

Voices of Hickling

Interview Transcript: David Nudd



*Interviewed by Ann Louise Kinmonth and Ray Cator
on 3rd March 2014*

DN: My name is David Nudd. I am 70 years of age.

ALK: *Marvellous, when's your birthday?*

DN: 26th of May, I'll be 71.

ALK: *Fantastic. So let's start with any special memories that you have of growing up in Hickling, or things that really mattered to you*

DN: The main thing I think is birds. I used to, we used to love birds then. Going round birds nesting and all things like that. My aunt, er, obviously she's dead now, she used to work for Jim Vincent, who you've probably heard of and I didn't actually know him because he died, er, must have been the late 40s or early 50s, and after he died my aunt still keep going down there to look after his wife – used to do cooking and what not.

They had a outside, there was a garage and another shed like thing too. They didn't have any kitchen indoors but outside there was a soil floor. What they used to cook with was a paraffin stove with this square-like oven on the top – everything used to be cooked in there.

We used to go in there a lot and I wasn't I couldn't have been that old because in one of their rooms, in front of the fire, they had this great big tiger mat with its head and everything – I used to be terrified of that.

Anyway, one of the things I particularly used to remember is I used to go up the stairs, which were like stairs used to be, on a curve, and, er, right at the top there were all these small units, ever so small drawers, no more than about 2 or 3 inches deep. Used to open them and all these drawers were full of birds' eggs. All different birds you could name – sometimes there were two and sometimes there would be 3 eggs, but whatever bird you name, all these eggs would be in there.

ALK: *So this was in Jim Vincent's house?*

DN: Yes, he collected them over this period of time.

ALK: *Where was that house?*

DN: That was Keeper's Cottage, down near the church. Used to spend a lot of time up there.

ALK: *And who is your aunt?*

DN: My aunt was Gladys Lambert, she used to live, er, er, in the centre of the village at “Clydale” – that’s where my daughter Paula now lives.

ALK: *Was she related to Muriel Lambert? Or was that another Lambert?*

DN: No. Not at all.

ALK: *So could you see into the birds or were you too small?*

DN: No. I could see 'em, 'cos these units that are in there are only about this high, and I've asked around everywhere, like, in their family and nobody seemed to actually know what happened to them.

Then he also had no end of Roland Green paintings, and J C Harrison paintings and Peter Scott paintings. But what actually happened to them in the end I don't know.

ALK: *Did you know at the time? What did you think?*

DN: I dunno. I didn't really realise, you know, what they really were. But he had quite a few of Peter Scott, because he was another bird artist. And, J C Harrison, he had a lot there.

I heard them talking about that, during the war a lot of the, of the fighter pilots from Coltishall used to go down there shooting.

There was one in particular used to go down there a lot, quite a lot – was Johnny Johnson. He was our top fighter ace in the Second World War. He used to go round there. When he used to come back off a, a sortie, a mission – what they call it, he used to fly round the church twice before he went back to Coltishall. Crazy, innit?

But they said he was a terrific shot when they used to go shooting and everything.

ALK: *He didn't come in his aeroplane to go shooting?*

DN: No I don't think so. No, I don't think he come in that. [LAUGHS]

ALK: *Well that's a really interesting memory. Did that get you interested in the birds yourself?*

DN: Er, I think it did rather, yeah.

Because there was a, there used to be a, I don't know if you can remember, there used to be a bird photographer, Eric Hoskins his name was and, he used to keep in touch with us 'cos he'd say “What nests you found?” or anything like that and we would tell him, and tell him where it was and he'd go down there and put a hide up to, you know, photograph them.

ALK: *Did you go, do a lot of looking, for birds and bird's eggs. That kind of thing?*

DN: Yes. Not actually take them. I mean we did collect them because you could in those days.

ALK: *Who's we?*

DN: All the lads in the village really.

ALK: *Who were the key lads for you?*

DN: Er, there used to be John Myhill, there used to be Joe Nudd. 'Cos we all lived up this way. When we were small we were segregated really because the ones up that end of the village didn't used to associate with us this end of the village.

ALK: *Seriously?*

DN: Seriously. Come, for instance, November 5th, right, we would have a bonfire on these allotments at the back here and the ones from that end of the village would have a bonfire in the middle of the track.

ALK: *Where did the village divide?*

DN: Er, well I suppose in the centre of the village I would have thought really.

ALK: *Up round the church was with you?*

DN: That's where I used to live, up there then. That's where I was born, up there.

ALK: *Where were you born?*

DN: I was born in a cottage, er, can't think of the name of it. It's near the church anyway.

And, er, I suppose I wasn't very old and then we moved up to the council houses here, up High Hill.

ALK: *And what did your parents do?*

DN: Father he used to work on the land, and mother, she was another one, I never knew mother a lot 'cos she died when I was about 8.

ALK: *Oh no.*

DN: 8 or 9. So I can vaguely remember but, like my aunt Gladys, mother used to work down Whiteslea Lodge – she used to work down there. When, that was before, who was the owner then Ray? Do you remember?

