

Voices of Hickling

Interview Transcript: Doddo Sheppard

Interviewed by Ann Louise Kinmonth on 27th June 2014

ALK: *So thank you for your help with, with this. How do you like us to call you?*

DS: Doddo

ALK: *Thanks for your help with this, Doddo. So, can you start perhaps with any special memories of, of growing up in Hickling.*

DS: Well I suppose one of my longest memories is my name and when I was born I saw the neighbours playing dominoes and I went round there one day and said “Are you going to have a game of doddidoes”, and that’s how I got my nickname.

ALK: *And, and you were born on the Green.*

DS: On the Green, Hickling, behind the doctor’s surgery, really, yeah.

ALK: *What year was that?*

DS: 1926.

ALK: *And, how long did you live in that house?”*

DS: I lived in there till I was about 5 I think, 5 or 6.

ALK: *And what was the family? Who was in there with you?*

DS: That was my mum and dad and two brothers.

ALK: *Where did you come, in the family?*

DS: I was the middle.

ALK: *In the middle. Three boys.*

DS: That’s right, yeah.

ALK: *What’s the earliest thing you can remember? Is that the dominoes story?*

DS: Well I can remember the old, what they call the town fire, which you’ve probably heard of, you’ve been in Hickling have you? Up at Town Street, I can remember that. I was very young when that happened.

ALK: *What do you remember, tell me.*

DS: I can just remember the fire engine, yeah. Actually I felt a bit frightened of it to be quite honest. I was so young you know....

..... But that's one of my earliest memories. And so, the houses up near the Chapel, the other side of the Greyhound. I can remember them getting burnt out, that's a long time ago. That's, you know, when you think of Hickling, long time, several years ago you had seven shops in Hickling didn't you?

ALK: *Do you remember them?*

DS: Yeah, I remember them all.

ALK: *Tell me about them.*

DS: Well, the one up Town Street, in what used to be the Bull pub, they used to call that the Hickling Woolworths, that was such a little old shop, that was so small, you know, that was the name that went by. Then you came to the village there was a paper shop, run by a man, a man named Jackie Few (?), you had the papers then, and, funnily enough, I bought my first bungalow off of him, when I got married.

ALK: *Where was that?*

DS: Just down Stubb Rd. I moved in there when I was eleven year old, in that bungalow, Old Chapel House, they took the top off it and made it a chalet now. I bought that for £175, he wanted £250 for it but I got it off him for £175, he'd been trying to sell to my father and I bought it the year I got married, because I thought to myself if anything happened to my father he could say "out" LAUGHS

ALK: *So, you always lived in private houses, not in any of the council houses in Hickling?*

DS: Well, when I, just after I started school, we moved down some houses right down the bottom end of Stubb, you know where the warden's house is. Well, there used to be an old loke go down there, with two thatched cottages and that's where I lived when I went to school.

ALK: *What did your mum and dad do?*

DS: My mum used to do some housework about Hickling, and my father was a carpenter, I never took up none of them trades.

ALK: *No, well we'll come to that. So, tell me about going to school.*

DS: I'd go to school, I can remember when, especially winter time, when the snow was on the ground, there was no closing schools in them days, you had to, you had to get there, and I, from where we lived down there that was about 3 mile I reckon, that was

ALK: *That was in Hickling? Not the Stalham School?*

DS: No that was in Hickling school.

ALK: Yes

DS: I never did go to Stalham.

ALK: What happened to you?

DS: Well, what happened, when the war broke out I think I was about 13.

ALK: So, you should have been going to Stalham.

DS: So, they then give you the option that if you didn't want to go to Stalham you could finish at Hickling, so that's what I done, I just didn't bother to go to Stalham, and er.

ALK: Your older brother went to Stalham?

DS: No he'd left school at the time. By the time Stalham had started he'd left school.

ALK: Ah! So he was all Hickling as well.

DS: Yeah, he was all Hickling.

ALK: And your younger brother?

DS: Younger brother went to Stalham. Yeah. And, er

ALK: Are they still about, your brothers?

DS: No. Unfortunately I lost one with a heart attack and one with cancer.

ALK: Oh, sorry.

DS: That's alright. That happens doesn't it?

ALK: It does. Yeah, yeah, mmm. So it was Hickling, tell me about going to Hickling school and that winter.

DS: Well, it was nice, you know, you had one fire, and two classrooms, that sort of thing. You never had the up to date stuff they get today, did you.

ALK: Do you remember the headmaster?

DS: Yeah, very well.

ALK: Why do you remember him or how do you remember him?

DS: Well, I remember the first one when I was younger and I remember the boys playing football in the playground and broke a window and nobody would own up and, I think, he had 13 boys out the front. He caned the lot.

ALK: Were you one of them?

DS: No, I weren't one of them. I was in a younger group in them days, but I can remember him doing that. And, er, but the next one came was a bloke named Fred Drake.

