

# Voices of Hickling

## Interview Transcript: Jack Aldred

*Interviewed by Ann Louise Kinmonth on 27th November 2017*

ALK: *Just for the tape could you tell me your full name, and your date of birth and the address you were born at.*

JA: **Oh, well, the full name , you'll get the shock of your life – Stanley John Aldred. And I was born at Back Lane, Martham.**

ALK: *When?*

JA: **That was 1928.**

ALK: *October?*

JA: **Yeah, the 18<sup>th</sup>, 1928.**

ALK: *So, what we're going to do is spend as much time as you like talking about your memories of growing up, especially of Hickling and thatching – that kind of thing.*

JA: **Yeah, yeah, I got that in there. In the book, that's all in the book.**

ALK: *know but I want it to be all in the tape.*

JA: **Ah ha. Oh and that's all on here.**

ALK: *How did you first get to know Hickling?*

JA: **Oh, well that been, you see, what actually happened was, once I was born in Martham then we lived on Somerton Staithe. My grandfather bought a cottage on Somerton Staithe for 80 quid, in the, in the pub and, er, I got back to something when I was, oh, 14 or 15 and, er, from then on my father was in the army and, er, we had been away.**

**But he was in the army so he come home and the house my grandfather bought weren't big enough. So much to my disgust – I didn't want to come here at all and leave Somerton – but there you are, I had to.**

**We came to Boundary Farm here, just up the road. Know where I mean?**

**That farm out that way at \_\_\_\_ there, and we worked there for Brace (?) and actually I took the horses on here.**

**Oh, I worked here. I was a while workin' at something 'cos I was a milkman, for, I was a milkman up Blood Hills for Goodwin there, that's it, yeah.**

**I, I went milking there. I went milking for, for, er, Harry Cator. I got a bit fed up of goin' every Saturday and Sunday.**

**So I then worked for Charlie Dyble, and he had a holding up Blood Hills.**

ALK: *What was his name again?*

**JA:** Charlie Dyble. And his father was Obadiah and he lived on, er, on that hill, what's the name of that hill coming out from Martham to, er, where they used to hang somebody in a, in a bloody wire cage if they done wrong, Gibbet Hill.

That was Gibbet Hill where he farmed. And, then as I say, when father come out of the army the house weren't big enough.

*ALK:* What did your father do before he was in the army?

**JA:** He, he, well he was a Yarmouth man actually and he done his time, er, sort of, er, a fishmonger.

*ALK:* So what year would he have gone in the army do you think?

**JA:** Ah yeah. Well that was it and that's why he had to go. He went in the army before the Battle of ----- (?) at the beginning because he knew there'd be some money to send home.

*ALK:* Mmm, mmm. Who was the family. When you were born how many children were there?

**JA:** I, I was the first one.

*ALK:* You were the oldest?

**JA:** Yeah, oh yeah, yeah. Well that was sort of a..., I got a picture of him in there.

At Martham church, the Reverend Griffiths and he just married 'em but I was in church and all that day.

*ALK:* How come?

**JA:** Well, I was there inside (LAUGHS) so, that's, you see.

*ALK:* I don't. You'll have to explain that to me.

**JA:** Well, I was inside her then. She was pregnant.

*ALK:* Was that why they got married?

**JA:** Well I expect, yeah.

*ALK:* And did she have more children?

**JA:** Oh yes, she had, er, ....., oh, Gerald, any rate he died, poor little fella, then she had brother Ted – he ain't been dead that long – and sisters Peggy and Ann. They are still alive, one is in Norwich and one is in Stalham.

*ALK:* So your mum had a handful? Or were they born after the war?

**JA:** No, no they, they, they were there before the war bar Ann.

The old man come out of the army I suppose and, how old would she have been then, Margaret?

*MA:* Mother, when Ann was born. She was getting on wasn't she?

**JA:** She was, 'cos that was after the war.

*MA:* I don't know.

**JA:** Any rate, something happened and she got in the family way.

So that, so Ann was born in Somerton after the war ended or the latter part of that time, that was just about.

*ALK:* Ah, before he came home?

**JA:** Yeah. Oh well he come home on leave and then when he had to go back again.

He, he , he was a sergeant major in the Pioneer Corps and he was in charge of Italian prisoner of war camp – yeah he done alright for himself in the finish.

*ALK:* What year was it when he came out altogether?

**JA:** Oh, he came out altogether when I was, er, yeah that was the ----- (?) '28 – '38 is ten..... '45.

*ALK:* Did you know him when he came back? Was he a stranger?

**JA:** Oh I knew he, I never seen a lot of him during the war. Oh yes, I knew him.

*ALK:* You got on alright?

**JA:** Yeah. He, well, he was just an army man when he came home, wasn't he. Yeah, he was alright in that respect I suppose. But, er, ....

*ALK:* Cos you'd been the man of the house.

**JA:** I?

*ALK:* You had.

**JA:** Well, he told me when he left me, there, "Look after your mother."

Well, how the hell was I going to look after our mother. She didn't want to look after me.

Any rate, we did get by, and, of course my grandfather was still alive. And we'll, I'll show you him in a while. And, er...

*ALK:* What was it like growing up at that time?

**JA:** Well, it was hard work. I first went with Blood Hills with Goodwins. There's the first pound I earned.

*ALK:* So, Jack's given me the very first pound he earned.