ALK: *I've always known it as the Cadburys*

DN: No. That was before then.

ALK: *Desborough?*

DN: That's it. Exactly right.

In fact, before you go, remind me to show you something. When I was born Lord and Lady Desborough sent her a silver casket and inside is a.... I still got the letter and everything they sent, that's all inside it.

So she used to live there, and she also, I know she went to Paston school at North Walsham and she qualified to be a teacher.

ALK: *Your mum?*

DN: Yeah. She used to teach down Ingham school. And she also used to spend a lot of time down there, because Lord Desborough, who was down there then...

Because mother could speak, er, Latin, that sort of thing.

ALK: *Could she?*

DN: He sent her on one of these courses where you learned to speak really properly, do you know what I mean? I don't know what it's called. He sent her on one of these courses so she was associating with all these people who come down there.

A different type of man

ALK: *Where was that?*

DN: Whiteslea Lodge. Yes.

ALK: *Is that where the course was?*

DN: No, I don't know where the course was.

ALK: *Sent her to Paris or something*

DN: He sent her on this course. I don't know where.

ALK: *They used to send them off to Switzerland and places like that.*

DN: Yeah, I mean, I don't know – but he was a smashing bloke.

ALK: *You don't know where?*

DN: I don't know to be honest with you.

ALK: *A good man*

DN: Yeah. He was a good bloke. Spent a lot of money on mother, he did. But I never really knew her that much.

ALK: *Why did she die?*

DN: She had cancer.

ALK: *Did she?*

DN: Yeah, like many of us. I ..., that was a day. I know it's being a bit morbid. That's a day that I'll never forget, because that was on a Tuesday, March, it was on a Tuesday. Tuesday evening the cinema used to come to the village, up the old village hall, yeah.

And of course the, I used to, we all, all the youngsters, you know, used to go there because the serial they had on at the time was Flash Gordon's trip to Mars after Mr. Meaning and all this sort of thing.

Anyway I went there this particular night. Anyway, after we come out the door I see father standing there with this bike, knew straight away. Honestly, I knew and that's what he come after me for and that particular day I knew she'd been, you know, she was very ill.

I went down to the wood down near Ellis' farm, down there. I went in the wood and I picked her a bunch of daffodils and I brought home to her, brought them home to her, and I remember she was that pleased, but when I got, 'cos when he come after me, took me home, all the family was there, you know I go, and 'er, that was that really. I know she had, she had 45 wreaths when she was buried. Amazing.

ALK: *A very popular woman*

DN: Very, yeah.

ALK: *And how many brothers and sisters did you have?*

DN: None. There was only me.

ALK: *Just you*

DN: Just me, yeah.

And mother died when I was... When we lived at High Hill. And, er.

ALK: *And was that her sister, Gladys?*

DN: Yeah.

ALK: *And she started to look after you?*

DN: Yeah, yeah, and course father always used to drink quite a lot, and then he started getting worse. You know, 'cos when the pub, The Bull, was open then, you know, down there was open and he used to come home and, 'er, he used, he used to come in sort of drunk, and, you know, he'd say "Get me a bottle" and this sort of thing.

ALK: *You know we're recording this?*

DN: I don't mind. I don't mind a bit. I don't mind a bit.

I can remember him now. He used to sit in the chair, like there, and he'd have his bowl there and there he was, being sick. And this was a regular thing.

ALK: *And you were about 9 or 10.*

DN: **Yeah, round about that, yeah.**

ALK: *Grievous*

DN: **That really got to me, yeah. That really got to me. 'Er, can't think what I said. I was contemplating on doing myself in. It got me that much.**

ALK: *Yeah*

DN: **There's no help. Nothing is there? Where do you go? And I'd be, you know.**

ALK: *Particularly those days*

DN: **Yeah, particularly those days. You didn't get no help from anyone.**

You had to carry on as best you can. You know, I. That got me down that much.

ALK: *What happened?*

DN: **Well, I just got over it, I suppose. Suspect mother, 'cos in those days you didn't have banks. Mother she'd always saved some money for him, she used to keep it in the house and, of course, when, before she died she said to Gladys "I want you to make sure that the money I got, that David has it." And also she took out a sort of small insurance or something like that. But I never got it. You know where that all went.**

ALK: *Yeah, yeah.*

DN: **So. There we are, that's it.**

ALK: *What are your earliest memories?*

DN: **Ever do you mean, or what? I can just remember my grandfather taking me for a walk down Stone Road and I was in the pram.**

And that's the first I can remember.

And I can't remember him at all, but.

ALK: *Are you sure you weren't told that?*

DN: **No.**

ALK: *That was a very early memory.*

DN: **That's the only thing I can remember when I was young.**

ALK: *And what was it like growing up here?*

DN: **Well, I mean, that was, that was ever so strange. I mean we didn't have, er, I mean, everything. We had a ----- (?).**

I mean Monday used to be washday 'cos in the kitchen would be this great big bowl in a brick..., and underneath a big fire.

