getting, we're getting a bit confused between the two things...so obviously we've got the basic payment which is part of the CAP regulations. And the money we get from that, I mean you know, we couldn't do without that money because we wouldn't make a profit, you know, well we're not gonna make a profit this year anyway, but that money that we get from, from the Europe is really important to help with the survival of the farm. But with regards to the other environmental schemes...yeah it's a difficult one I mean the payments aren't great, but some of the lesser land, some of the worse land you know you can use, you know if it's not going to grow very good crops, you can put the poorer land into these environmental schemes and get a small payment on, which does help, but...

Anca: So it's a bit of a win-win maybe?

Robert: Yeah, well it's...Yeah I think they've got their place, they have got their place, but I don't know you know, whether farmers, if you were getting better prices, whether farmers would then naturally do more for the environment anyway, you know would they be planting hedges or woodlands or...

Jim: Mmm, but see it's a two-edged sword this, because we've got the world population expanding all the time and they're telling us now that we gotta' produce more, but in actual fact we're producing less at the moment, because the percentage



that the UK farmer right, used to grow, and when I say grow I'm including everything in that, used to be a lot higher percentage wise than it is now, every year virtually, it's dropping, the amount that we produce to go into our own market, but get less and less all the time. I mean people are not gonna grow stuff unless they're gonna get a reasonable price for it, there's no point is there?

Robert: Yeah I mean you've got to make a profit and you know the way the prices have gotten all it's doing is all the smaller farms are giving up and the bigger farms are getting bigger

Anca: Yeah, that's a big issue...

Robert: Well yeah it is a big issue, you're right, and it's started with the arable farms but now it's going the same way with the dairy farms and I think more so you know if the prices don't improve

Jim: Some of these farms are keeping these cows in 12 months all the time. Well I know a lot of the people don't like that, I know the public like to see the cows onto the grass in the summer, but some farms they'll keep them in all the time and they're bringing the food to them

Anca: Right, yeah

Jim: The cost of that, God knows what it's costing. You know and we've got quite a simple system, we try and do our grass line really well so the cows have always got something in front of them. But because of the drought in this corner this year it's been very difficult hasn't it to keep enough grass in front of the cows

Robert: It has this year, it's been very dry.

Jim: You know, for grazing, but we've managed it so far, but we're going to be short of food for this winter the way things are going. The only crop that may save us is our maize, we've got some maize growing and that's doing well.

Robert: It's been a very dry year for Kent this year, one of the driest years we've had for a long, long time, so you know it makes farming even harder...

Anca: So do you, what's your views on climate change then, do you think it's caused by climate change or it's just a...

Robert: Well [laughter] I think different generations we have different views

Anca: Well I'd like to hear them both...



Jim: This isn't the first time that we've had this situation, I remember going right back, there's a number of years when things were either too wet with far too much rain or like we are at the moment, we've hardly got enough rain to keep things growing so.

Robert: You've had cold winters haven't you if you go back.

Jim: If you go back to the, see my family moved from Scotland down to here in 1955, right? Yeah and I was only a young lad running around with shorts then, but the winters, ok...

Robert: [whispering] It's being recorded as well so...

Jim: Eh? The winter...it doesn't matter...the winters what we found is the winter have been much colder back in the 50s, a lot of snow, so the 50s, the 60s, the 70s and the 80s were all cold snowy kind of winters.

Anca: Right

Jim: Now since the end of the 80s, the last 20-25 years, we haven't had anywhere near as cold a winters or as snowy

Robert: Been miles wetter...

Jim: But I've got a theory on this see it goes in 40-50 year...

Anca: Cycles

Jim: And then it'll change again. Because if you look back to the good old days when the Thames used to ice over and that, you know, we've had really cold winters before. And we also must have had, going as far back to the Romans, they used to, they had vineyards didn't they? Well the weather must have been reasonably ok to do that, during that period, so I really don't, I'm a bit of a skeptic with that business

Anca: So...

Robert: Yeah, well I'm not, I'm not 100% convinced it's caused by anything we're doing, but we seem to suddenly get more volatility in the weather now, so it's either very wet, very dry, very windy, very hot and we don't seem to get the seasons like we used to get. You know, farming was always, you could plan your farming year cause you knew during the spring would be very wet and the summer would be ok for harvest and the autumn would be, perhaps a mixture of sunshine and showers



and the winters would be cold, but we don't seem to get the full seasons like we used to anymore, but. I know what my father's saying, he's right, you know the roman did grow, did have vineyards in here in the UK, the river Thames in the medieval times used to freeze up and we've never seen that in our lifetimes. So the weather does go through...

Jim: So I mean, if you take a cycle of 40-50 years, it's nothing, is it, it's like a pinprick you know from when time began, I just, I don't understand the whole thing but if the last ice age finished 10,000 years ago, what I'd like someone to answer is why, why did that go as fast as it did, what caused the melting...

Anca: Mmm

Jim: Well nobody's ever answered that question, but I'd be interested to know somebody's theory on it because it makes no sense.

Anca: Right

Jim: But 10,000 years ago there again it's something, isn't it. When you look at how long the whole...

Robert: Something caused the climate to warm up then, didn't it, for the ice to melt so, I don't know...

