

Denise Jarman –

Denise Jarman was born in 1952 and grew up on Boosley Grange Farm, near Longnor. She remembers life on the family farm up until the great changes of the 1980s and 1990s. She often revisits the farm, where most of the fields are now rented out to a large-scale dairy producer.

Part Two - The loss of connection with the land and environment

Christine: Denise, you were saying about lapwings and your memory of the number of lapwings that were here when you were a girl.

Denise: That's right. It's one of my favourite memories and when I hear a lapwing it just takes me back then. Yvonne and I used to walk to school up the lane and lapwings would nest on the pasture there every summer. That doesn't happen now, because they've changed their habitat, they've changed that into a field that they mow now for silage. So, we have no lapwings now anymore. There were large numbers that would come and fly down. We had to run the gauntlet every morning and every evening, because they would just come and fly down and nearly touch your head. And also, their call is just amazing and whenever I hear a lapwing, I always think of that part of my childhood.

Christine: So, when do you think they went from round here?

Denise: Definitely when they changed it from pasture. When they started silaging.

Christine: Does this matter to you, this loss of wildlife?

Denise: I do worry for the wildlife now with all the intense farming, because you know my children don't have memories like that, your children, your grandchildren, even if you stay here will not have memories like that. It's not just the lapwings though is it really? It's everything, isn't it? It's the butterflies as well, it's the bees. When will it stop really?

Christine: A lot of people say that there is almost no meeting ground between what conservationists want to see happen. A lot of it looks like blame is pointed in the direction of farmers, yet we've got ourselves into this cleft stick where we are expecting food to be cheap, milk to be cheap and all the rest of it. Can you see any sort of positive way forward where we could begin to recover wildlife? Can you see ways that that could happen, ways that farmers could think differently about the way that they operate given the right incentives? What would be a good way forward here?

Heather: I think the young ones farming today, they just haven't got that same drive, they haven't got that knowledge that the older generation had. So really, I think there's just young lads driving tractors, flying up and down, just do what they've gotta do, get home, and they haven't experienced what it could be like. They haven't got that connection.

Denise: I'm talking really..., all I know is the traditional way of farming. Now we have, like you say, a different type of farming and because we all want cheap milk, cheap food, they have to produce, they have to farm that way, in a way, don't they? to produce that for us.

Christine: What about compromise? Could you think of any other way that this could work so that we could have a compromise between sustainable land use and modern farming?

Denise: I don't know what the answer is to be honest.

Christine: The problem is that we need to go forward with some sort of communal sense of responsibility here, don't we? To lay it at the feet of the farmers is ridiculous. So, what would you say were the strengths that your families had in taking care of the land that maybe we are missing out on today?

Denise: I think they had a great love for what they did, a great love for the land and I don't think now... I think it's too, in a way, it's too commercial now. Because in my father's day, he cared for the land, he loved the land, it was his life. And he did have a great connection my dad did. I think now of my nephew who is still farming and I wouldn't say he'd got a great connection or love for the land. He drives huge machinery and I just think they just care about getting a job done. Getting the crops in before it rains. Getting the lambs off to market. Because they're under different pressures aren't they, really? It's all changed from where it was before. And the pressures really are greater, I think now.

Christine: Do you think we can get that connection back with the land, and the care and commitment that your families had for the land in the past?

Denise: Hopefully we can, hopefully we can create some kind of... I mean, I think if you spoke to my nephew about destroying wildlife habitats, I don't think he would basically give a damn. I think it would not be something he thinks about at all. But it's not only destroying wildlife habitat is it really? It's changing the land, it's changing the landscape as well. Because the farm that I grew up on, it's completely changed. It's not the same. It's not the same as when I lived here at all. I look at it and I don't even recognise it, I don't even recognise the farm. Admittedly it was a long time ago. And I think you've got to reach out to as many people as you can. It takes more than one to make a difference, doesn't it really? But that one person who is making a difference maybe will be the spark that will set it all off. I watched a programme on television about them destroying the uplands. I can't remember where I saw it, but that made me think. We are effectively destroying everything really, aren't we? We are effectively destroying the way our world should work, because it's so labour intensified now, isn't it? And I think we're greedy, don't you? I think we want more and more.