We used to play truant a lot, which wasn't good was it? But we used to play truant and what happened was, he was a drinking man. He'd go out to the pub and have a pint a night. Of course, we soon come unstuck didn't we? If you didn't go to school, he'd say to your father "Ain't the boy well? He ain't been to school today". So that really caved that in, you know, that was the end of that sort of thing.

ALK: *What did you do when you played truant?*

DS: Well I used to mess about on the roadside, often go for a swim in the Broad if that was summertime, anything like that you know.

ALK: *Who were your friends?*

DS: Well I, we were all friends together, a whole crowd of us really, which if I think the majority of 'em are gone now, unfortunately.

ALK: *Do you remember anyone in particular?*

DS: Well, I suppose one of my best friends was a bloke named Kenny Addie. 'Cos when we used, there used to be a place in Hickling we used to call the Dipping Place and you know where Tallowin's farm is. You used to go down to the farm and go down a loke to the edge of the Broad and, er, you was walking about ankle deep and then you would get what depth you want and that's where we used to swim in there. But Addo, Kenno how we used to call him, he used to live with his mother and his aunt and his grandmother: and they didn't like him going swimming: and he wanted to swim so what we finished up doing of between us boys – we got they, he used to wear a grey shirt, I can see it now, and what he used to do – he used to pin that up the bottom and go swimming like that. And, course, he had to dry it out before he went home – but we used to lend him our towels to wipe on.

And we done a lot of work together and we went to sea together, you know, and I suppose he was one of my mates who I went most, you know, with, sort of thing. But there used to be quite a gang of us really, used to be ten or a dozen really.

ALK: *Mmmm. Both, both ends of the village, or just one end?*

DS: No. The meeting place was Greyhound Corner, allus used to be up there, Sunday afternoons - I've got a photo of it.

ALK: *Oh, have you. You must show me after.*

DS: Yeah. The Sunday afternoon there'd be a whole gang of us meet on the Green.

ALK: *Boys and girls together?*

DS: **No, all boys, all boys.**

ALK: *All boys together. DODDO LAUGHS*

DS: **Yeah, all boys together. Yeah.**

ALK: *So, you left school at 13?*

DS: **No, I left school at 14.**

ALK: *14. And what did you do then?*

DS: **I worked in the greenhouses, you know, Nurses. And funnily enough, that was on this space where I now live. Used to be where it was all greenhouses. And I worked there, I used to do 48 hours a week, used to have to work on a Saturday morning and that was for 14 shillings.**

I stuck that for about 12 months, I was 15 I suppose and I thought “well, I don’t see a lot of gold in this”

ALK: *Mmmm.*

DS: **I went with a bloke, well he’s dead now, he owned Stalham Dairies, Jimmy Nicholson. And he only had two thrashing tackle then, what they thrashed the corn with. Well I went with him, sacking chaff (?) and he used to pay me man’s wages, 12 shillings a day, so if I got a day in I’d nearly got a week’s wages, sort of thing. Everything else was a bonus, you know. And that’s right, and then, most of my life I just dived about reed cutting.**

ALK: *How did you get into that?*

DS: **Well I think what happened after the war I got in the boat trade, I got a bit sick of that, you know, I just wanted some open life, that sort of thing, and, er, we took the reed cutting up and then we, actually we used to do quite a bit. We used, in them early days we used to do what they call diggin’, you know where they digs round the meadows and mark it, we used to do what they call shore cutting with like a big old hay knife, cut all the edges, pull it out. Then sometimes we used to put bottom ----- (?) what they call bottom ----- (?) and you dam a chain off, get all the water out and then you fling all the mud out of the bottom, with a mud scoop. A mud scoop, which you don’t see, I don’t know if you’ve ever seen one.**

ALK: *I’ve seen one.*

DS: **You have seen one, a wooden scoop, a wooden scoop with a leather back on, that’s what you had, yeah. That’s what we used to do, and sometimes we used to cut sedge and, er, I got...**

ALK: *Did you have to learn how to do it or did you just know?*

DS: No. You just went with somebody who'd done it.

ALK: Who did you start with?

DS: I think we started with a bloke called Stephen Taylor.

ALK: Stephen Taylor.

DS: Yeah, Nimmy they used to call him.

ALK: Nimmy.

DS: Yeah.

ALK: I've heard that name.

DS: And, er, he, he and his people used to live in them cottages right where you go down to the Pleasure Boat.

ALK: Yeah.

DS: That's where he lived. And then we got sort of more seasonal and we used to look to go to sea and they...

ALK: When you say "we" it was you and your mate?

DS: Yeah.

ALK: The two of you.

DS: Yeah. We used to try to keep on the same ship, you know, sort of thing is the, what we own, and er.

ALK: Who painted that?

DS: Well, funnily enough the woman across the road, she was a self taught artist and I had a big window in there when I came in. And then I had it bricked up and she wanted it for double glazing. And she said "How much do you want for it?" and I said well, I had this post card sized thing of a boat and I said "If you paint me a picture of that I'll give you the double glazing", and that's how I come to get it.