Anca: Maybe us humans [laughter]

Jim: We're getting too far back

Anca: You mentioned something very interesting, that in 1955 you moved here from Scotland. So was it...?

Jim: Why?

Anca: Yeah, why and...

Jim: I'll tell you why, Scotland's a lovely country, beautiful country, but it's a wet country. And there are some really good farming areas in Scotland, but where we were on the western side, that, the Glasgow area, the rain just always comes through there from, comes across from Ireland across and you know some years it was a terrible job trying to get the crops and you know they get grass and hay cut, and I think my father woke up one day and said 'oh well enough of this' and with a lot of help from my mother as well and he said 'well we'll make a better life for ourselves if we move south' but I never expected them to move this far [laughter]



Anca: [laughter] So were, by then you were actively involved in farming as well, you were a farmer..

Robert: No, dad was only 10

Jim: Yeah I would have been 10 at that time, 55 is a long time ago

Robert: But the family was farming...

Jim: Yeah

Anca: Ok. So for how many generations you could go...?

Robert: How many generations back?

Jim: Farming wise, I'll be quite honest with you, I don't really know how far back. Certainly probably 4 or 5 generations anyway, going that further back they might have been horse stealers, you just don't know but, I'll tell you one interesting thing was, we had a train to move the farm lock stock and barrel, that means everything, including the cattle, down to Kent. And the reason we brought the cattle with us was because TB was clear in Scotland, but England were having problems, and so you didn't want to buy cattle who had got TB already. So that's why my father brought cattle. But we've got that scenario again now in England don't we, TB.

Anca: That's another big issue...

Jim: But I mean, things go around in circles, don't they. But there's too many bunny huggers [laughter]. I think we're being sympathetic too much sometimes with wildlife. Well I mean we enjoy the wildlife on the farm, but we know...

Anca: I'm sure you do...

Jim: We've always kept some animals under control because they dominate otherwise and this is what's happening about one particular animal at the moment. That I mean they're saying why aren't there any hedgehogs - I'll tell you why - because that particular animals likes a bit of hedgehog and he also likes to go around the nests through the ground, ground nesting, and they take the eggs and the chicks...

Robert: And the bees

Jim: And they love the bees to wreck their hives



Anca: Right. There's a huge scandal now with badger culling, and they claim that they're doing it but they're not doing it right and that I don't know, it should be done differently.

Robert: Well I tell you what should happen, the protection order that is on the badgers should be lifted and the farmers should be allowed to control the badgers themselves. That would sort the problem out, it wouldn't even need to make big news. I mean it would obviously be big news if the protection order on the badgers was lifted, that would, you know there'd be a lot of public outcry and uproar about that. So if you just instead of having an organised cull just leave the farmers to control the badgers...

Jim: Yeah

Robert: On their own, like we control the rabbits and the foxes, and you know

Jim: I mean that's how it used to be and it used to work ok, I mean we don't want to see the end of the wildlife lad, I mean we'd love to see the wildlife, but if one animal starts to dominate then all others suffer, that's my opinion on it

Anca: Yeah

Robert: The badgers has no, there's no predator for the badger

Anca: So do you know when the ban was introduced, I can look it up...

Robert: 1970 I think, and I was told recently that the ban was introduced because lots of the gypsies were badger baiting

Jim: Yeah, for dogs, have you heard of that one?

Anca: Is it like a sport?

Robert: No [laughing]

Jim: They would set the dogs on the badgers, these were bad people you understand?

Robert: It was organized crime.

Jim: Yeah they used to bet on them you know which dog would survive



Anca: Right so it's a bit like a cruel sport

Robert: A cruel sport yeah

Jim: That was totally out of order that was

Robert: So, that was going on a lot in the 1970, well in the 60s and 70s, so to protect the badger...

Anca: Was it all over the country?

Robert: I think yeah

Jim: Pretty well yeah

Robert: So but, you know, back in the 1970s we might have only had probably one badger set on the farm.

Jim: No, there's always been more than that, but

Robert: Yeah but there's a badger set in every field now, so it's multiplied.

Jim: And the TB is getting closer to us all the time, they've got it in Sussex now you know and we're not that far away now are we?

Anca: Yeah

Jim: It's terrible for the farmers that have got it cause they can't move the stock, like if they wanted to pack up they can't pack up until they're clear you know

Anca: So they just need to destroy their entire, they need to basically kill all the...

Jim: Well in the areas where the TB is they should gas them, that's what they should do with them, none of this shooting business.

Anca: Yeah

Jim: Just gas them cause they'll just fall asleep basically. And then get, once the area's clear, then you'll get clean badgers that'll come in from other areas. I mean all these animals, foxes, badgers in particular, they move around, but once they've got an area where they're actually got their set they won't move too far from that but...

Robert: Well I think that...



Jim: Oh I don't know its...

Robert: It's a difficult one for me, I mean they are a nice animal to look at, but just the, the risk of the tuberculosis and the mess they make when they dig, make sets in the middle of your field, you then have to, you can't plow up you have to drive around it. You know, it's a shame but I think, I think they need controlling.

Anca: Yeah, we discussed right at the beginning about milking and I suppose that the entire process has changed a bit through time. Could you tell me a few things about it, when I don't know, when you started...