They'd light this fire underneath and, you know, put clothes in and stir them round.

ALK: Was that in the new council house or in the house up near the church?

DN: No, it was in the new council house.

ALK: It had a copper outside?

DN: No, in the kitchen.

ALK: In the kitchen? It wasn't out in the back?

DN: No, no, no. Beside it up the other side of the room was a cooker and that was the same thing. They used to cook in them.

ALK: A range

DN: They used to light a fire underneath.

And blimey, I can't remember much about mother but I can remember she used to make this potato pastry. Cor, and that used to be gorgeous. I never, I never heard or seen anything like that since. Amazing, isn't it?

ALK: You get it in Scotland, David

DN: Oh, right. I didn't know that.

And bath time used to be in front of the fire, just a bath. We had turns. I don't know when I used to go in but that was the, you know, that was the thing in those days, they were bath.

ALK: But you had electric light in those days?

DN: Yeah, just about. We just about had...

ALK: Which one was yours?

DN: Number 7, High Hill.

ALK: Who was next door to you on either side?

DN: Ray's family was to the right of us.

And to the left of us, you know, they were semi-detached, used to be a Mrs Johnston and her son. But what happened to them I don't really know. I can only just remember that.

ALK: We'll carry on. School

DN: Oh blimey, yes, school, yeah. Er, the first thing I can remember about school was, er, mother

I don't know if mother was alive or dead then. I can't remember 'cos we used to go to them at 5 didn't we, so she must have still been alive.

ALK: *Did you and Ray go together?*

DN: Yeah, more or less. The problem is I can't remember. I can't remember too much about school but anyway Fred Drake, he was headmaster.

He used, he used to sit in the chair on his desk, his feet up on the table and there he'd sit reading the paper and studying the horses. True. Sitting beside this massive great big fire, 'cos that's all we used to have in there then.

And in the room next to that, where the sliding doors used to be, Mrs Myhill, she was local, she lived up the High Hill as well, Mrs. Myhill did. And in the other room, the small room, used to be Mrs Gold. She lived at Ingham, didn't she?

ALK: *Did she?*

DN: Yeah, yeah. And they were all ok but he, Fred, he could use the cane if necessarily

ALK: *Did he use it on you?*

DN: No, no, he didn't, no, no.

ALK: *Did you learn anything there?*

DN: Well, yes. I think we did in a way. I mean I weren't really clever enough to get far with say English. I ain't too bad at Maths but even now my English is dreadful.

The only thing that I was interested in when I was at school was art and cricket and that was about my limitations really. I used to be quite good at both of them.

And we used to have a garden. There was a big garden there with a, with a pond in the middle which was supposed to be like Hickling Broad. This pond in the middle and a greenhouse and there used to be a hedge which used to partition the garden off from the rest of the field, you know, I suppose that must have been about a third of the way down to where the field is now. And, of course, we all used to be out there gardening and all this sort of thing and, you know, I think we had a good laugh about it more than anything.

But, yeah, I remember things like that.

ALK: *Did you go on to Stalham after that?*

DN: Yeah, when I were 11, I think, we went to Stalham.

ALK: *Can you remember when that was? What year did you move? Well, you were 11 I can work it out.*

DN: **You can, that's right, yeah. And, anyway, we went there and we used to bike from here to Stalham.**

ALK: *Do you remember how old you were when you got your bike? Did they provide you with a bike, David?*

DN: **Some people they used to.....**

ALK: *If you lived over 3 miles so they didn't have to provide you with a bus.*

DN: **Yeah**

ALK: *They would provide you with a bicycle and a cape. Where did yours come from?*

DN: **That was my own bicycle. We used to get 13 shillings a term for using that.**

ALK: *Did you?*

DN: **Yeah. 13 shillings a term and directly I got the money I used to walk across the road to Mulleys, they had a fishing tackle shop, and buy all these, all this fishing tackle. We used to go fishing on the Broad.**

ALK: *And did you learn anything in Stalham?*

DN: **Yeah, that was something completely different. I mean they In those days there were only about 300 there then, it wasn't crowded out like it is now. Er, yeah I used to love....**

ALK: *Which lessons did you like?*

DN: **Well, I liked art lessons. I liked that and I didn't mind Maths and I didn't mind History.**

ALK: *Do you remember any of the teachers?*

DN: **Yes I do. There was Mr Goome, he was headmaster, he lived at Ingham. There was Sid Pestle, he was the art teacher, he lived at Catfield. And Taylor, he was the History teacher, he lived at Hemsby somewhere. And the woodwork teacher used to be, I think, Mr Gotts. And his wife also used to work there, used to teach there as well. Er, I can't really... oh! There was Mr Byfield, he'd take you forP.E., P.E., that's right. Yeah.**

That's right, yeah. And Mr Weddle, John Weddle. He's still about, John is.