ALK: Was that, was that the boat you went on?

DS: Yeah. That's why I got the painting.

ALK: What was she called?

DS: Wyedale

ALK: Who did she belong to?

DS: That belonged to a firm called Easticks.

ALK: And out of Yarmouth?

DS: Yeah. Out of Yarmouth, yeah.

ALK: *What was that like? It's a trawler?*

DS: **That's a drifter.**

ALK: *It's a drifter.*

DS: **Yeah. We used to go herring catching and mackerel catching. We used to go down mackerel catching where we knew of 'em out in the herring. And if you'd got herring catch, like herring, we were, well one year we worked Lerwick and then other years we worked Shields or, well it was mostly Shields. My first voyage was down to Lerwick.**

ALK: *Right up and down the coast then?*

DS: **Pardon.**

ALK: *You went a long way.*

DS: **Oh yeah, we steamed, you steamed all that way down to Lerwick and that have, was a good life.**

ALK: *Tell me about it.*

DS: **Well, I'll tell you I started off as what they call a yonker and you used to get £5 a week and then on every £100 you earned, which was then 10 shillings, then if you done a voyage, a decent voyage you got what they call a sharing up. But on the one to Lerwick we never really, um, made like the voyage and er so we just had a weekly wage and there weren't no sharing up when we come home. But then we went to Shields, worked Shields, North Shields, and we had quite a good voyage down there.**

ALK: *How long would that be?*

DS: **12, a voyage used to be about 12 weeks.. And, em, you know, but if you got the herring you came and landed 'em.**

ALK: *Was it easy fishing or was it hard to get them?*

DS: **Well, you hit or you missed.**

ALK: *And how often did you hit?*

DS: **Quite often.**

ALK: *Yeah*

DS: **I meant I got some fishing books in there. We won the Prunier Trophy one year and we had a 300 cran shimmer of herring.**

ALK: *A shimmer?*

DS: **Yeah, well, a shimmer is an amount, you know, the net.**

ALK: *Yes, that's a shimmer.*

DS: Shimmer

ALK: A net full.

DS: Yeah. Well it just depends how many is in, that's always called a shimmer.

ALK: I never knew.

DS: And, er, when they surface as you haul in the darn and when the nets came up that was just like one big plate of silver. We hauled 267 I think and we give 60 nets away to another of the firm's boats, and he hauled 60 cran out of of them.

ALK: How did the size of those fish compare with the ones you get now?

DS: Well, I don't think you see the good herring.

ALK: You don't see them at all.

DS: I never buy 'em now.

ALK: Spoiled

DS: Yeah. But they are good for you, herring, aren't they?

ALK: Where did you sleep?

DS: They had what they called bunks, forward and aft, there was 4 in the forward part and 5 or 6 round the back

ALK: How many of you'd be on that be on that?

DS: Ten.

ALK: Not much room then?

DS: No, not a lot of room. But there was room for what you wanted. You, you know.

ALK: Yeah, you're young.

DS: The only time you sort of sleep is when you're waiting for the fish to swim, and, em, but as I say I've been to sea several times and there ain't no-one have been there, 'specially when you are up Shields.

Used to go ashore dinner time and have a few pints and go back, sleep it off, they'd let go and next thing you'd hear when they got to the fishing ground was shoot ho, shoot ho.

ALK: What was the word?

DS: Shoot ho, that's shoot the nets.

ALK: Shoot the nets out, yeah, yeah.

DS: And that used to bring you up, wake you up. LAUGHS

ALK: *Put your stuff on.*

DS: Yeah. Get yourself together. You had your clothes on anyway.

ALK: *So, what did you eat?*

DS: Well.

ALK: *Apart from beer.*

DS: Well, that was always fish for breakfast, which was herring and if you were what they call fireman, you know, down the engine room, second down the engine room, you had to clean the breakfast fish, and, because of being down there I got that job, though what I used to do, I didn't scrape, I got what they call a donkey hose that was down the engine room, a pressure hose full on thing, and just swirled them around in the bath till the scales come off, and they're alright. That took all the scales off, you know. But mackerel were my favourite fish really.

ALK: *Mine too.*

DS: I love that one.

ALK: *If they're fresh.*

DS: Yeah.

ALK: *With a bit of bacon.*

DS: Yeah. Very nice they are.

ALK: *And lunch?*

DS: Well, the old cook, he used to do the lunch, he'd probably have roast beef or meat, yeah, yeah. Used to have a roast, that sort of thing for lunch. Very often, when we were mackerel catching you'd have breakfast, fried mackerel for breakfast, and serve them soused for tea in vinegar or water, however he fancied doing 'em, but that didn't worry me 'cos I loved 'em.

ALK: *Is this why you stayed healthy? Good diet*

DS: It must be, yeah.

ALK: *How long did you go on going out on the drifters?*

DS: I think I did about four or five year out there. Well, yeah.