Robert: Well yeah it's probably not changed as much here as some places, but I mean you talk about when we were down in the 50s before we had the parlour.

Jim: Well the acreage has increased

Robert: Yeah but with the milking...

Jim: The Warnock 150 acre farm in Scotland and when we bought this place that was 275 acres, but we're up to between 6 and 700 acres now.

Robert: So how's the milking changed that's what Anca wants to know.

Jim: Oh yeah, well when we came, when we brought the cows down with us we had no electricity as such so everything was worked off generators. We had milking machines at that time where you put the cluster on, but the cows used to always be tied round the neck, and you would go in between the cows to feed them and they would have troughs at the front and they would stay in certainly in the winter time. But the milk would be milked into a bucket and then you would empty the bucket into churns...you know what milk churns are?

Anca: I saw

Jim: Yeah that's it. And the milk was then, we would filter it in a dairy. We had quite a simple system to cool the milk down and then the lorry would come in each day and collect the milk, but we never, it was hard going without electric you know.

Anca: I can imagine

Jim: And water, there was very little water I think we only had the one main tap for water. We had got water to the farm, but then we had to make certain the cows had water too. Yeah I mean there were big changes there.



Robert: In 1970, another farm just right next door came up for sale so the family brought that, and we eventually started milking the cows on this new farm in a breast parlour.

Jim: Well there were, when we started there were still we were still milking with the briar system and things, you know where the cows were tied up. But then by that time new, newish systems were coming out for milking the cows and that and a lot of cows used to be milked in bales, you know out in fields and this sort of things, but eventually they started putting in the breast parlors and herringbone parlors and this sort of thing. And it's been like that for a long time but there's quite a number of people now that are putting in the rotary parlors, big rotary parlors, but you need a lot of cows to justify that, and this you know there's a lost of cost there.

Robert: And robotic milking as well now is starting to become popular. There are..

Jim: So you've seen, what we've seen is the briar system, that's when they're in the stalls, and then the breast parlour and followed closely by the herringbones for milking, the rotaries. And now the latest are the robots, robot milking, but it's good for some farms but not so good for others. I don't think we're going to go any further than that anyway

Robert: No, I mean I think there are robotic milking machines in Kent now I think..

Jim: And the rotaries

Robert: And there's rotaries as well in Kent, yeah

...

Robert: We we're still milking in our older breast parlour today

Anca: Yeah

Robert: So that is, what's that, it's nearly over 40 years old now, We've modified parts of it and updated certain components in it, but essentially that parlor is over 40 years old. It's a nice parlour to work in and it's good for the cows, but it's maybe just a little on the slow side. So it's all about efficiency these days and trying to get things done quickly and efficiently.

Jim: You better watch they're not costing too much too, otherwise you're back to square 1 with no money.



Anca: Mmm. How about, I don't know if it's relevant here, but how about safety regulations and all this?

Jim: Red tape

Anca: Has it, has it happened to you to I don't know

Jim: You just have to look at the state of this office, that's what it's like [laughing]

Anca: Were you ever forced to update the technology that you're working with because of safety or...

Robert: No

Anca: Nothing like that

Robert: We've not had to update any equipment because of health and safety reasons...

Jim: No, well I think most of the equipment that comes in now is well guarded anyway, but you got to remember these days to put the guards back on. Sometimes when you're in a hurry and that like harvest time. You know might take something off and say oh bugger I meant to put that back on but you carry on as normal till you're finished at the end of the day and you put it on for the next morning. But no, I mean health and safety, yeah it's got its place, but it's over the top now there is so much, it's silliness isn't it, it really is.

Robert: Well a lot of it is common sense, but you do have to look after your staff and not expose them to, you know, risk, but with farming there's always going to be some risk.

Jim: Especially when you work a cow, because you can't stop a cow kicking out, or a cow knocking you over, you know its...

Robert: Or machinery, lost a finger...

Anca: My grandmother, my grandfather has lost a finger while cutting hay for cattle.

Robert: Yeah it has happened

Jim: It amazes me that in the old days when they used to grow a lot of turnips and with things called mangles, they were big heavy sort of things, that used to grow in rows and you used to have to hoe the rows between to get them to go away. But when they were ready you'd have to pull this thing out of the ground and there



would be a trimmer or something there to chop it off like that – and then there were a lot of accidents that way.

Anca: Can you imagine that!

Robert: Yeah no, I think farming was probably more dangerous because of having to harvest these things by hand and now you're on the machines which...

Jim: And there were a lot of these big machines that used to come in you know with belts and that showing you know whereas nowadays everything's covered all the belts and that moving are covered, but not in the old days.

Robert: No, no, things were much more dangerous. Things have got a lot safer on the farms over 50 years, yeah, a lot safer.

Jim: There are a lot. I'll tell you what, there will always be accidents on farms because of stupid things sometimes, not because you haven't done something, but just something, I mean some of the worst ones have been with the slurry haven't they

Robert: Yeah.

Jim: The gasses have, people have died with the gas you know from the slurry..