ALK: *And when did you leave school?*

DN: **When I was 11.**

ALK: *No, Stalham. When did you leave Stalham?*

DN: Oh! Sorry. 15.

ALK: *What did you do then? Do you know?*

DN: Anyway, the garage, the garage near the school. I was being, I was sort of interested in cars and, er, so I got an apprenticeship there.

ALK: *Now I'm going to park the car because I want to come back to that. But I'd quite like to follow up the drawing, if I may. Can you tell me when you met Roland Green and how he came to give you drawing lessons?*

DN: Well, yes I can.

Many years ago we used to have in the village, this massive big fete on, on the This massive great big fete, there always used to be someone come from, one of the stars from Yarmouth used to come and open it and there used to be everything.

Roland would be down there with Mrs Perry, she was a sort of pretty good artist as well.

ALK: *From the Thatched House. From the big house in Hill Common?*

DN: Yes. That's right, yeah.

ALK: *And she used to do illustrations for children's books*

DN: I didn't know that. Did she really? Yeah. Anyway, her and Roland used to be in there, in this tent and, er, drawing, sketching people's faces, that sort of thing. People would go in there and used to have to give them so much money and, that's how they would carry it on.

But I think how I come to meet him was, the first time I met him was down Keeper's Cottage you know 'cos he used to come and see Mrs Vincent and I think my aunt used to sort of help him a lot because you know, he used to have some cooking because he was down there all on his own and whatnot so he said "Well, if you'd like to come down on a Saturday morning I'll try and give you some lessons."

So I said alright, so anyway I remember this first Saturday morning off I go, biking down, sort of Millionaires' Row and right at the end I used to leave my bike there, and I got on this path, and that weren't very wide and there's these great big reeds I'd be looking at as I was walking down. You know, reeds each side and a little path, I suppose about this wide.

Anyway I walked down there, knock on the door, "Come in" he says. Anyway, so, he sort of taught me about the basics of painting, of that.

Anyway, all in the room, everywhere were these birds hanging, these stuffed birds hanging on this sort of, this stuffed from the ceiling, hanging down everywhere and, er, I went down there for quite some

time. I can remember I went down there, I used to paint and he was, Roland was then painting a picture of a pheasant. That was a winter scene, he was painting a pheasant, standing below a snowman, the snowman had like a carrot and all this sort of thing and, er, you know about a snow scene, and I was doing this beside him at the same time.

And I weren't very old. I've still got that picture, about somewhere. I kept it.

Many years, years and years and years after that, 'cos if there was any Roland Green exhibitions me and Jean always used to go, or J.C. Harrison or either.

But there was a Roland Green exhibition at Norwich. I think it was at Mandel's gallery. So, anyway, we thought we'd go and have a look, so we went up there and had a look and, lo and behold, what I seen was this exact picture what I'd seen him paint. How about that? And that was for sale, about seven hundred and something pounds, that was. Cor. I thought. I said, Jean, I don't know, I really ought, this was sort of afterwards, I wish I'd have bought that because, sort of short of money, that's going back a bit, seven hundred and something pounds is a lot of money.

ALK: A bit of your life though

DN: Yeah, that's right. Er, that amazed me, so where it ever went to from there I don't know. Strange, funny story that isn't it?

ALK: It's a great story. So how long did you go on going?

DN: Er, well, I dunno. I suppose I can't remember off hand, maybe, sort of, 3 or 4 months – something like that and I didn't go any more. I dunno why, whether I got fed up with it or what. I can't remember now, it's a long while ago.

But talking about going, talking about Millionaires' Row, do you know when, when we were right small we used to go down there fishing. Used to, where all the boat houses are and everything there. And do you know what? You could, you could cast in and you would sit there like that and you could see the fish take the bait.

ALK: That clear?

DN: Clear as a bell. 'Cos there were Mally, you know Mally Talby, went down there and we were fishing there, and he caught this massive great bream down there, that was about this long. Was it silver bream 'cos there are so many different sorts.

ALK: I suppose it would be

DN: And he'd sit there and sit and watch them taking the bait. Ain't that amazing?

ALK: *Amazing*

DN: Same as if we used to go summertime. You know, down at the Pleasure Boat. We used to swim out when the boats were about, we used to swim out there a good way and when they come in we used to, 'cos those days you used to have a little boat on the back and, er, we used to hang on this boat on the back and so they brought us right into the, you know, that was beautiful and clear, amazing.

ALK: *Yeah. Did you swim at Tallowin's dipping place?*

DN: I was then going to come to that. Yeah, we used to go down there as well. I think we used to go, we'd either go to Tallowin's Farm or down past yours and nearly to the farm and you used to turn right, down to the...

And that was very much like the sea, that used to start from nothing and get deeper and deeper as you went out. There again it was lovely and clear.

ALK: *When do you think it went, when do you remember it going cloudy?*

DN: Oh, heck. I don't really know. I suppose I must have been 20 I suppose, maybe something like that...