**JA:** Yes, and my grandfather took it from me and gave me another one for it, and then he gave it back to me later on in years.

*ALK:* So what schooling did you have before you started, to earn this pound?

**JA:** Well the schooling I had. I done some at the Priory, Yarmouth. Yeah.

*ALK:* Did you go there? How did you get there?

**JA:** Well we were in Yarmouth for a while.

*ALK:* Ah, you didn't tell me that.

**JA:** Yeah, we were there for a while. But then, then I er , of course they put us on a train, didn't they, and sent us off to Retford.

*ALK:* What for?

**JA:** Evacuatee. Evacuation.

*ALK:* From Yarmouth?

**JA:** Which was the last thing I wanted and I'd been upset(?) They were sending kids from Catfield and there to Sea Palling. And I didn't want to go, I wanted to stay where I was. Well, in Somerton, then. Yeah.

*ALK:* Yeah.

**JA:** And, no, we get on this blasted train and go.

*ALK:* Who went from the family?

**JA:** Well my brother and I.

*ALK:* Not the girls?

**JA:** No, no, they weren't, ah yeah, well my elder sister went with an uncle, to Northamptonshire – my mother's sister. And, of course, the other one weren't born.

*ALK:* Where did they place you?

**JA:** Pardon.

*ALK:* Where did you stay?

**JA:** What, then?

*ALK:* Yeah, when they evacuated you.

**JA:** Oh, for a while In Retford.

*ALK:* Yeah. Who looked after you?

**JA:** Well, I had, ..... I weren't there long. Sands.

*ALK:* What, you run away?

**JA:** Yeah, I did.

*ALK:* You never.

**JA:** I buggered off.

*ALK:* Did you? I guessed.

**JA:** Yeah, and I walked straight out to an air raid on Chesterfield. And they were coming down, and the incendiary.

*ALK:* What you were 14?

**JA:** Yeah, I was then. ----- (?) I want to go home – so I started walking.

*ALK:* But you walked north?

**JA:** Yeah, I got to get, I knew where Chesterfield was 'cos I knew where the crooked spire was.

I wanted to get in that porch and sleep for the night. Somebody said, er, "What are you doing?" I said I want to get that church (?) the bombs are still coming down. "What the hell are you doing on your own?" I said "I just want to get in that porch tonight and I'll go on again." "No you won't."

He took me to the cop shop, 'cos I had some torn trousers on. I never told anybody.

We got in the police station – they put me in a cell, they didn't lock me in. They brought this policewoman. She said "What you done to them?" I said "Caught 'em on a tree trunk".

"Get 'em orf." she said, and she sewed 'em up for me. **JACK LAUGHS.** What I was doing, my mother was at Hassop, near Bakewell, Derbyshire. That's where I was walking to.

*ALK:* How did your mum and dad meet then? If she was from up there.

**JA:** Oh, no. Oh, no ,no, no, that was when she went, she went there for the war – she went to her sister. Yeah, she discard, she didn't discard us all, my sister went with her sister, mother's sister, and we were just, um, a couple of years up there.

*ALK:* What were you doing?

**JA:** Well, the school sent us up there.

*ALK:* I see, but what were you doing up there?

**JA:** Well, we went to school again. You lived somewhere else but I mean I never did like to go.... I never did want to.

*ALK:* No. I mean, who did you stay with up there?

**JA:** We, we were with some people there, you know.

*ALK:* Were they nice to you?

**JA:** They weren't too bad. I can't complain, and of course I mean I just walked away from it all.

*ALK:* So, did you find your mother?"

**JA:** Well, she come and got me out of the police station.

*ALK:* So, how did you get back from there to Boundary Farm?

**JA:** Ah, well, see then, then after all that we came back to Somerton and, er, as I say, when father come out of the army, the house weren't big enough so they got offered this farmhouse ....

*ALK:* Mmm.

**JA:** ... and that's how we come to Boundary Farm.

*ALK:* So you were beginning to tell me about the work, the first work that you did – and it was mainly farm work?

**JA:** Well, I'll tell you what

*ALK:* Milking and ?

**JA:** I'll tell you what my first order was. That morning when I got there. 'Cos my grandfather worked for me, he was team man there then, he was a horse man

So Goodwin said "Put that three legged stool there. Pick them up and go up that other end box in the yard and milk that heifer."

So, and there was a bloody bull in the yard an all. So I had to do the -----(?) and as I walked past my grandfather he said "You know what I told you, don't you?" I said "What's that?" He said "I told you he'll kick your bloody arse if you start milkin'".

He did, he was muckin' the horses out then.

So I go "Whee, whee, whee." I was milking all right, 'cos I ain't been doing it long. Oh dear, oh dear.

Then, of course, I went through and, er. I know that Howe. He was alright, he treated me alright.

But that first harvest I, er, well we used to take the cows out ievery morning, all the way from Somerton and walk them nearly to Horsey – on them marshes, over that road, over Horsey Road. You know that one don't yer.

Yeah, well up there over on the stream – and, er, no, no just this side of the stream, and, ha, course that Fortress landed on a bungalow further up the road there, hit a bungalow. I watched that coming in – I was turnin' the cows out and all of a sudden I seen the mushrooms come out.

Apparently two stayed in, to try and get it home. And that was, er, well, that smacked the bungalow about, didn't it, Margaret?

*MA:* Yeah.