Robert: From the slurry, the muck. The slurry stores, different dairy units have different types of systems for storing their slurry. We have a tower that's above ground and it's open so there's no real risk, but on some farms the slurry is kept underneath the sheds, and sometimes you have to go down to sort out blockages and things and the gas is invisible, the methane

Jim: The methane will kill cause you don't. I don't think there's any smell to methane is there.

Anca: No, I don't think so, no

Robert: You can, you can pass out and die

Jim: Anyway that's pretty much red tape, too much red tape.

Anca: Ok, so another question here, what's your view on organic?

Robert: Organics. I haven't got a problem with it. You're not gonna feed the world with organic farming, but I think it's got its place it's a bit of a niche market.



Jim: Gotta be a really good farmer to be into organic, you know keep the weeds down and all this side of it is very difficult and also you're not allowed to use certain chemicals and that

Robert: Well it doesn't matter whether it's crops..

Jim: Yeah you know Robert's right, you wouldn't feed the world, that sums it up, you know, it's a fine niche market maybe but..

Robert: I mean for organic milk there is a premium but then your yields are gonna be a lot less, your feed will be more expensive so, I mean I've not worked the figures out but I can't imagine your margins will be much better with organic milk and, I don't know it's just...

Anca: Well I suppose that's the reason why there aren't a lot more farmers producing organic I guess, it's not worth it...

Robert: I don't know we're just..

Jim: I don't think it's increasing is it? The number of farmers..

Robert: Well I think the organic farming's increasing is it, the numbers?

Anca: I will look it up.

Jim: Good question isn't it? I don't think it is. Cause people gotta pay more for it than the supermarkets or wherever they get it at.

Robert: But you know, you're always.. whether you're an arable farmer or a dairy farmer, you're always trying to maximize your output and if you're organic you know you're not going to do that and then you've got the problems of weeds and things and pests and diseases and...

Jim: I don't think it's a growth area anyway.

Robert: No, not if we have to feed an increasing world population.

Anca: You mentioned weeds and pests and diseases...how do you see, well how are you affected by these problems at the present moment and if you would compare it with the past...do you have, are you..

Robert: Weeds diseases and pests now compared to 50 years ago..



Jim: Yeah, there's less. Yeah definitely less, but that's thanks to the modern way of doing things you know and modern chemicals you know, so important. With things like potatoes you used to get potato blight didn't they, and the country starved over that, but now you've got the right spray it doesn't happen. So we've got to be thankful in many ways but you know when people say oh chemicals this and that – but without it we wouldn't grow half the crops. Its that simple isn't it?

Robert: Yeah you know you've only got to look at the crops these days and you know if you're a good farmer your arable crops, you.. you shouldn't see any weeds you just.. see not uniform crop, same if you're a good grass farmer you know you shouldn't see any thistles or docks or nettles, but certainly in the hedge rows and fence lines you might see some of these things, but generally when you look out into the middle of the field the fields look very, very clean. But I mean that's another problem that's coming because well because there's a lot of sort of green MPs now, Euro MPs, the EU are trying to ban different chemicals which are useful for controlling weeds and pests and diseases, but what's gonna happen is the chemical companies, if they see that you know, the EU are starting to ban certain chemicals then all the money that they put into research won't be for Europe, they'll be spending money on research in other parts of the world, where the chemicals aren't banned. And if we're not careful, you know we will lose, lose a lot of our ability in the future to control the weeds and diseases.

Jim: Well I mean one of the particular things they discussed, it was two or three years ago now, was banning rat, rat poison.

Anca: Yeah.

Jim: Because they said it was toxic. But how the hell are you supposed to kill them if, if it isn't, if something's not toxic? And I, I thought it was a joke, I couldn't believe right and I said to somebody who was well up there in the NFU about it, and he said well no, he said they've been treating this seriously and they want to ban it. I said well they don't know what they're saying over there you know. The one thing you have to have on livestock farms is rat poison to keep them down.

Anca: So what happened in the end, they didn't ban it?

Jim: No, not in the end but.. the fact is that they discussed it. It's a no-brainer isn't it?

Robert: Yeah you can't have rats running all around your farm it's..

Jim: It not just the farm they'll be everywhere else too, they'll be in the towns and that because there are pest control people that go around all the time, you know,



baiting different areas in the cities, villages, towns. But, I've got no confidence whatsoever in the EU.

Anca: This is somehow related to our health and safety discussion because if you're growing, producing grains you don't want rat residues and anything, any infestation at all.

Jim: Yeah yeah.

Robert: No you don't.

Anca: You need to control them somehow.

Robert: Yeah, you do. Rats I mean are very difficult to control because they live underground, you can't get at their, their nests so you have to try you have to bait them somehow. Or you have to sit there with a gun and be very patient but you haven't got the time to do that.

Anca: Right so now a rather personal question: what does your farm mean to you and what does farming more generally mean to you.

Robert: Well it's a way of life for a start. It's sort of like, you know there's very few industries like farming, especially if you've been brought up on a family farm it's sort of in, it's in your blood and you grow up, you know, with the country side all around you and it's just, it's just, it's in you, isn't it.

Anca: Have you ever thought about doing something else, when you were maybe younger?

Robert: Well maybe when you're at school because you know they ask you erm when you're doing your exams they ask you, you know, do you want to go to college or university – which I did do, I did go to university for 3 years.