Beautiful, that really was. We used to go fishing on the Broad quite a bit. I mean even, we used to go fishing down the Broad, we used to go fishing a lot at the end of, er, that wooden place down the end where the Pleasure Boat is, used to go fishing there. Anyway, there'd be fish everywhere where you went.

ALK: *What's the best fish you caught?*

DN: Well, I weren't very patient I don't think. I think I caught a pike once, that was about a couple of foot long, but that's about, but that's about my limitations I think.

'Cos it used to go, he was no relation, I used to go with Roger Nudd, he used to live on the track, Roger did. And he still is ever such a keen fisherman and he was then.

But the only trouble was that he, he had a very short temper and if anything went wrong he used to throw all the fishing rods in and whatnot, and 'cos when he calmed down we had to turn round and go back and get them all out again and things like that. He's a real character, he was.

We used to go down, used to go tench fishing and, er, what we used to do is just tench – they were strange things to catch. We used to rake a lot of weed out near, near, near the same, near some reeds. We'd rake that. You know, we'd chuck some bait in and we'd go fishing the next

night, in that particular part. I don't even know if there's any tench on the Broad now.

ALK: I really don't

DN: No I don't know. And there used to be. Those days, the main place in the Broad, they used to dredge that every year without fail, May Gurney's used to.

And the weekends they used to leave their dredger down near the Pleasure Boat. That was a metal type dredger, flat bottom. We used to go on there and, and they used to get all these fish, used to accumulate over there. You'd only, you'd only have to just, you didn't need a rod, you just drop a line down with something on the end and that would go down.

Fish, you got fed up with it. Fed up with catching fish. Honestly. You wouldn't believe that now, would you?

ALK: You would not

DN: Perch especially. There used to be more of them than anything.

ALK: Well, before we come to the cars, I wanted to ask you about special memories of seasons and holidays in Hickling. Some people talk about those freezing winters and skating and that sort of thing but I don't know about your particular.....

DN: Er, well, I think one of the things that stick in my mind more than anything is harvest time.

Harvest time. I mean they didn't have combines, they used to have binders, tractor and binder and, er, there used to be a chap in the village. He had a piece of land up near the Broad – Tom Applegate, can you remember him? He was sort of a contractor to anybody who wanted any, any corn cut, you know.

'Cos a lot of them, in those days, they had allotments. They'd have about an acre of allotment which they paid the council for and they'd probably have sugar beet one year and corn the next.

And that's how he'd go 'cos all the farmers, they used to have their own combine obviously but, but, for harvest we used to go down the wood and we used to look for a stick with a sort of knob on the end, you know, which we used to hit the rabbits with, if we could get near them, that was.

And we used to get to know different farmers in the village and how near they got to finishing the field. You see, 'cos what used to happen, the rabbits as it got small they'd still keep in, you know. They wouldn't run away, they'd still keep in the corn, so of course, so when it got nearly to the end and all these rabbits would suddenly rush out. We

chased them about, trying to catch them and someone would probably be there with a gun and you get out of the way and this sort of thing.

So that was one of the main things and also wintertime, I mean those days the Broad seems to have frozen up nearly every year. You go down there and you could go on it. The same down Keeper's Cottage there.

ALK: *Is this while you're still at, still at school?*

DN: Yeah, still at school.

Like at Keeper's Cottage there. In there there was quite a big piece of water and we used to go down there that wasn't very deep but that used to freeze nearly solid and we used to go down there and, you know, mess about how you do on ice, things like that.

ALK: *Did you skate?*

DN: No, I didn't, no. I used to bike, cycle, on the Broad but I never skated on the Broad. I remember '63, that was the worst one.

ALK: *Oh! Wasn't it!*

DN: That was really. That was absolutely solid. Someone drove a tractor over the Broad.

ALK: *They drove. It froze from Boxing Day till 30th March*

DN: Yep, that's right. Yes. So all that while. Used to belong to the window people then. There used to be the coot shoots that were a favourite thing down, down....

ALK: *Whiteslea and back to the Pleasure Boat*

DN: In fact, when I find them up I got a lot of photographs when they were, when they were having these coot shoots and everything. I'll see if I can hunt them out and give them to you to look at.

ALK: *There used to be a festival with royalty?*

DN: Yeah, they did, that's right. When Prince Charles came down to the paper shop, didn't he, and all that sort of thing. They used, they used to stay at the Pleasure Boat and all this sort of thing but...

ALK: *They'd stay at the Pleasure Boat if Whiteslea got flooded. Very sensible.*

DN: And, of course, Jack Nudd, he, he was one of the characters of the village. He, he used to, 'cos they used to have punts then, they didn't have boats, they used to have punts.

So there'd be one shooting in the boat and another one. And Jack, he had Prince Philip in his boat and Jack say "I just wait until he says, until he's then going to take aim and I just wiggle the boat" [LAUGHS]

ALK: *Say that again*

DN: He said “I’d wait for him to take aim to shoot the coot”, he’d say, “and then I’d just....”