ALK: *How old were you when you stopped doing that?*

DS: That was early 50s when I stopped doing that and so I'd be, what, 26.

ALK: *Mmmm.*

DS: Being around about 26, 30. Fifty, about '53 probably.

ALK: *What did you do after that?*

DS: **Actually we used to do reed cutting, sugar beet or, you know, or any marsh, marsh work or piece work would come along. We used to brush the hedges, a scythe and a hook in them days. You never had these tractors come along cutting it. We used to do that piece work with a chain, so much a chain.**

ALK: *What would you get for a chain? I don't know how long a chain is.*

DS: **22 yards.**

ALK: *Right.*

DS: **I forget what the price was now 'cos that was so long ago. But, winter time after that I used to cart sugar beet at Cantley, took up lorry driving and we used to do that piece work. And listen to this, we used to, I used to fill a ton of beet, per ton, for three and seven pence ha'penny, and cart 'em into Cantley, three and seven pence ha'penny a ton.**

ALK: *Mmmm.*

DS: **And I used to drive an artic' in them days. And that used to carry roughly about 10 ton, and I filled that twice a day on my own, and carted them out to Cantley. That was work, that was.**

ALK: *That was, it was. So, you've been self-employed pretty well all your life?*

DS: **Well, yeah, more or less.**

ALK: *Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. A sort of crofter.*

DS: **All bar, um, well the last, after I got married I sort of, I still done piece work after I got married, but, 'er, then I used, I finished up 'bout the last twenty years on the council, lorry driving there, on the dustcarts and what have you.**

ALK: *So, you talk about getting married, tell me about when you met your lady.*

DS: **Well when I met my lady I think I'd just finished going to sea in them days and, er, I think really, well, you know, I didn't have my own, I were living with my father, 'cos I'd lost my mother and I think, I just sort of thought, well I think that's time we started to sort my life out And, er, I met this girl, a Martham girl, she's very pleasant. Very nice person.**

ALK: *How did you meet her? Where did you find her?*

DS: **I met her at the dance.**

ALK: *So, you'd go to dances. Where was that?*

DS: **At Hemsby. Yeah. I used to go to dances in them days.**

ALK: *Hemsby.*

DS: Yeah. And, er, that's where we met, and then we, we just got married and we lived 11 year in Hickling in that bungalow.

ALK: Which you bought.

DS: Which I bought. Then we moved here, and unfortunately, after 49 years, I lost her.

ALK: I'm sorry. What happened?

DS: She had cancer 5 times, yeah.

Last time she got it, she got it in the pancreas. And my wife were, reckon she weighed what, eleven and a half, twelve stone, and when she died I don't think she weighed six.

ALK: Bird. Little bird.

DS: Just going to be eaten up, eaten up. Yeah, terrible.

ALK: It's a horrible disease that

DS: That's a death you can't never forget.

ALK: I'm sure you can't.

DS: She couldn't speak, she couldn't write. I kept her at home right until the last week.

ALK: Well done. I'm sure that's what she wanted.

DS: Yep. I done things I never thought I'd ever be capable of doing.

ALK: Yeah. Yes, I understand that.

DS: When you're pushed.

ALK: Yes. It's amazing what you can do.

DS: Yeah, yeah. But as I say we had a good 49 years, good things to look back to and....

ALK: Yeah. What were the best do you think?

DS: Well, I think that was all good really. We just

ALK: Got on alright.

DS: Yeah, we got on alright. You had your few differences which all people do, don't you?

ALK: They do.

DS: But never had a serious row.

ALK: Did you have children?

DS: No we never had, never had no children.

ALK: *Mmm.*

DS: But I've got a niece who come here.

ALK: *Good.*

DS: Yeah, we partly brought her up as my brother and his wife split up and she came and lived with us. Then they got back together and she went home again, I don't think she wanted to go home, she was spoilt.

ALK: *So thinking back to, um, those early memories, did you have holidays?*

DS: Well you did have holidays but you didn't go away.

ALK: *No, what did you do on your holidays?*

DS: You went out. Like when I was young you had to go to Sunday School.

ALK: *Right.*

DS: You had no choice, you had to go to Sunday School. That was it on a Sunday morning.

ALK: *And was that because of what people in the village said, or because of your parents.*

DS: Your parents, you had to go.

ALK: *Yeah.*

DS: In them days you done as you were told.

ALK: *Was that the church in Hickling?*

DS: No, that was the chapel.

ALK: *Chapel.*

DS: Chapel Sunday School, Mill Pit, and then the bursary every year you had to get up on the platform and say a piece of poetry.

ALK: *Do you remember doing that?*

DS: Yeah, very well. I hated it. LAUGHS

ALK: *What did you have to say?*

DS: Well, they used to give you a piece of poetry to learn.

ALK: *Can you remember it?*

DS: Coo, really, no.

ALK: *I thought it might be graven on your heart*

DS: I know one of the favourite ones when you first started, I am a little soldier, that sort of thing. And then you got, sort of, as you got older you got more different things.