Anca: Was it related to...

Robert: Yeah it was, yeah it was Agricultural College which was part of the University back in the early 90s but always with.. in the hope that, you know, I was going to come back here anyway. You know, it's security in many ways, although you know if the prices carry on as low as they are for many more months, then obviously, you know, you're going to be worried about what's been a good family business for many generations but...



Anca: About that, do you think that your business at the moment is under any threat, if as you said, if the prices go down, or how do you see your farm developing in the future? Do you see any impending threat or do you reckon that you'll...

Jim: Well at the moment I think we've got to survive the problem that we've got at the moment. And there soon will be a load of casualties, that's my opinion I think there's going to be an awful lot of people that, you know, give up or they'll go bankrupt. And we're lucky in some respects that we're not in a rented farm, because they've got you know they've got extra money to find each year to pay the rent and if things are bad like they are generally at the moment, I just don't see how they're going to do it, if it'll last for any length of time. Farmers are pretty resilient you know we will, we'll go as long as we possibly can, and just hope that we're one of the survivors, cause that's how it is at the moment, well it is certainly with the milk.

Robert: But it's, it's, it's out of our hands really, what can we do, we are price takers not price makers, we get the price that we're given. We haven't got the power as farmers, it's the retailers that have all the power now.

Anca: Was it always like this?

Jim: What's that?

Anca: Was it always...

Robert: Have the retailers always had the power? I mean you go back 50 years.

Jim: Yeah, they didn't always have it, because there was a lot of small shops in the old days, that would compete against each other, you know in the high street and that and that was a healthy side of it, in many respects but..

Robert: But when would you say...

Jim: The farmers were smaller too you know, it's only in the last 20 or 30 years that the farms have started to get bigger.

Robert: When would you say it was the most profitable time for farming that you can remember?

Jim: The most profitable well, I well I think towards the end of the last century you know from probably the 80s to the 90s through there it was quite a reasonable time...

Robert: Well in the 70s not too bad..



Jim: I mean things have always been...

Robert: I mean it was through the 90s the milk price started to go down didn't it?

Jim: Yeah

Robert: It might have been the 70s and 80s that were...

Jim: Yeah.. It's right about that, but it's probably, it's 30 years ago yeah we were doing better.

Robert: Yeah but if we're talking about the face of agriculture in the last 50 years so it's, the most profitable time for agriculture was probably during the 70s and 80s. Now what's the state, the farms get bigger, we're rushing around more, it's more stressful now, the prices are lower... you know it's, you know it's a nice way of life and it's lovely working in the country side and seeing wildlife and you know, you..

Jim: Well it's not so great in the winter time sometimes when you're out and you're trying to feed cattle or milk cows and it's absolutely freezing in the parlour, you know. And you think your contemporaries they're all nicely in bed about till probably half seven in the morning and you're out there freezing.

Anca: Yeah but as you said it's a way of life so you just do it not just for the money.

Robert: Yeah I know, but we still have to make a profit so we can reinvest in the business. And you know couple of years ago the milk price was improving and improved, improved quickly and we had some very good prices for a very short spell of time, and we looked and maybe putting some serious investment into the business. I mean it's a good job we didn't do anything. It did, it looked, you know it was a bit of a risky thing to do even at the milk prices that they were then but we decided not to do it for the time being

Anca: And it turned out to be a wise decision...

Robert: It turned out to be a wise decision because the milk price has gone from 34 pence a liter to 23 and it's still going down and some people are on 17 or 18 pence a liter. So it's...it costs us 30 pence to produce a liter of milk, so getting 23 pence doesn't even go anywhere near to covering up costs.

Anca: So that's why you really need those, those subsidies from CAP and...

Robert: Yeah we need the subsidies to help yeah definitely



Anca: Otherwise..

Jim: Oh yeah without the subsidies this year, certainly I don't think many of the dairy farms would survive. I mean if you're a wealthy individual, which some are with some big estates and that, it's not gonna worry them too much, you know like this, because they're pretty wealthy people to start with. But if you're talking about the ordinary genuine farmer right, who works his backside off basically, we're not in that sort of league. I mean what do, I mean what does this country want, does it want one gigantic arable farm, you know, I don't know.

Anca: Do you think we're heading towards that direction.

Robert: Yeah, definitely.

Anca: Is there any chance to change anything and if so, how?

Robert: I mean you know we got to keep putting the pressure on our politicians.

Jim: Yeah.

Robert: You know I'm a South-East Dairy Board so we, we meet up four times a year and discuss all the issues that we're having. And last week I met with the Dover MP, Charlie Elphicke and we highlighted our concerns to him, but even he said 'Well, what do you want me to do, I can't fix the price for you'.

Anca: Then who can do it? How about the public? Do you think they could have a say in all this?

Robert: Well they're certainly on our side which is good. Yeah they're on our side, they support everything we do, but at the end of the day, you know, they'll just go into the supermarket and they'll buy their groceries and you know go to the cash till, pay it and go home, you know.

Anca: Yeah.

Robert: And I don't suppose they even look at the price of milk.

Anca: It's so convenient for them.