ALK: *Wiggle the boat*

DN: Wiggle the boat about a bit. [LAUGHS]

ALK: *Was he a good shot?*

DN: I don’t know really. I can’t remember. I don’t know. But all of a sudden that all finished.

ALK: *It did*

DN: Shame wasn’t it?

ALK: *It all just finished. Was that because the coot had gone, or the royalty had gone?*

DN: Yeah, I think so, they used to be everywhere. Everywhere. But you don’t hardly see one down there now, do you?

ALK: *Tell us the thing you told me about your dad going to work one morning and he heard the ...*

DN: Yeah, that’s right. Father used to work for the first, the first place I can remember him working was, which used to be Tatham’s, used to be, he used to work there.

Yeah, Sutton Mill, that’s where he used to work, then he went and worked for Harry Black, sort of right down the bottom of Eastfield there, and he was telling me one morning, when he was going to work, about 7 o’ clock..

ALK: *All dark*

DN: Yeah, and all of a sudden he heard this noise and what should come round the corner, he says, is all these rats, hundreds of them all congregated together. And he say he got off his bike and got up on the, got up on the verge and they all went running past. There was very few people had actually seen that. That does happen but there’s very few people actually.

ALK: *Why was it?*

DN: You see. Agriculture. You see between the wars, the first world war and the second world war we had neglected agriculture. It had gone to rack and ruin so rats, and they would say that the corn stack would move ’cos it was full of rats. And it was only when the war came, that by law if you were thrashing you had to put a net round, a net that high, and the policeman had to be there, that they started to sort the rats out

ALK: *Well I think this is a good moment to move across. Do you want to get the car out? I want my friend, Mr Cator to talk to you about your career and the cars, because I think he knows more about that.*

DN: **That's right.**

ALK: *We've been talking for just over half an hour*

DN: **Have we really?**

ALK: *And very helpful it's been.*

RC: *And so if we could go back now to when you were 15*

DN: **Yeah, we will, yeah.**

RC: *And just been apprenticed*

DN: **Started out as a garage apprentice.**

RC: *Even before then David, because your other aunt and uncle kept the garage*

DN: **They did. They did, yeah. They did, yeah.**

RC: *In fact they opened the original garage*

DN: **They did, yeah. That was amazing. They used to have petrol pumps there then. And originally they used to live, er, more or less opposite the village sign in that thatched house.**

And if people wanted petrol out of when they were open, they used to go, they'd come down here and knock on the door and someone would go down the garage with them and fill the car up with petrol.

They had to walk about, what, 50-60 yards to the garage and they would go and get the petrol. Anyway, after that the house next to the garage come up for sale and they bought that. So that still wasn't so far to go, and I can remember one story.

There used to be a farmer in the village, Harry Skoyles his name was. He used to farm down near the church and he had this Ford Prefect, I think.

Anyway a lot of them used to do, they would just pull up by the pumps and they would fill their own cars up. They would just go in and book it down, you know, they had an account.

So anyway, I didn't see this happen but I see the aftermath of it all. Apparently he filled his car up and, anyway, he walked round into the office and said what particular, how much petrol he'd had. Anyway, he come out and he wasn't a very good driver at all because he used to slip the clutch a lot and that'd always be rev...., the car would always be revving.

Anyway, he took off apparently and what had actually happened, the hose had got caught round his bumper and he never released it 'cos he went tearing off and he pulled the petrol pump right over...

RC: *You see these cartoons*

DN: Yeah.

RC: *It happened in Hickling before. Many a time.*

DN: That's right. That's right. Anyway, getting back to this apprenticeship business.

Anyway I went in when I was 15, course to start with like they give you all these rubbish jobs. It used to be dreadful, like serving petrol and mending car punctures and all this thing.

Anyway, when I did eventually get into the garage I never had any tools or anything like that and Mr Smith, he was the foreman, he used to lend me his tools. So, anyway, doing something up on this ramp, I can't remember now. Anyway I dropped it down.

Anyway, I get in this car, I mean I was only about 16, didn't have a licence or nothing like that. Anyway, backed off this ramp, see, and I heard this clatter. Got out and had a look – I'd driven over his toolbox. So, anyway, I drove forward and, of course, they all sort of hear all this noise and come out to see what was going on, and Mr Smith came, I'll never forget him – he used to wear this grey, long coat which used to come to about down here.

Anyway, he was absolutely fume..... He say "David" he says, he didn't swear 'cos he was religious. "Curse your snotty eyes" he say "I had that toolbox all through the desert" he says "fighting Rommel".

He say "And you come here and run over it" [LAUGHS].

Flat. Things like that. Anyway, worked there for, I weren't there too long. I used to get fed up, so...