**JA:** Yeah. But there was a child in a pram, just outside the back door and that never interfered with her. 'Cos the two what were in it were dead. In the plane, they, they're dead. So that was that.

*ALK:* Was that one of ours or one of theirs?

**JA:** No that was a Yank.

*ALK:* Was a Yank, so one of them, yes.

**JA:** They were comin' back, they were comin' back, they done a raid and I knew they. I knew by that thing 'cos I seen it coming in from the sea, I was, I was halfway up the Horsey Road and I thought Oh God look at that, and all of a sudden out come these parachutes.

But two of them stayed in. I suppose they thought they were gonna get it down – they didn't. They never, ...

*ALK:* Did you see the plane crash?

**JA:** Well no I...

ALK: *It just sped on.*

JA: **I don't know because that was out of my vision then, once it got there.**

ALK: *What happened to the two who came down?*

JA: **I, I heard it thump down. Oh, they were dead. Oh they were dead yeah.**

ALK: *Oh dear.*

JA: **I, I heard it smack down but the other one weren't thinking about that . The other one was on the Staithe somewhere, you know where the staithe is, all old memory of the of the 'arl- you know what the 'arl is?**

ALK: *What?*

JA: **A deek, a little deek. A dry deek. 'Arl.**

ALK: *Yes. What I call a dyke. A dyke. A deek.*

JA: **A deek. And they were there and all of a sudden there was a thunderous row out to sea. Well I knew that, for some unknown reason I knew what it was.**

**And that one weren't very bloody high, it weren't very high going over Sutton mill I tell you – and that was a doodlebug. Well there you are, get under cover, get inside, and I stood there looking at it. Get in there -----(?)**

ALK: *Had it cut out? The engine?*

JA: **No, no, no, the flames were going.**

ALK: *Well you were alright then.*

JA: **That came.....**

ALK: *Yeah."*

JA **... and that landed up the road here. Boundary Farm.**

**Farther back there at Catfield and that was in the deek when I last see it, 'cos we went up there, one day we were, we were rabbitin' and I climbed a little old wall, and there it laid. Well they took all the bomb, explosives out, I suppose, and left the shell in there So I did see one of them.**

ALK: *Amazing.*

JA: **Fly.**

ALK: *Yeah.*

JA: **Cor, that was amazing I can tell you. They were shouting "Get it all (?)" JACK LAUGHS.**

**And then, of course as I said, the old man was, we come here and then I got straight into reed cuttin', and sedge cuttin' and horses, I was workin' the horses.**

ALK: *What was the year like on the farm in those days?*

JA: **Well, that was all work weren't it?**

ALK: *Yeah.*

JA: **All hard work.**

ALK: *Different work though.*

JA: **Well, you'd got like this here thing come here, I see that, or, or even a combine. Well there was no such thing.**

**I mean you just pitched everything by hand and the sugar beet harvest, you had to chop all them with a blasted hook and then chuck 'em all on a lorry, on a tumbriel, horse and cart.**

**And then go and take and sling 'em on the hail or the lorry.**

ALK: *What's the hail?*

JA: **No, that's the lump what sugar beet lay, how they lay, on the hail.**

ALK: *Mmm. Yeah.*

JA: **Or the hail they called it. The hail.**

ALK: *Yeah.*

JA: **And, er, once they done that I mean you had, there was some, you had any rate corn carting and that, I loved that. Lovely.**

ALK: *All with horses?*

JA: **The corn cart there, see that. See that?**

ALK: *Yeah.*

JA: **Well that's a morfry Now why should that be called a morphrey?**

ALK: *No idea, why's that called a morphrey?*

JA: **'Cos little pigs, when pigs are running about if, if they were they got two, you know – one is and one has – and they were called a morphrey, a morphreydite.**

**Now that's a tumbriel – that board up there, you see that board was sticking out front.**

ALK: *Yes.*

JA: **Well that was put on a tumbriel.**

ALK: *Yeah.*

JA: **So that's called a morphrey, that's neither a he, she, man or woman. See the wagon and that there, so that's a when that's, when that's called a tumbriel. Without that that's a tumbriel.**

ALK: *Yeah, and with it?*

JA: **With it. That's a ....**

ALK: *Bigger tumbriel.*

JA: **Yeah. Yeah with a ....**



ALK: *Neither fish nor fowl.*

JA: **That was then called a morfry**

ALK: *A morfry. Never heard these words.*

JA: Yeah them shafts. You take that board off.....

ALK: *A smaller thing.*

JA: **Yeah you got your tumbril again.**

ALK: *Yeah, absolutely, yeah. And when did it change? When did you notice that the horses were being not used?"*

JA: **Aaaagh, oh, when that well, your father's go.**

MA: *What?*

JA: **When did your father go, when did he pack up horses? Was it afore we got married?**

MA: *No it was after.*

JA: **They were still goin' after we got married, yeah. And, er, that was how many years ago?**

MA: *Sixty four.*

JA: **Sixty four, oh God, sixty four years ago.**

**That was round about the time when horses started disappearin'. Yeah.**

ALK: *So how did you get from the horses and the cows and so on to the reeds and the thatching?*

JA: **Well you got, ooh that was easy enough, 'cos I done some, some off hand. Then, er, I went to old Billy Tomlit, Herbie Cator lent me to Billy Tomlit, from Martham – he was a thatcher and we were, we were cartin' a bloody great ladder about on a, on a bicycle. That didn't last.**