Robert: It's just convenient and why, I mean they tell us that surveys been done, a recent one by Mintel have done a survey saying that consumers would pay more for milk, they're prepared to pay more for milk, but they're not gonna go and say to the supermarket, 'hey right I'll give you more money for my milk today'. You know,



anyway that will happen if the supermarkets actually put the price up. And the consumer, the consumer wouldn't, they wouldn't probably even notice and I don't think they would complain if the milk price went up. I mean it was only a few years ago that four pints of milk would cost you one pound thirty nine pence. Now it's 89p. In about 3 or 4 years it's dropped that much. I mean it's really, it's.

Jim: I mean that water costs more money that in the old days.

Anca: I was thinking about that, the water is more expensive.

Robert: Up, up, I went up to London a couple of weeks ago for a milk meeting and I bought one of these in the shop and it cost me, whoops, it's only half a litre and it cost me 1.65£. But I wanted a water, I was on the train I needed a bottle of water, picked it out the fridge, 1.65£ and you just give the money without even thinking about it and yet milk's being sold for a fraction of that.

Jim: But you see, what, the thing I've noticed most is we actually came down from Scotland in '55, is when we first came here, our area, nearly every farm had a dairy, of one sort or another.

Anca: Right.

Robert: Yeah had cows.

Jim: And now we're the only ones left. Does that tell you something?

Anca: Yeah, could this bring you an advantage of any sort in the future if..?

Robert: Yeah possibly if we can survive, then possibly maybe in ten years time if.. you know I think there's about, we're under 10,000 dairy farms in England and Wales now. And I think, you know, you've only got to go back 20 years and there's probably 30,000, so the number has reduced by a third in that time. Now we are losing about 500 dairy farms a year so it won't take long for that to...

Jim:accelerate this because of the situation we're in now. We've had six month of bad prices, what more than that isn't it?

Robert: Yeah six months or so.

Jim: Yeah, you know, people can only go on for so long not making a profit can't they? Because the landlord is going to be knocking on their door 'Your rent is due Mr. such and such. You know.. and they haven't got money at the moment you know..



Robert: Yeah if I had a crystal ball to look into, who knows, I hope that.. and it's awful to say but you know, a lot of people will give up.

Jim: They might give up around the world as well.

Robert: But hopefully it might be better for those of us that can survive it and see it through. It might not be, I mean, you know. When there was 15,000 dairy farmers we thought well if it gets down to 10 it could be better for us all, but it hasn't, you know. What's happened is the ones that were left have got better, more efficient and have got bigger. So the actual cow numbers haven't gone down, the milk output is still the same.

Anca: So is it just the issue of small farmers being out-competed by big farmers or is it also the international market with the import and export and all that.

Jim: It's a bit of both.

Robert: Yeah it's also international market, I mean we're concentrating on dairy cause that's what we are, we're dairy farmers. We're only 80% self-sufficient in the UK in dairy, all the rest comes in in imports. Well we could, we could produce all our dairy requirements in the UK if we didn't have the cheap imports coming in. And with the strength of the pound now as well it makes it more expensive to export and the pound is going to remain strong.

Jim: Against the euro.

Robert: Against the euro. I think the pound will keep, will get stronger, you know I have my doubts about the euro long term.

Anca: Especially with the pricing.

Robert: Yeah, exactly.

Jim: Well I mean the thing is that allows cheap imports to come in, but for us to sell our produce is costing us more when you've got a strong pound. And they're not gonna pay the UK more money if they can buy it cheaper elsewhere, are they? You know it's..

Robert: I'd like to ban all European...foreign dairy imports into the country. That'd be wonderful if we could do that, but you can't do things like that..

Anca: Was that ever erm.. ever discussed?



Robert: Well I mean I've mentioned it sort of flippantly in the emails and things to different people, but you know you just think you can't control, you know, things on that scale you can't, we can't have any influence in that, that's government and they've never done anything.

Jim: You know farmers have always felt.. guilty really of not showing common sense sometimes. The only way with any product that you're gonna do well or at least get a living from is if you can control, right, the amount that's being produced, and I don't care what it is. And when you're producing that much more, it kills it. It kills it stone dead, because that's all surplus, you know, and that gives the buyers the chance then to push the price down.

Anca: Yes..yes..

Jim: And that's what happening. But anyway....

Robert: But, but, the world demand for dairy products is increasing this year. It's gone up I thought it was 1.5% or 2.5%, so the demand keeps going up. And the UK is one of the best countries producing milk so why shouldn't it be the UK that helps to, you know, meet, supply the demand.

Anca: Yeah.

Jim: You know we could given the chance, we could, we could fulfill all our milk product needs quite quickly, 100% instead of the 80. So, ludicrous isn't it? And you know, Ireland are pumping milk out over there, way above, you know, the amount that they can use and we're the ones that are suffering because they're producing too much. It is nuts isn't it.

Robert: Denmark..

Anca: Right..

Jim: Yeah but.... in Denmark. They've always had to get higher prices there the Scandinavian countries must be, their farms must be suffering a bit at the moment because they've got silly high costs. Yeah.. So, but anyway there we are. Wish we'd be more positive but..[laughter] It's just this way.

Robert: Well it's the way the situation is at the moment. It's, you know, 6 months of really low prices, you know, makes you a bit, a bit worried and a bit pessimistic.