ALK: *Oh, I see, so they were kind of like moral poems ...*

DS: **Yeah.**

ALK: *... with a moral story.*

DS: **And then they used to do well with the collection, 'cos they used to have it morning, afternoon and evening and they used to have collections. And then they used to give us a day at Palling beach, and I can remember going to Palling beach in a horse and cart when we first started, when I first started.**

ALK: *Really. That must have been lovely.*

DS: **Yeah. That was lovely, yeah. Day at the beach, that was a big day out, go to Sea Palling. LAUGHS**

ALK: *What would you do there?*

DS: **Just play about on the beach I suppose, have ice cream.**

ALK: *Did you swim?*

DS: **Yeah. Swim in the sea probably, yeah. That you used to, that was a good day out in them days.**

ALK: *Yeah, I'm sure.*

DS: **But when I lived down Stubb, in them Stubb council houses, there used to be a lady, Lord and Lady Desborough, used to own Whitesley Lodge. And Lady Desborough used to walk up the village every morning, right from down Whitesley. And when we were on holiday and us boys all playing about in them council houses, we knew very well when she come back she's going to have a bag of sweets and she'd always say "Have a sweetie" and they were two of the most lovely people you could ever want, wish to meet.**

And once a year all the Stubb crowd, children, girls and boys, they used to take us down Whitesley Lodge, give us a meal, of sandwiches and all that, and then after that they had their motor boats to take us out on the Broads. They were such lovely people, you know. But that was, they were good days, Hickling was a lovely place to grow up really.

ALK: *Mmmm. What were the nicest things about it do you think?*

DS: **Well, I think like in villages them days everybody knew everybody, you know, and I think everybody's, you know, anybody was in trouble they always got help and they were all ready to help each other. And, you know, there was always something going on and they, then you got a little older and you played football. They used to have, um, the girls, the women or the girls play the boys at football, but the girls could use**

their hands or anything, you know and they played proper football. And that was a good sporting day, yeah.

ALK: And that was on the football ground?

DS: On the Recreation Ground

ALK: On the Recreation Ground, yeah.

DS: When I first started playing football there weren't no Rec and we used to have to hire a paddock off old Joe Chapman at Brightmere Farm and play on that. But, er, my father he was secretary of Hickling football club for quite a lot of years.

ALK: Well, he probably ran the village then, he was an important man.

DS: Yeah he was always around the football team, picking teams and that.

ALK: But they did more than just the football for the village, didn't they? Always getting things organised.

DS: Oh yeah, they, I mean there was plenty going on really, somebody, you know ... One of my best sports in them days was the high jump. I was, I used to jump quite a height, and they used to have a sports day at Ludham and we used to compete. And old Fred Drake used to take me out onto the playing field in the mornings and make me practice high jump, because that wasn't nothing like they do today, you had to jump over and land on your feet. And I got through Ludham. And if you got through Ludham you went to Norwich City football ground and they had another one there.

ALK: How old were you when you were leaping?

DS: Oh, I weren't very old, 11, 12 maybe. Perhaps not that, but that was, that was ...

ALK: Did you grow young, did you grow tall?

DS: No, I didn't. When I left school I weren't the height of an electric light switch.

ALK: And then you went up.

DS: I took after my mother, she's a very short person.

ALK: Yeah.

DS: And then after I left school I grew.

ALK: Yeah.

DS: Yeah. As I say, Hickling, Hickling was a good village.

ALK: Yes. And do you remember any of those terrible winters?

DS: Yeah, right well.

ALK: Which ones do you remember?

DS: I remember them all, just about.

ALK: Tell me about those winters

DS: They were good sport.

ALK: Yeah.

DS: Yeah, I mean, snowballs, yeah, which you don't like now but they were good things then. And I mean us boys used to spend, I reckon, at least 6 weeks on Hickling Broad, skating. And we'd be on there at night by tilly lamp, playing ice hockey, and that was brilliant, you know.

We'd go on there, actually when we were reed cutting, some of them winters, we used to go up the coast to Horsey and, you know, you walked round the banks, but you could have walked all the way on ice.

But we used, we used to go across the mouth of Waxham Cut, and all them sort of thing, and we come home one night across Waxham Cut, walked across the ice, and when we went the next morning that was all broke up, as quick as that.

ALK: Couldn't get back?

DS: No. But we didn't, we had to go back....

ALK: And get a boat.

DS: A boat. But the Broad was great. Actually I remember Hickling Broad was that thick one year that I see Jack Martin, who had that shop in Hickling, go on there with his motor bike and sidecar. He went on, he actually took the motor bike and sidecar on Hickling Broad.

And on a Sunday sometimes us boys, you know we were about 18, 20, early 20s, we skated from Hickling Pleasure Boat round to Potter Heigham bridge, had a couple of pints and skated home again. LAUGHS. Yeah, brill that were.

ALK: Yeah. Really good times. It must have been quite hard doing the reed cutting, though, in those hard winters.