**Then he had a pony and cart so we were alright there. But I know at first I had to go up in Cator's barn and what would happen, they'd be tyin' reed on then, tyin' it on.**

**So you, you had your reed laid, yeah, and your sway, and they tied that, er, tarred twine on it and pushed on it and shove it down this side of the rafter, and I would have to take it out, then he, he put the, I'd have the twine and he'd put the bloody thing down the other side of the rafter and I'd thread it again so he could pull it up the other side of the rafter.**

**We were stood up on a ladder like that, high in the barn. That was Billy Tomlit, yeah, so I had a fair idea about that. I went to ..... (?)**

ALK: *You weren't apprenticed? You learnt it as you went?*

JA: **Well, I learnt as I went more or less, 'cos I'd seen it happen in the village.**

ALK: *Yeah.*

JA: **I'd seen it all happen you see, so, er .....**

ALK: *Were you the first in your family to do thatching?*

JA: **Well I think my grandfather done a little. But he didn't do full time. I, er, what actually happened was, a ha, his name, what was his name – from the County Council?**

MA: *I don't know. I can't remember?*

JA: **Oh whatever was his name? Any rate, he come round one day – “I want a word with you.”**

**I said “What do you want?”. He say “Can you meet me at Blood Hills Farm ?” I thought what the hell he. He said “Them barns want thatching”.**

**I said “What do you know?” Well he said “ I heard about you doin' some thatchin'. I said “Oh” – well, then, I was reed cuttin' , reed and sedge. I was over Horsey.**

ALK: *At Horsey?*

JA: **I was, I was, I was cuttin' at Horsey then, yeah.**

ALK: *So you were working for the estate?*

JA: **No, no, no, myself.**

ALK: *Working for yourself?*

JA: **Oh yeah, we, we, what we done – we paid him so much for what we had. So much a shouf [sheaf] – I don't know what it was now – and then we sold it on so, er, you know, we made a bit of money.**

ALK: *Did you know Doddo?*

JA: **Yes, I knew Doddo. He's still alive.**

**H e worked with Nukes. Nukes was there – in the book. And, um, that was Margaret's cousin. Oh yeah, he's in his 90s, 93 now. He's getting' on, he's the only one left.**

ALK: *Mmm, mmm.*

JA: **Yeah.**

ALK: *I talked to Nukes.*

JA: **Well he's in there. That's her cousin too.**

ALK: *Is he your cousin?*

JA: **No, Margaret's.**

ALK: *Oh, your cousin.*

MA: *What Nukes, yeah.*

ALK: *I asked him why he didn't get married.*

MA: *Yeah.*

ALK: *He said he liked the football too much.*

MA: *Yeah*

ALK: *I liked him a lot.*

JA: **He's in that book.**

ALK: *Yeah, yeah. I got some nice pictures of him cutting reed.*

JA: **Oh yeah. He did have some 'cos he always had a camera with him.**

**So there, that's how I got wi' him and we went to Buxton we were mowin' 'n cutting.**

ALK: *You cut in the winter?*

JA: **You cut from December, just arter Christmas....**

**And, if it isn't cold we go on, each on us, some cuttin' in June. 'Cos there's been a late colt, all they're cutting when they shouldn't ha' done 'cos that's the next colt coming up and that's never good enough 'cos you won't cut him next year.**

**Any rate Billy was bloody good at that. I went over there one year, Martham, Ferry. You heard of Martham Ferry haven't you? Yeah, pick up some reed, he said "I've got you so many out Jack". I said "I'll come and get 'em."**

MARGARET WHISPERS

JA **The colt. That was tied in, that was next year's reed.\**

ALK: *When you call it a colt ...*

JA: **Colt.**

ALK: *What do you mean, the height?*

JA: **No, The young reed.**

ALK: *The young reed.*

JA: **Yes, comes through green.**

ALK: *Yes, it comes through green. But you don't cut that?*

JA: **Well no. But that's what I'm now sayin'.**

ALK: *Oh sorry. Yes, I see, yes.*

JA: **So next year there weren't no reed.**

ALK: *No, there won't be.*

JA: **That, that was next year's reed.**

ALK: *Yes. That is.*

JA: **That'll be done. We never used to touch it. I and Nukes ...**

ALK: *That's cutting too late.*

JA: **Yeah, well Billy's good for that I tell you. And when they grown they were as green as green. What the hell are we goin' to do with these. We had knocked all out – we used the reed but we had to knock all the ..... so that was that.**

**That was on the THATCH grass. You don't know where that is do you?**

ALK: No.

JA: **That's Martham Ferry. That reed. As you go, if you go in from Martham, over the ferry, just over the river, all that on the right has thatch grass.**

ALK: *Yes. Yes, yes. And what about the sedge? When do you cut the sedge?*

JA: **Oh well you cut that later on. You can cut that any time.**

ALK: *Yes.*

JA: **Yeah, long as you don't ....**

ALK: *And did you pay attention to the wildlife when you were cutting? Thinking about where the eggs were?"*

JA: **Yes we did. Yeah**

ALK: *Tell me about the wildlife.*

JA: **We always did.**

ALK: *Tell me about that.*

JA: **There was one thing we had to watch what we were doin' 'cos we had to go again. After we mowed the reed we used to chop it into little hills (?) about, so we knew where to pick it up.**