Anca: I want to make sure that I covered everything so I'm going to quickly go through the notes.



Robert: Less staff on the farms now than there was 50 years ago.

Anca: Less staff.

Jim: mmm...

Anca: So could you tell me why is that, why do you use less staff now than..

Robert: Just cause the machinery's got bigger and the machinery can do the, well the machinery can do the job of several people.

Anca: Is this good for the business and then is it good for the economy?

Robert: Uhm..Well it's.. yeah it's a catch 22 isn't it? Because yeah you could argue it's good for the business but then the modern big machinery costs lots of money.

Anca: Right.

Robert: Far more than..

Anca: So you invest, you need to invest a lot and...

Robert: Yeah you do need to invest a lot, but then if you need to get the work done quickly you've got to have it, haven't you.

Jim: Yeah.. yeah..it's hard to work out the economics of this sometimes, I wonder whether it adds up really.

Robert: I mean, yeah, I mean it's got to. I mean, you buy a big tractor and it costs your 100000, you might spread over say four years.. Yeah.. A member of staff, you know, could cost you 25000 a year wouldn't it? So yeah do you have the big tractor or do you have one extra member of staff? Well without the big tractor you can't.. one member of staff isn't going to replace the big tractor is it, so you'd need 50 members of staff perhaps..

Anca: Yeah. I saw something there that caught my attention. So those are breeds of cattle that...

Jim: What these cows yeah? There are show cows, cows that go to the shows. And I've won championships because the pedigree, the cows are all pedigree and the sheep are all pedigree as well. And we've been showing for 25 years, went to a Kent show last week, we didn't have any winners there this time, but you're not gonna win them all anyway. But we've had some good years haven't we?



Robert: Yeah. Yeah we had some. Those pictures of those cows are probably from the late 90s. We had, yeah we had, that was probably our most successful period of showing cattle was the late 90s, early 2000s. Yeah some of the best cows we've ever had up there.

Anca: So are those...

Jim: These two cows on the right hand side the white cow and the black cow, they've got more offspring generations going back in the herd than all the rest of them put together. The family..the Daffy family and the Linderas... They've bred really well, you know. And the others have done ok, but not to the extent that they have. Probably were the best cows we've ever had, cow on the left hand side at the top there, but didn't breed that great. We've still got some [unclear] but I was told that we would do better with her than what we have.

Anca: So are these British breeds?

Robert: Yeah so these are, these are..

Jim: Holsteins..

Robert: These are the cows we have, so these are Holsteins. So what, you had Ayrshires when you moved down, didn't you?

Jim: Yeah..

Robert: So when my father moved down from Scotland they had Ayrshires which are brown and white. And then I think you, you had a year or two without..

Jim: We had about 18 months of getting the parlour and everything ready, you know, on the other farm..

Robert: So, when they restarted, they started with Friesians which are black and white like that, but not quite as big, and don't produce as much milk. And then they started crossing the Friesians with Holstein blood from sort of Canada and America, which increased the size of the cows and the yields went up. So now we're 100% Holsteins. So that's, yeah that's something that's changed over 50 years or sort of, you know, cows will give twice as much milk now as they did.

Jim: The genetics have got, the Holstein's genetics are much more milky than the pure British Friesian that we used to have. Now they would milk for about 7 or 8 months and they dry themselves off, but these cows, these Holsteins will virtually keep milking.



Anca: How about fat contents and all that because I know now that everyone wants it to be lean.

Robert: [laughter] Yeah, that's a really topical question at the moment. Our milk buyer Arla, they want us to produce milk with lots of fat and lots of protein.

Jim: That's a surprise isn't it?

Robert: Which is a surprise, I see you've raised your eyebrows then.

Jim: Yeah, quite right

Robert: But what they'll then do is skim the fat and skim the protein out of the milk and sell that separately.

Anca: Ah, ok

Robert: Before they then sell the milk. So, yes you're right, we all want leaner, less fat in our products these days, but actually the dairies, they want as much fat and protein as we can possibly give them so they can then sell...

Jim: Yeah we get penalized if we get it too low don't we?

Robert: Yeah, we get penalized if the fat's too low.

Anca: That's, that's...

Jim: I know it's nuts, it's absolute nuts.

Robert: [laughing] That's, that is what is going on, and when we, when our cows go out to the field to graze the grass in the spring time, our fat always drops because when they eat fresh grass the fat in the milk goes down, so we get penalized for that. So though it's a better system, the cows are out in the fresh air they're eating grass, they're not in the sheds anymore. Because the fat levels have dropped our milk buyers go 'I'm going to give you less money for your milk now because the fat's too low; we want to take that fat and sell it on top of the milk'. I mean it's, you know you wouldn't believe what...

Anca: It's hard to believe this.

Jim: [phone conversation in background]



Robert: It is hard to believe. Arla are, Arla are inventing new products all the time, it's the niche products to sell for more money and they are, one of the latest products it's something called, it is called Protein, it's 20 grams of protein, and it's in a pot and it's aimed at young men. So that's where that's come from you see, they've, they're taking the protein out of the milk that we sell and loading it into a plastic pot and then selling that separately.

Anca: So I guess they're processing it more than maybe they used to do in the past?