DS: That was hard work but

ALK: Yeah.

DS: as they say, hard work don't kill nobody. LAUGHS That's what they're 'allus telling me. It hasn't done me a lot of harm really.

ALK: Brilliant. So, moving on a bit, do you have any particular memories of the war or just after? How the war affected you in any way?

DS: Well, I think my worst experience of the war was when I was called up, I didn't get what I wanted.

ALK: Yeah.

DS: I was unfortunately balloted down the coalmines as a Bevin boy, down the pits.

ALK: You?

DS: Yeah.

ALK: Aaah. What happened?

DS: Well when you, when you were called up you had what they called a registration card and I can't quite remember if it's the last number or vice versa and if you had that you were balloted to go down the coal mines, you had no choice. And we lived in Nissen huts in this, sort of, camp in County

ALK: Where was it?

DS: County Durham. Yeah, and Easington Colliery was the first one I went to.

ALK: So, when did you go there?

DS: I, I started off at Easington.

ALK: When was that?

DS: That's in County Durham.

ALK: Yeah, sorry, which date, which year? Do you remember?

DS: What year?

ALK: Yeah, I'm trying to piece it in with the other thing you told me about leaving school and coming and working in the glass houses.

DS: Oh yeah. Well, that'd be when I was 18 wouldn't it?

ALK: OK.

DS: Yeah, because that was the calling up age, I really wanted to go in the Navy but I never had no choice.

ALK: Yes, yes, yes.

DS: But I was in that ...

ALK: I suppose you might have died early if you'd got the navy.

DS: Pardon.

ALK: You might be dead if you'd got the navy.

DS: Well, no

ALK: You don't know do you?

DS: I don't think so. **ALK LAUGHS.** I think when you are brought on this earth you are brought on for so long, and no matter where you are when that day come, you're gone.

ALK: Yes. *It's written.*

DS: That's written, yeah. I've allus said that and you, you know. If you're at sea

ALK: Did that help you go down the mines then? *Knowing it was written.*

DS: I mean you could've got killed down there couldn't you?

ALK: You could, you could.

DS: Quite easily.

ALK: Nobody wanted to be a Bevin boy did they?

DS: No, no. Nobody wanted it.

ALK: Miserable for you.

DS: No. I'll show you something you'll hopefully never see.

ALK: Yeah.

DS: Go on.

ALK: Ah, you're showing me your Bevin boy veteran, you've only just got this haven't you?

DS: That's right.

ALK: Cos I read about it.

DS: We got that the year my wife died.

ALK: Oh, so she was there?

DS: No.

ALK: Oh, just after.

DS: Unfortunately she was in Priscilla Bacon when it come.

ALK: Aaaah, aaaah. That's lovely, lets take a photograph of that, let's keep that out.

DS: Yeah, we waited a long while to get them.

ALK: You did indeed. Did it help, getting it?

DS: Well I suppose that's just something what, you know, what you got.

ALK: Yes, but did it help?

DODDO MUTTERS AND LOOKS FOR SOMETHING

DS: Ah, this was supposed to be silver when we got this.

ALK: Yes, and you don't think it was.

DS: I don't think that was. That's what we got when we won the Prunier Trophy for the biggest shot of herring.

ALK: Oh, I love that. That's great, the year before I was born.

DS: Is it? **BOTH LAUGH.** Yeah, that's the date we received.

ALK: So, we were talking about your memories of the war and you were saying that the worst one was that you didn't get what you wanted.....

DS: That's true.

ALK: which was the Navy.

DS: Yeah, I wanted to go in the navy, badly. And, er, well I say you got no choice.

ALK: How long were you down the mines?

DS: About, I dunno, about 4 year I think.

ALK: So you were away from here during the war?

DS: Yeah, yeah.

ALK: So you didn't see any of the bombers or anything going over?

DS: Well, not really. I know before I went, before I was called up, there was one or two planes crashed in Hickling, weren't there?

ALK: I don't know, tell me.

DS: Don't you? There was one down Stubb Road on Tallowin's land, There was one up the top of Sutton Parsons Road by the bungalow, that crashed there.

ALK: What sort of planes were they? Do you know?

DS: Bombers. And, er, where the police station is, that used to be all glass nurseries there, whether they thought that was water I don't know, they, they machine gunned all that, the jerries. Yeah, and, of course Stalham got bombed.

There's three people in a , I think it's three people, that was father and daughter and, I think, another person got killed in the bakery up there when they bombed it.

They also hit Hickling Bull, what is now Hickling House. I don't know why but they had a go at, they machine gunned that one day LAUGHS.

But, as I say, coal mines weren't, you know, that weren't the thing. I think to go in a coal mine you've got to be bred to it, um, I didn't like it anyway, I got out of it in the end through, I fiddled it.

ALK: *What did you do.*

DS: I said I, I thought, I thought I'd got some, I got away with it anyway but I had about 6 medicals before I get out.