**Well, when you went back to get it again, if that was a hot day, you had to look what you were doin' 'cos that'd be full of vipers, curled up on top in the sun. Yeah, yeah. If you got, made sure they went. They never interfered with you but, that was that.**

**They used to lay there till we took something so we got the, cart 'em away, we had a little old sledge behind the, behind a, a, a, a - I forget where that first reed cutter was I had now. Oh blimey, I'm on about four stroke and two stroke. Any rate, we, we had a sledge behind that, we could pull out perhaps a dozen at a time. Then you had to load of 'em onto somethin' bigger to get 'em. Well, of course we had a truck by then so we could get 'em home.**

**But them at Horsey, we got them off – yeah, we did manage to get about on the marshes there for a while with a, with a sledge, big sledge – tractor sledge and got 'em orf like that.**

ALK: *Did you cut scything, by hand scything? Or did you cut with something else?*

JA: **Oh no. Well, I cut the scything, cut the scything till this first machine come out. And it weren't no better off, what you call 'em?**

MA: *What?*

JA: **That first machine**

MA: *I dunno.*

JA: **Oh, blast! Two stroke or four stroke.**

MA: *I dunno.*

ALK: *But it bumbled along cutting the reed for you?*

**JA:** Yeah. Yeah.

*ALK:* Yeah. A mechanical cutter.

**JA:** And you built a, a cage in front to take the reed.

*ALK:* Yeah.

**JA:** So you probably cut ....

*ALK:* Much more?

**JA:** Well, no. They weren't no quicker. As far as I know they weren't no quicker. Nukes knew that and, oh yeah, when you was done muckin' about it was alright – that was easy to cut.

*ALK:* What sort of year are we thinking about when all this was going on? This was after the war, yeah?

**JA:** Oh, after. Well, the usual. Any case you won't cut much till after Christmas.

*ALK:* Mmmm. But which year are we talking about when we're saying you were beginning to cut it mechanically?

**JA:** Oh! That would be, er, ...

*ALK:* Like the fifties or .....?

**JA:** Where was I, where was I. Oh, we got that Chapel House, didn't we Margaret?

*MA:* Yeah.

**JA:** We lived up Chapel House up the road here.

*MA:* Yeah.

**JA:** And, er, course we been here 41 year.

*MA:* That'd be the sixties.

*ALK:* The sixties

**JA:** Yeah, yeah.

*ALK:* About the time you were getting electric light.

**JA:** Well we did have electric light once, well we had – up the cottage.

*ALK:* You did.

**JA:** We were up the cottage arter we got married.

*MA:* First off we had a bathroom.

**JA:** We had a little old house there. That was the next one, the little one. We went in there, when we first got married. That's how I come to get awards, win awards, on this farm.

*ALK:* So go on telling me about the wildlife. I like that about the adders. What other things did you, what other surprising stories have you got? About the wildlife"

**JA:** Well, well, what we had actually got. Ho, can I tell you.

They go on about the lack of bitterns, bitterns, bitterns. Well, this particular morn I started off from him who used to paint, done all the paintin' in, in Hickling, his name is gone now.

ALK: *Mmm, I know who you mean!*

JA: In the little old place.

ALK: *The Studio*

JA: Yeah. That's it. And, er, that was thick. Foghorns were going. Any rate, I kept shoutin' – I got my way in to other side of the Broad and, er, so I started ----- (?) .

Ha, I thought what the hell is that making that row – WAUK, WAUK – JACK LAUGHS – I looked over and that were a cock bittern. Trying to answer them foghorns that was. Ha, ha, he kept tryin' – he ain't quite got the stage where he could have got a good boom in, you know. Well they were there.

ALK: *Were they sitting or flying or what?*

JA: No. He stood there, looking at me. Now this is, look – you can go to work but if you ----- (?).

They knew damn well you weren't going to interfere with them when you were workin'.

It was the same with all the other birds and that, not so much the animals, but the birds stayed with you.

The bearded tits, they come through, ting, ting, ting, and er, and pheasants were all round you and they were there and they never paid ----- (?) I'll tell you.

So we were down to the Mere one day, Horsey Mare, Milnes(?) and er... We got on, on the end – oh! We were going after some more – reed, the last lot that we cut, which we had to go and get and get rid of and, er, yon Buxton, did you know Buxton, did you know anything about him?

ALK: *Um, Mirrie Lambert was his nanny.*

JA: Yep. Well he come down – he weren't there, he had gone abroad somewhere he, he got on telly then.

But his wife came down. "Oh you can't go there" she said. I said "Why?" She said "The harriers are in."

"Well," I said "I'm aware of that but I said "Have you looked around?".

She said "Why?".

I said "Well what's that ----(?)." She had to waiver on it.

"Yes," I said "They aren't going to pay no regard to us, they know damn well we aren't goin'.

in fact they're waitin' for a rat to run out something of that fate you know.

But she still said "You can't go."

So there you are. But we did go, we went round the other way and got all the stacks we hadn't got. So we got 'em, we go right round to Martham, there was another way out of that.

But all them, I don't care what anybody say, you knew exactly what was going on, and as soon as they took boatloads walking round before they got anywhere near 'em the birds were gone.

Yeah, they disappeared – and that's goin' to happen again you know.

ALK: *Mmmm.*

JA: They're goin' to do with the Broads now, and let people walk all over 'em – that ain't gonna work. But there you are. I don't suppose I'll be here to worry about it.