Robert: Yeah, oh definitely, they really are, it's incredible what they can do now these modern dairies. But it's yeah, it's...

Anca: I really don't want to take too much of your time, but this is really interesting.

Robert: It's fine, I've got time.

Anca: Right so you're saying that they're processing it a lot, could you do this on the farm yourself?

Robert: No, no.

Anca: You don't have the means or won't they let you to do this?

Robert: Well, it's probably the technology required to do it. Yeah it would cost, it would cost too much money, I imagine the technology to take protein and fat out of milk must cost millions I would think... But, this is what's happening and something else which they've been doing for a while now is what we call homogenize the milk, which, you might have heard of that, it's where they, the fat is smashed up so that, in the, you know, 70s and 80s when the milkman used to leave a bottle of milk on your doorstep, the fat would, it would separate and the fat would sit on top. Now if you did that there would be no fat on the top. And it's not necessarily because the fat's been taken out, although in a lot of circumstances it is now, it's just because it's been homogenized and the fat particles been smashes up so much that they don't separate anymore.

Anca: Mhm. Do you think the public wants this or they just...?

Robert: Oh I don't know.

Anca: You don't know?

Robert: The public wants things that look nice don't they, they want apples that aren't bruised and potatoes that are the same size and you know, well I don't know, I



mean probably the modern generation wants, are quite happy to see no fat on their milk, but maybe the older generation like to see the fat on their milk because...

Anca: I used to love to see the fat on the milk.

Robert: Yeah.

Jim: I think the farmers are probably guilty of, if they had said the milk, right, that it was 96% fat free, that would be a lot better than saying there's 4% fat in the milk. You understand what I'm saying? It's 96% fat free isn't it, if there's only 4% and that's how it should have been sold.

Anca: Yeah, yea[laughing]

Jim: Yeah.

Robert: Everyone worries too much about the fat in milk.

Jim: Yeah, yeah. I mean milk's a marvelous product really. And this, it's just so cheap, it's crazy, isn't it?

Robert: It's full of calcium, full of protein and you know it's just a, it's real important product isn't it, I mean that's what we all, you know, all animals, you know, are reared on milk, it's...

Jim: We need to be getting on now anyway...

Robert: Yeah

Jim: How are you getting on there, are you getting through it?

Anca: Yeah, that's pretty much it, unless there's anything else that you'd like to add, that's worth...

Robert: Anything else that, anything else that's changed majorly in the last 50 years?

Jim: Well we've gone from...we've gone from sheaths in the field, with the big machine coming in each year, once a year and putting it through, to the binders. What the binder cut, yeah, they used to make the sheath, yeah, and the binder came in and that would actually do it mechanically, that's the word I'm looking for, the binder. And then of course it went from there to the combines, the big modern combines. So that, yeah, there's been a lot of movement there as well.



Robert: We're using yeah, we're using satellite navigation now, on tractor and combines so auto-steer now...

Anca: So you don't need a driver?

Robert: You still need a driver to be in the cab, and not every farm has this now, it's only, it's quite expensive technology. We, we haven't got the auto-steer but some farmers locally now have a system that the tractor will steer itself. So the man, the man sits, the man...

Jim: Well you got a car that steers itself now haven't you?!

Robert: Well you have, but it's in agriculture as well. So the driver will just sit in the chair and maybe work a few controls but the tractor is steering itself.

Jim: The fields have got to be right for that too, haven't they? I mean it's no good driving a tractor around in a field if there's a gateway into the next field that doesn't quite look big enough to let the tractor machine through??

Robert: It still works, it still works out. Yeah, you know you.. It still works out. All the fields are mapped and yeah it's satellite navigation effectively. I mean, we use something similar for spraying but, it's yeah it is expensive technology and you need lots of acres to be able to afford that technology so the smaller farms cannot.

Jim: Yeah it's the big arable farms isn't it?

Robert: Yeah.

Jim: Have you spoken to anybody else round about here?

Anca: So far I interviewed, I personally interviewed another 4 farmers.

Jim: That's alright, but I'm gonna go anyway, you can finish off here.

Anca: Thank you very much.

Jim: I hope it goes alright for you anyway, you can always ring him up, he likes a phone call now and again.

Anca: Thank you.

Anca: Yeah, I would really appreciate, as I said, maps and pictures because you provided some very useful information.



Robert: There might be, it's difficult sometimes laying your hands on, on, on things like aerial photographs, I mean we've got a few in here but they're all old ones and we haven't, might have some more up to date ones, it's probably 20 years since we've last had an aerial photograph of the farm but, I mean that, this one here. I mean that was, that's this farm here now, this has probably all changed a huge amount, that was probably taken 40 years ago. But the only things that's really changed here is that barn's gone another modern barn's been put there in its place, bit like that. All these trees out there have died and gone. There's not many, it takes a long time for farms to change to be honest, especially like our own farm you know. We're not a big farm, I mean we are a big farm, we're 650 acres, which is bigger than the UK average, but there's plenty of farms within Kent now that are 2,3,4,5000 acres.

Anca: Right.

Robert: You know, so I'm not saying it's becoming the norm, but you know, there's more farms of more than 1000 acres now than there ever have been.