ALK: *And what, what did you do after that?*

DS: I come home and they called me to the army, and they took me back down at a place called Brantspham (?), been in County Durham they called me back here.

And I, I just, I didn't mind the army, you know, and I was down there when they, they called me, they called me in this place, they said "You were in the coal mines weren't you?", I said "Yeah", he said "Are you still suffering from the same complaint?", I said "Yeah" so I got out of that there.

But, just as the war finished in Europe and the, the Japan war was still on, you know. The war, just as I come out of the army the war finished in Europe so that's the sort of time, you know, but, yeah, but.

ALK: *Do you remember the end of the war?*

DS: Yeah, very well, lovely.

ALK: *Was it? Where were you when it stopped?*

DS: I was, actually I was back home when that finished in, well just as it finished in Europe, but before that finished in Japan, and, um, there's a bloke at Hickling, Arthur Nobbs, he was a prisoner of war in Japan and, cor, he looked terrible when he come home.

ALK: *Did he?*

DS: Yeah, he had a terrible time. There weren't many people he'd show or anything, but he showed me his back and that was like a map, where they whipped, where he'd been whipped. That was terrible, but he had, he had a few years before he died, but I think that was a, you know really, what was the cause of it. But that's, they say that Hickling Broad has caused a very lot of fun.

ALK: *Well, that's good. Yeah. Were there any parties at the end of the war in Hickling? Were there any...*

DS: Well, I think they had one or two sort...

ALK: *Celebrations.*

DS: I think they had a bit of a celebration but I can't remember much about

ALK: *Can't really. There was more relief.*

DS: Yeah, more relief than anything I would say.

ALK: *That's what others say.*

DS: Yeah.

ALK: *So, you're doing good. We're coming on to talking a bit about your health and illness. And I'm very interested to remember, if you can remember anything about illness in childhood, and if you ever went to a doctor or anything like that, or how the family used the healthcare.*

DS: Well I, I've been very fortunate in my life, as regards illness, you know, you had your children's diseases, chicken pox and all that, obviously, don't you, but I don't class that as being ill.

But I, you know, you get bad you used to go to the doctors didn't you, he used to get a bottle of this old brown medicine – but that weren't bad, I liked that actually LAUGHS. But, you know, that done you right good as what these tablets do.

ALK: *Was this the doctor at Ludham?*

DS: No I used to have the own doctor.

ALK: *Stalham?*

DS: He used to come to Hickling. You know where Martin's shop is?

ALK: *Yes.*

DS: Well, right opposite that they got the old peoples' bungalows and there's one facing sort of just off them, with people living in now, that was the surgery.

ALK: *Yes.*

DS: In them days. They had so many days a week, or something like that, you know. But, you see, them days if you turned up ill during the night a doctor came out, didn't he?

You know, you rung 'em up and they come out, that was end of story. That wasn't like it is today, is it? They don't care whether they come or not today LAUGHS.

ALK: *So, you weren't really ill when you were a child?*

DS: No, not really ill, not really ill.

ALK: Did your family ever have to worry, because it just, um, the Health service came in when you were about 20 or something.

DS: Yeah, something like that I think. No I never remember my parents worrying about ...

ALK: They didn't worry about being able to get a doctor or

DS: No. But,

ALK: Do you think your family regarded themselves as well off, or moderately well off?

DS: I wouldn't say we were well off, we managed.

ALK: You managed. Yeah.

DS: I mean, you know, in them days I don't think there's many people had money to chuck about.

ALK: No.

DS: I can remember one time my father biked to Norwich for work, from Hickling.

ALK: Yeah, yeah..

DS: They had no choice, if you didn't work you didn't get no money, that's as simple as that.

ALK: Yeah, yeah. And you were saying that, really, looking back it seems that you got a better service from the doctor than you do now.

DS: Coo, a lot better didn't you? No matter what hour of the night, if somebody was took ill, you rung the doctor, he came to your house, end of story. There's no well I aren't coming out to see you, I can't do this or you'll have to ring so and so.

ALK: So what would you do if you got ill now?

DS: Well, I don't know to be quite honest. I don't suffer with a lot but I do, I am on, um, on, um, warfarin which I go for a check about every month, six weeks. But I ain't really been ill in my life, well, I think the worst thing I ever had, I had prostrate (sic), which you get when you get older anyway, but I think the worst thing I had was, I had abscess on the bottom, and they just couldn't find out what it was, and I used to get pain right across there, and it kept getting worse and in the end that used to hit me and I used to just drop on my knees and double up.

Then I had it one Friday and and Dr. Couch, who was at Stalham, she come out and they thought that was what they call rege or rige, whatever it is, anyway she come out and she said I'll come and see you

again tomorrow morning, and when I got up I said to my wife, I said, had a shower and shave, you know, get ready for when she come.

I'd just had a shower and shave and got dressed and god that hit me again, so they whipped me into hospital.