ALK: *What do you think the Norfolk Wildlife Trust ought to do?*

JA: Oh, well I think they ought to stick to a bit of privacy where they can.

ALK: *Yeah.*

JA: I do, not have people all over the show. But I've seen what can happen and I know what can happen – and another thing too, if they do that, there's a lot of people aren't going to let them eggs alone. They aren't, they'll get them somehow.

Where do they, don't get a notion to go there, they don't want to let alone.

Hey, most certainly what I say – getting on 'em harriers – no, no storks. I'll tell you another one about 'em in a minute. When the storks first come over, when he said, yeah, he said "We had somebody watching, every night they go. They didn't go last night and the blasted fox got the lot". So, they, they, oh dear, oh dear, yeah, what a job.

And then all other things about the, about the harriers and so many different things. About the birds is one thing, another – oh yeah there's another one – I got a load of reed from Slade (?) at Horsey. Now, I was reading in the paper, you see that paper, this here guy who ----- (?) here they are. Nothing doing, they just don't come here.

I left some at Horsey Mill and I was going over the road and I thought "What the hell is that?" And there was a sea eagle, flying level with me. I thought "Hello, I weren't supposed to see you". When he got halfway down he cut across to Martham Broad.

Yeah, and that guy who knew what, he said "You'll never see one."

Well I see one and we saw lots of birds about, you know. And, oh, another thing, if we see a nest we used to let it alone, we'd leave reed round it, or sedge and let it be, and carry on. Yep.

ALK: *Did you ever get into trouble out there, on the marsh?*

JA: Well we got in trouble, some of the things I tell you. Yeah, if we ----- (?) if we did get anything stuck – and that was Robey at Stalham, did you know Robey?

ALK: *Nope.*

JA: You didn't know Starling(?) who owned all the marsh of course there?

ALK: *Where?*

JA: **Er, Somerton.**

ALK: *No.*

JA: **Yeah, he was alright for us, he was. A lot of people didn't like him, but ...**

ALK: *You did.*

JA: **I'll tell you what, if you got in a muddle he'd go and get you out on it. Yeah, he would.**

**'Cause Buxton you see, they were lovely buildings there at Mere Farm – they let 'em all fall apart.**

**He didn't want nobody down there, he didn't want people down there, and he didn't get 'em down there, he had all the birds, that's true, but then, also then Ford's Farm – they all fell down.**

**And they just, er, he wouldn't 'cos they're on a lease aren't they – er, er, I don't know how far they got, what they got.**

**Did they get a hundred year lease on that when that?**

ALK: *I don't know.*

JA: **I think that might have been – yeah. Er, his father left a hundred year lease to the family. And I aren't, I aren't too sure of that. They, er – any rate, to get back to Blood Hill – Price his name was, wasn't it Margaret? Yeah that's it.**

**He said "We want you thatchin', what do you think?"**

**I said "What the hell you talking to me?"**

**I knew what I was sellin' reed for so I sort of worked it all out so I gone down somehow so I said "If you want it tied up it'll cost about four hundred quid."**

**That's just what we thought, go ahead and do it."**

**Well I don't think, I don't think he did buy.**

**And then he was the first man went out and showed me how to do it, get two pieces of wire, if you like, or, 'em twig, you know – water diviner – well they, they swing round with me, if they come to water.**

**Yeah, they work for me, they worked for him, they done it for me, some people they won't, but they did.**

**Er, what did they use to call that?**

ALK: *The hazel wand*

JA: **Yeah, that's it, yeah.**

ALK: *The wand.*

JA: **That's it. If you like.**

ALK: *Divining wand.*



**JA:** Yeah. There was another name for it – you know what I mean.

*ALK:* I do.

**JA:** And that old boy, we was thatchin' in Horning – and he come down there, bald head with glasses on like, like one of the old boys on telly like – he was a laugh Well, he said “I’ve got to find some so and so where. He said “There it is.” I said “what?” “Yeah”, he said “That’s there. I was up in a helicopter” he said “all last week finding oil for ‘em.”

I said “did you find it?” I think he’s died since, but last year there you are.

And that’s all he had – two bits o’ twig, yeah.

Well, from then on we start go on – I realised that there was a gap between reed and sedges – you cut ‘em, you know, that finished. If that finished, er, April, you didn’t want to go back in til Christmas, perhaps a little longer with sedge, yeah.

And that weren’t goin’ to work so, and this here Norfolk County Council, well they, well, they pulled the work in didn’t they Margaret?

*MA:* Yeah.

**JA:** Norfolk County come to see you – little old bloke, yeah, where is he now? Yeah, we sat there drinkin’ tea. It’s so and so next – don’t forget to put your price up.

*ALK:* This is, you did the thatching in between the cutting.

**JA:** Yeah, yeah. For Norfolk county you see, the Holdens(?)

*ALK:* Do you think, do you look at the roofs now and think “they’re mine?”

**JA:** Oh I still look at ‘em and know I done ‘em but no, well I mean they, they don’t last forever, do they?

*ALK:* How long do you think they ought to last?)

**JA:** Well, er, I, the longest one I pulled off, you know them little boat sheds agin the boatyards at Hickling?

Them low ones. Well I never done that one but I done one that belonged to Fred Drake, the schoolmaster.

*ALK:* Yeah. The Hollies?