RC: *Your work. You used to get a lift with my cousin, Colin Shinwell.*

DN: Yeah, Colin did. While I was there, yeah 17, I was learning to drive. Me and Colin used to be ever so friendly. So anyway, I bought this old, this old car, 1930 something Standard 10 – give £35 for it. The arrangement was Colin would teach me how to drive and I would let him have the car so if he wanted to go out anywhere he could use the car, and he always used to keep it down his anyway and if you wanted to go out anywhere you would use the car.

That's how we used to carry on until, I suppose, I passed the test, I can't remember.

And then I worked for a civil engineering contractor in the village, W.A.G. Johnstone.

RC: Just before that, what about harvesting with my cousin and uncle?

DN: Oh dear! Oh dear! Yeah, that's right, I forgot all about that. Anyway, because I was friendly with Colin, he actually left the garage. He was qualified and everything and he went and worked on a farm which used to belong to...

RC: Chilbarrow

DN: Chilbarrow, who was a butcher in Stalham.

RC: Which is the farm that now belongs to John Tallowin

DN: Yeah. Anyway, used to go down there and see him this particular harvest time, it was a Sunday morning we went down there. Anyway, cos, when that was lunchtime, then we all disappeared down the pub.

Anyway, we come back and those days there was a lot of these ex-Second World War tractors about and I think the one they had I think was a David Brown.

RC: Which we all piled on, there was only 2 seats,

DN: Yeah.

Anyway, he hooked this trailer on, this massive, there's a long drive right from the road right down to the farm, quite a long. Anyway, he goes steering down there 'cos when we come in we shut the gate.

George went down there and he, I said to Colin "I don't think he's going to stop, do you?"

Anyway, we stood there watching it and he went straight through the gates, smashed the gate. Smashed this gate to pieces and, oh dear, oh dear, so.

Yes, well, anyway I went to work for W.A.G. Johnstone, he used to do water mains, irrigation systems and he used to do quite a bit of building work as well. He had quite a few people in the village used to work for him and I got on the side where he used to do water mains and irrigation systems, things like that, for land.

One particular time there was John Elliott and John said to me "Can you remember when we worked for, Wag they used to call him instead of W.A.G. Johnstone, so that's what they used to call him. He say "Can you remember when we worked in a brewery. I can I said but I don't know which one it was..."

He say "You had that much to drink we had to lay you in the back of the van". So when we got home they took me round my aunt's, laid me up

near the door and rung the doorbell. She come and I just flopped down indoors.

Yeah, so I worked for him for quite a while and he had some, he had some excavators and I was quite keen on this sort of thing, so if any of them, if any of the blokes had holidays or anything like that I would go on their machines while they, you know, while they were on holiday and I got, I got there so, after a while the work wasn't too bad, you know, and we were getting , I think, round about £10 something a week that particular time.

So anyway, one day I was looking at the paper and I seen this, this firm at Norwich, Harvard Plant Hire, they were advertising for excavator drivers.

I thought well, I don't know. I'll give them a ring.

So, anyway, I give them a ring, Saturday morning I went there and sort of had an interview like that.

Right he says, digger round the back, have a go on that. So I went round the back on this digger, "You'll do" he said, "Start Monday" – as quick as that. Anyway, my money, from being £10 a week went up to over £20 a week. I thought I was in heaven those days.

RC: And you didn't always get your money did you?

DN: Not at Johnstones you didn't. 'Cos he didn't, Bibby. Bibby's dead now, isn't he? He used to say to me sometimes on a Friday "Can you go with Bob" he says "Go to the scrapyard".

RC: They didn't always get paid for the work they'd done

DN: Anyway, we used to load up all this scrap, there'd be copper and all this sort of thing. Used to load up and Bob and I used to go to Archie King's and get rid of this and get the money, take them home so we, he had enough money to pay us, things like that. Anyway, when I got to

RC: Just backtracking a bit

DN: Sorry.

RC: Those old flat fronted Morris vans

DN: Oh yeah. That's right, yeah.

RC: The tale of coming home in that

DN: Yeah, they used these vans and they were big vans and they used to be ex-Electricity Board vans and, er, they had sliding doors.

They had a nasty habit, these vans, of you'd be going along the road and, all of a sudden you'd see the back wheel going over a field

somewhere. They had this nasty habit, the back wheels coming off, and things like that.

But the best one was, we come, that was before the bypass to Potter Heigham was built we were coming home from somewhere and, of course, that would be the old road then and, er, Potter Heigham Policeman's Corner, we were then going round there which was a fairly sharp corner and we used to keep all the tools on the top of the van, like that.

RC: Up the top there

DN: What should happen, just as he was going round the corner this fork come down. That went straight through the steering wheel. Luckily, luckily there was a gateway in front so we went... He couldn't get round the corner so he went over in the field, should be...

RC: You're lucky you didn't go in the dyke

DN: That's right. Yeah. So there used to be a lot happen when we used to go there.

I can't think of them all at the minute but....