I was in there about 10 days I think, and then, they then decided that I'd got abscess on the bottom, and I said, that was in the Norfolk & Norwich, I was in BUPA when I was at work, and I said to this fella, he said "You'll have to have an operation", I said "Yeah I realise that." I said "But if that's all the same to you" I said, "I'll go to BUPA". Oh, he said "We do a good job here." I said "Yeah, I don't doubt your word at all", I said "Can you give me a date to do it?" "Oh!" he said "that could be 3 to 6 months.

I said "That's no good to me, I can, more or less, tell BUPA when I want it."

So I went and had it done in BUPA and when he done it he said "You were living on a time bomb." If they'd have burst" he said "You'd have been out of this world".

I had five abscess, but apart from that I ain't had really ...

ALK: When did you have that done?

DS: Oh, when I was, quite a few years ago now.

ALK: The old Norfolk & Norwich. Before they built it the new one.

DS: That was the old one.

ALK: The old one, yeah, yeah, yeah. Very good, so last questions I have is, was there anything else that you thought, that would be really important, I'd like to have a recording of that, I'd like to have that spoken about. Was there anything that we haven't covered, 'cos there may well have been. I'm sure if Ray had been here he'd have said "Now come on, tell us about so and so."

DS: He'd probably have brought the subject up... No, not really.

ALK: We've covered things you think?

DS: Like I say I've just enjoyed my life and I'm still enjoying it.

ALK: I can see that.

DS: I still play bowls and, you know.

ALK: Yeah, I can see you do.

DS: But I suppose, you know, the only thing I regret is, everything, is losing my wife.

ALK: *Yes, well that shows how much you and she got on doesn't it? And, do you think*

DS: Yeah. And, as I say, I enjoyed my whole life, I enjoyed Hickling. We only left Hickling because my wife worked at Norwich or Yarmouth, to save her coming through them back roads in the winter time, that was just out onto the by pass and a good road.

ALK: *And how do you think Hickling has changed over your lifetime?*

DS: Oh, terrible.

ALK: *Tell me about it.*

DS: Well, when I was in Hickling that was a lively town, lively village. Allus something to do, allus something going on, allus something to entertain yourself.

I mean them days there weren't the traffic on the roads there is now, you know, there was roller skates, hoopla, hoop, bring they hoops along the road, you know, you could allus find amusement.

But, you know, I sometimes go to Hickling to see my mate, I don't know whether you know him, George Newman, Nukes they call him.

ALK: *He's done this.*

DS: Yeah, and we used to go and cut reed together, me and George, and, um, that's like a ghost town.

You go in on a Sunday morning you hardly see anybody. You know, you think to yourself, all them shops in Hickling, none, nothing is there. I never have dreamt that the day would come that would be like that.

That is , that is, that's a nice village and I still, I still like Hickling, that's where I play bowls, at Hickling but, er, whether I'd want to live there now or not I don't know.

I suppose I'd be alright at the moment 'cos I've still got my driving licence, still got my car and I think if you haven't got one you're a little bit stuck, aren't you?

You know, it's alright saying you can jump on a bus and go to Stalham but if you are taking frozen stuff home, you know, that's a bit dodgy isn't it? LAUGHS.

Yeah, but I've enjoyed my life in Hickling. Allus friendly people, all nice people in Hickling and working days were in Hickling, when I was at work.

ALK: *When you were doing the reed cutting were you working for the Trust, for the?*

DS: No, I never did cut reed for the Trust.

ALK: *Aaah.*

DS: And, em, actually, what we used to cut for Buxton of Horsey....

ALK: *Ah, yeah.*

DS: but after a time, I said to Nukes, I said "I dunno, I'm getting a bit peed off with this." He say "I'm going to see if I can buy, buy the reed standing and then sell it, cut it.

Give so much to the fella' for standing reed and then get it out and sell it to the thatcher. We should get more out of it, so that's what we done.

ALK: *Who did you sell it to?*

DS: And, er, well the local thatchers had it but we were cutting along Meadow Dyke one day and a boat pulled up there, a cruiser, and this bloke shouted out to us as it went across.

He said "What do you do with your reed?" So we said "We sell it." So he said "Will you sell me some?". "Yeah, if the money's right, and you know you pay the same as everybody else.

And he come from Devon, and they used to come down on a Friday night, travel down on a Friday night, used to get to ours about half past 7 Saturday morning and my wife used to give them some tea and toast and we used, we used to bring the reed up Billy Nudd moved some of it.

And, er, we used to go down there and help them load up, then they used to take it all the way back to Devon. I couldn't believe it when they, you know, when he said where he come from but, couldn't believe it.

ALK: *What a story.*

DS: Yeah. But, you know, what a way to chase for a load of reed, and then take it back. That must have been expensive stuff by the time they got it down the road. We got to know him right well.

ALK: *There you go, so that's an hour.*

DS: Is it an hour?

ALK: *Yes, yes.*

DS: Cor, that's soon gone, yeah. So

ALK: *Well, 50 minutes*