**JA:** Yeah, and, er, I’d been on a job and I forget where it was now and we had to strip the roof and, as I come to leave we pulled the lot off they hung there as they were put on, still bonded with reed. So I thought, well there’s nothing wrong with this, I’m gonna have a, have a go here and, so I took some on ‘em.

Now, I done that boatshed – Fred was dead but I done it for his family and I put them in the eaves, back in the eaves on that boathouse – and they’re still there today.

*ALK:* Where is Fred Drake’s boathouse?

**JA:** Well, that is the one.

*ALK:* Where is it?

**JA:** That was it, at, um, Hickling boatyard.

**ALK:** *In the boatyard?*

**JA:** You know, there's two little lower ones there.....

**ALK:** Yes, yes.

**JA:** It's the first one. That's his and, that was – that's his family's if they still got it. I put them on there and they must have been on there ten, twenty year.

I snuck in there one day and had a look and they were still there and they were still alright and they must have been on that bloody roof, whenever I got that off, for a hundred year.

**ALK:** *When did, um, the reed start coming from abroad? From the Danube rather than the way...*

**JA:** Aaah, yeah, well you know, well... Buxton for one, he ruined the marshes, he ruined the reed. You have got to cut it when it's there and burn it off, burn the marsh off. You gotta do it.

**ALK:** *Why?*

**JA:** Well, if not that build up and build up and then you got that look, rubbish for the colt to get through. And we used to have reed every time.

All of a sudden there weren't the reed coming, if it did it weren't well mown. You see, there's single wale – that's one year's reed.

Single wale. Double wale, two year's reed so you had to leave it to double wale.

Then it began to get worse and worse and they weren't doing much, that was bloody How Hill they just sittin'.

I went cuttin' there for a while, but blast we had to get out on it; 'cos they wouldn't let you burn. "Oh you can't do...". Yes but you gotta burn, the birds much prefer you to go and burn that so they can get whatever then they do to leave it like it is.

I know that and so, so I won't go and cut there in the finish. I thought sod it. It's as well I didn't have to then because, you know, I was cuttin' and thatchin'.

And that was about it. That's how it come about, yeah.

I had to fix my own prices for a giggle – that was a laugh really but there you are.

And before you knew it I was in Martham and the blasted ladder went up and that was halfway across the roof when he come down. The boy stood at the bottom o' the ladder – "When you goin' to come down and do mine?"

You know. "God", I thought "hold on a minute, I ain't done this one yet. 'Cos they all knew me you see, they said "Jack, when you coming out to mine. See you?"

**ALK:** *And what about your boys? How did they get to do it?*

**JA:** Oh, er, Michael, er well that's Stephen. Stephen done remarkably well at Easton – did you know he was top scholar. He was top student at Easton Agricultural College.

**ALK:** No.

**JA:** Yeah, and I tell you – ‘bout something like that as a fartin’ (?) little old being in the, oh yeah, in the press about it. Weren’t there, Margaret?

*MA:* Yeah.

**JA:** Not many, but we got it somewhere.

*ALK:* Well done.

**JA:** Only a bit like that. If that had been one of them old farmers there’d be a whole bloody page full, yes. He done it, and they couldn’t do him this time, he done it. He took every prize there was bar poultry and, er, so he didn’t go on to do nothin’ to do with poultry and, er ....

*MA:* Beekeeping.

**JA:** Beekeeping. Yeah, he didn’t want to know that but he done everything else and cleaned it, cleaned it up. Sports and all.

*ALK:* Fantastic.

**JA:** So, why he done it I do not know but he left there, Easton, top student, and went to where was it?

*MA:* Hindringham

**JA:** Hindringham. With some old Scotchman I think originally, er, er, in pigs. Well I don’t know he got a hundred odd sows, he was taking care of, hell of a lot of ‘em at any rate. And when the guy come out ‘cos they built a new piggery, fattened the pigs and had ‘em all in there.

So he said to Stephen, he were a chap loose then. He said “There you are Stephen, you can fill that up now.”

Stephen said “What?” He said “No, I think you’d better fill it up.”

He said “I got a full man’s job without that lot.” He got all the damned old sows piggin’ down and he says “I know I can’t do that.” he says.

There you have it – so he come home that noon time. Saturday noon time we had a little old dog, Brock, didn’t we girl.

*MA:* Yeah.

**JA:** And he’s on the window sill. Oh and he was goin’ in, every time every time Stephen got as far as Stalham, in that car, that dog was up at the winder.

And how some ever (?) “Oh”, I said “I can’t let him out yet, he might run smack in under the tyres so I had to wait till Stephen got in and then I let him go.

Blast he was at Stephen’s all the while then. He walked in the door. He said “Can I make a start with you?”. I said “Yes, if you want.” I said “I wish you would.” “Oh that’s alright.” He said “I’ll come with you.”

So Monday he started with me. He did, ‘bout him and his pigs. He can do what he like, I ain’t goin’ to do all that.

*ALK:* What did you think about his decisions?

**JA:** Oh, alright. 'Cos I got someone to follow me.

**ALK:** Yeah.

**JA:** Yes I did. I thought that was great. That was him, and he went on a while and then he started on his own – so I was pleased with that.

But we kept him here. We bought, bought these. Michael – this here chimney piece, there was a chimney piece here, which I was up on the roof chuckin' the bricks down the chimney into a barrer.

And Michael weren't very old were he Margaret? And he carted 'em, pushing them all out.

And when he left school he, he was alright, Michael was.