Anyway, I went to Harvard Plant Hire and I was, I been going with Jean quite a lot then and I was there - I think I went there in '63 after the bad weather, that's right - and I mean those days times were really good then and, anyway, what happened, what happened then, I'd be about, I suppose I'd be about 20 I expect. That was when they built these, these bungalows along here, 'cos my aunt was, had the garage then, was, had the garage and, er, er, my uncle, what was his name.

RC: Not Mr Brown?

DN: Jimmy Brown. Jimmy. He used to come home from work, he was a bit of a tyrant really. He used to come home from work and before I, before they let me have my tea I used to have to go down the garage and mend any punctures that were about there or have to do anything on the land, you know, I used to have to hoe some sugar beet, you know, before they'd let me have any tea.

So anyway Mr Bannister, he's the one who built all these, he used to be friendly so he was talking to aunt up at the garage and someone had let him down over the sale of this bungalow because they couldn't get a mortgage.

This is fairly, used to happen quite a lot in those days.

Anyway, so I thought I don't know, I think I'll buy that. So I went to see him and he say "Course you can" he says. He say "It'll have to be different because what happened is the ones who were going to buy it to start with had cut things down so much they, they didn't want a

garage, they didn't want a wall at the front, they didn't want a drive, and they still couldn't get a mortgage.

So he say, if you can get a mortgage you can have it.

So anyway I happened to be working at Norwich, up at Castle Street. I was there.

Anyway, lunchtime I went for a walk down opposite the museum and just popped into one of these Building Societies along there. I say, can we borrow some money. "Yeah. Fill the form in". So we sat and filled this form in. She said "Well you'll have to wait about a month, til they decide up Head Office whether you can have a mortgage or not", 'cos you had to fill these forms in, they'd get in touch with your employer and all this sort of thing.

Anyway, I had a letter come about a month ago – yeah, you can borrow the money like that. So I put, put £200 down and I got a mortgage for two thousand.

RC: How old were you then?

DN: 21.

RC: What a wise move, wasn't it?

DN: Well, I suppose it was really. Yeah. So, anyway, I got a mortgage as easy as wink. Just like that. For £200 down.

Yeah. £200 down, £2000 mortgage. £16 per month and I was bringing home sometimes £80 a month, sometimes £100 a month and that was no problem whatsoever. Fantastic.

And the rate was at least 10%.

In those days, not like it is now, and that still wasn't a problem moneywise at all. Then we got married and Jean used to, I used to give her about £5 a week and that used to be for the coal and everything.

And, and, we lived there ever since but we added quite a bit on over the times.

RC: You give her £10 a week now, do you?" [LAUGHS]

DN: Yeah, that's right. [LAUGHS].

RC: Tell us about your involvement with the Stock car racing.

DN: Well, the first time I used to go was, that was round about 19..., late 50's I suppose 'cos the main sport in Norfolk then used to be speedway, which used to be at a stadium that was called the Firs Stadium, that was on the Cromer Road at, er, Norwich on the A140.

Anyway, so speedway, everybody used to be crazy on speedway. There used to be a bus used to come in the village, we'd get on the bus and go up there and watch speedway and, and, that used to be absolutely packed, absolutely but we, we used to watch the speedway.

And then after that they thought they'd have, try stock car racing. So, anyway, I went to see that. Some people weren't keen on it but I thought "I dunno, I quite like this", and that was, I suppose, the first time I actually see it and I wasn't really keen on it until I was maybe about 20, and then Jean and I used to go to most of the stadiums, not actually in the country but like that at Wimbledon, that sort of thing, Ipswich, they had a track at Yarmouth.

RC: Yes. I was going to say Yarmouth did take off quite well didn't it?

DN: That did. It took off very well there when they started there 'cos those days there's tons of holidaymakers about, they couldn't go wrong. They used to have 3 meetings a week, used to make a small fortune, and, er, that's how I gradually got interested. I'm 70 now but for years and years a lot of the drivers still send me photos and I do a painting for them, have it framed and, er, they come and get it from all over the country, even up Scotland.

There was a driver at Scotland - he wasn't very old – at Cowdenbeath, he got killed, and they had this big meeting for him at Cowdenbeath. So late one night, one night, a couple of drivers came round, they came round. They say "We'd like to ask you something" I say "Yeah. What's that?". "Do you think...", he say "I've got some photos of...", can't think of his name, "Could you do a painting for us?".

I said "Yeah. Of course I will". "We'll pay you for it", and then they told me what it was, they were having this memorial meeting for him and this pair, they had got some photos of him standing beside his car with a chequered flag. So, anyway, I done this painting for them. I had it framed and they come after it.

"How much do you want?" "Nothing" I said "I don't want nothing for it, at all, whatsoever".

Anyway, they had this, after the meeting they auctioned a lot of these things off, and this painting as well and it made 350 quid.

RC: Well done

DN: Yeah. Didn't want... let his wife have it all, to help her. That's typical me that is, you ask Jean, I'm a proper soft touch.

RC: I think that's a good moment to stop. Thank you very much indeed

DN: That's alright.