And so was Stephen – and when he left school he didn't know whether to go as a school teacher. I said "That's up to you. You have to do whatever you can."

I said "I'll help you where I can but that's entirely up to you what you do." Any rate, he then decided ...

**MA:** He went to Yarmouth College, didn't he?"

**JA:** Yes, he went there. He come out top student, bar one, he did.

**ALK:** You had bright boys then?

**JA:** He come out 'cos, what did he call, Hayley.

**MA:** Yeah.

**JA:** At school Hayley was the only one above him.

And then he come home and he said "I had one thing, father." I said "What's up?".

'Cos Hayley was in the bank, she still is. Er, Natwest, and so I said "What's up?" and he said "I can't do her" he said, "when that come to figures."

He said "I'm good but she is superb."

And that, he'll tell you that now won't he?

**ALK:** Did he marry her?

**JA:** No, he didn't marry her. [ALK LAUGHS]

No, no, oh no he didn't marry her.

He then, er, decided. He didn't know where he'd go to school teaching. Then he didn't want to do all them years and he decided he'd go thatchin'.

So there you are. You got it...

**ALK:** Do you think the next up'll do it?

**JA:** Ah, he got one of them now – he's got his boy with him, Danny.

**ALK:** Yeah. Danny. Ben's not going to?

**JA:** Well I don't know if he will.

*ALK:* Now and again.

**JA:** Well, he's with Stephen but I don't think he'll ever go on his own.

*ALK:* No.

**JA:** No, I think Steve ... he's getting back now. Yeah, I think he's getting back 'cos Stephen doesn't let him do some things – but, course, see he got them two you see there now.

**Well she is a what, Margaret?**

*MA:* Well she used to go round after drunkards and drug takers didn't she?

**JA:** That's it yeah.

*MA:* She ----- (?)

**JA:** Yeah. And she's on hell of a money, when she go. That is top money.

**So what, I mean he just has to stay at home, look after the children doesn't he?**

**And then Stephen's on his own.**

*ALK:* Now how are you getting on? I've had you talking quite a while. Are you tired?

**JA:** Nooo.

*ALK:* You alright? One or two other possible things then. So we're quite interested in, um, you know, things that have happened around Hickling like fires or floods or, you know, the Broad freezing over. Whether that brings any stories to mind for you. Any of those kind of things that you remember.

**JA:** Oh the Broad. Oh yeah, that's lovely. We had six weeks. Well, we was getting' all that blasted Broad. We had to break a wake open every, every morning for the swans so they could feed. So we used to go over there and break that open.

**Or somebody did and 'er, and then, I mean we couldn't do a lot on the land but that was all. I still had the horse money, I still done them.**

**And, er, we'd go skating on the Broad, we'd go playing ice hockey, skating about, and all sorts, that was pretty good. But then they had people, they come on Hill Common and they come from Norwich, they'd load up their skates and there you are.**

**Whole families, and they started to go on.**

**Well this was when there was a thaw. And they were all piling in together. And I said "You know what you're doin', don't you?" . Oh, it'll be alright.**

**I said "Alright. You'll see".**

**They all went through didn't they? Well, they put all that weight on didn't they. If they'd have gone one at a time they'd have been okay, I knew that.**

**"Ladder, get a ladder".**

“You don’t want a ladder, you can walk out if you look.” Yeah, and they just walked out. They wanted a ladder to get out. I said “You can walk out.” Yeah, oh dear, oh dear.

That was one ----- (?). ----- (?) he had an ice sledge on there behind a pony. Yeah – we had cars on there and night lights up so we could play hockey. Yeah, lights up and what other thing was that somebody done? (Ohhh, something or other, I don’t know.)

They were all goin’ about there. We had a lovely time.

Them days I had my grandfather’s skates on ‘cos he, he’s a rum bugger he was. He lived in Sutton all his life, he never moved out. When he got in his youth he was a bloody handful and Hickling was always taking blokes out, goin’ arter their women.

They’d go and want to fight ‘em and everything. Well he, ‘cos I said to him “Blast Jack,” he said, “you got ‘em old skates on so you skate over to Hickling . He said “Every time ----- (?), iced that probably be most every year,” he said they used to go on and have a pint or two in The Pleasure Boat.

I said “How’d you get on in there then, with them lot?”. He said “They knew better than to interfere with me, boy. They won’t interfere with me.”

Yeah. yeah, and he was a funny old bugger I can tell you. But ...

ALK: *Now, we begin to move towards, you know, finishing up for you, and then we’ll talk about these things on the table.*

JA: **That’s alright. Go on, yeah.**

ALK: *Anything else about, um, growing up and working around Hickling, and how it’s changed in your lifetime? Things that have improved or got worse – how do you look at it?”*

JA: **Well, I can look at many things.**

I mean the first, the first football pitch we had played on is full of bungalows. They went to the next field. The football field where all them new bungalows are we played football there.

And Harry Chapman’s fish and chip shop – you always went there when you had a game of football.

Er, there was the old tin hut – well that’s gone. I don’t think, have they built anything in there? Is there a house there now?

ALK: *What’s gone*

JA: **Down Stubb Road, where they had the billiard table and all that.**

*This transcription has been made to back up, not replace, the audio tapes that form the main record output of the VOH Changing Village project 2015 to 2020.*

*The transcribers used their best efforts and checked back for proper names and places. We ask for forgiveness for any errors...*