

Heather Fryer-Winder

The ancient farmhouse at Boosley Grange is split in two and the little girl next door to Denise Jarman and her family was Heather Fryer-Winder. Heather lived alone with her father David Fryer for twenty years, after her mother left, when she was just five years old. She left the farm in her twenties for a spell in Germany, but returned to Boosley Grange where she now lives with her husband, two children and father David, who once had a large dairy herd. Most of the fields are now let for grazing. Heather remembers a tough and lonely life on the farm in which support from the girls next door was vital to her.

Christine: So, how old were you when your family moved in?

Heather: I was born here. Me dad was thirty when I was born. My mother was nineteen and I'm now fifty. I was born here and later on I went off to Germany enjoying life.

Christine: So, you were a teenager when Heather was born, is that right?

Denise: Yeh, I would be a teenager when Heather was born.

Christine: And you've got this strong friendship bond growing-up next door to each other and...?

Heather: We're family. I was brought up just with me dad so... My dad used to farm and he took, was it called the 'golden handshake' in those days? I just remember it being quite tough as a child really, just me and me dad. And I remember sheep farming and prodding the snow with the sticks looking for sheep, and things like that. 'Cos he was sheep, wasn't he?

Denise: I think it was more sheep.

Christine: When you were a little girl, you had to work really hard?

Heather: It was tough, walking up the lane and walking to Eleven Lane Ends sometimes for school buses and things. We used to have to walk back from Eleven Lane Ends if the bus dropped us off. It's quite a walk. I mean, I was never on me own, there would always be like Nick Williams and the Critchlow lads, and there'd be one or two from round about, 'cos a lot of children went in those days. The Ball family.

Christine: So, it was very much part and parcel of your lives as children. What would you say you learned from these things? I suppose you learned lots of practical skills, but did you learn other things as well? Sort of lessons for life.

Heather: That's a difficult question. You learned how to work hard and graft and how to use a brush. I think getting your jobs done. You just had to get them done. Nothing got left did it. You'd got to do it. You finished a job. I think that's how I am personally today. I think I am very..., if I set out to do something, I'll finish it, whereas perhaps the youngsters today, probably aren't like that.

Christine: Then as now, it's an incredible tie having a dairy herd?

Heather: I was quite..., I do remember as a child going to Anglesey with me dad, because he had his first farm on Anglesey. I don't know when and what and how, but he had a farm on Anglesey. It was before he came up here wasn't it? He had a lot of ties with Anglesey, so when he finished milking and things, I can remember as a young child going with me dad to Anglesey, because he had friends still down at Anglesey,

so I spent a lot of time with him. My mum left when I was very young, so I only had holidays with me dad.

Christine: So, this is a hard life, very early starts. Do you think it restricted your social life as a young teenager and a young woman?

Heather: Probably was. I just took meself off, plus there was a lot my age around here who I could walk across the fields too. I think because there was only me.

Christine: What about some good things that you didn't have when you were younger?

Heather: There's a Moorland Connect bus that goes from the top of the lane.

Christine: You still love it around here?

Heather: I do love it around here but I always feel as though I missed out on things, I don't know why. I do love it around here. I love the countryside, but I always feel as though I've missed out on something. I feel like I've missed out. Like my children now are very sporty and I take them here, there and everywhere, and I feel because I was very sporty as a young child, but I couldn't do these things, because my father was dedicated to milking, lambing, whatever. I couldn't do these things. I didn't have like clubs and things to go to. So, I feel as though I missed out on those things. Once I started school, I was chosen to represent the school at this big event, and my father wouldn't take me, because he was too busy, he wasn't interested. I feel as if I missed out even though I do love this, you know I love it, but I think I would have liked to have had a lot more of a social life, particularly as a teenager.

Denise: I think that was also because you were an only child. I think I didn't feel that way, because I had a sister who was so close in age to me, so I always had a companion and a playmate. So, I didn't feel isolated like that.

Heather: And I latched on like. Yvonne and Denise were older than me. So, I was quite sad, well I was very sad when both of you got married and left and moved on. I was fourteen in '79. But Yvonne and Denise were my rock, particularly Yvonne, but Denise as well, because Denise went off first, so I probably spent my latter time with Yvonne. But they were my rock really, both Denise and Yvonne. That's what I remember. Like Denise bought me my very first patched skirt and jumper and I thought it was the bees knees.

Christine: Do your children like being here? Do they express dissatisfaction?

Heather: Abbie certainly does a lot because she's that age. I see a huge difference with David. He's got a friend who lives over Biddulph way and I can see the difference. David is an outdoor lad and he likes photography and obviously him and Adam, Julia's son, they like the outdoor life, they'll go cycling or whatever. Whereas I do feel that some of David's friends are all into these computer games. I mean ok, perhaps you do get that now, but he said only the other day when he came home, 'it's nice to come back to the hills'. I thought for a sixteen-year-old to say that, that's quite nice. Whereas Abbie, she's probably 'I haven't got any friends' and 'I want to go up town', but she's eleven so it is difficult. And there's an age gap between them, but they need to get on with it and that's it. This is where we live. But I take them out. I do me best to make sure occasionally she has someone to stay or vice versa. Or I take her places. So, I've had to do quite a lot. They have swimming club, running club. I give my children probably what I didn't have, you know. I know you perhaps shouldn't, but I suppose I'm living my life through my children, how I wanted it to be. When I look at Abbie doing her athletics, I see me in Abbie. I definitely, I personally live what I wanted through my

children. Like you know, seeing David at the weekend win a triathlon, it was fabulous. I run myself, but I mean that as well, you've got it on your doorstep; fell running, I mean, I love it. You've got it on your doorstep and I think 'make the most of what you've got on your doorstep'. And I like fell running and it's on me doorstep and the kids like sport.

Christine: Right Heather, you had a chance to not be here, to leave here. What happened?

Heather: I think what happened was that when I was about twenty-four, twenty-five I decided that I wanted to experience a bit more of the World and I felt quite enclosed at the farm. I felt I had jobs to do and I just felt I needed to get away and experience a bit more. So, I decided to go to Germany, because at the time Buxton was twinned with Bad Nauheim in Germany. I was working in Buxton at the time and my boss managed to get me a job out in Germany, Bad Nauheim near Frankfurt, in a hotel. And I met my husband from Glossop over there. And we came back when my son was eighteen months old, back to the farm, because we had all this space. I loved Germany to bits. Travelled all over Switzerland and various places, but we decided the Germans play hard and work hard, but they have small houses, small balconies, and I wanted to come back to where there was space for the children to grow up in. I knew that I'd got this opportunity to come back and live here at Boosley.

Christine: Ever had any regrets about doing that?

Heather: Sometimes yes, because the lifestyle we had out there was very good, we earned a lot of money, we lived in a beautiful place, but we didn't have the space in the flat. So, I sort of feel I'm sitting on the scales in the middle position. There is one part of me thinks what would have been out there, but then I didn't want my children to grow up in Germany, I wanted them to be English and to grow up in England. I just felt they'd got this lovely space to grow up in.

Christine: So, what are your hopes for the future then in Boosley Grange? Do you see yourself being here for...?

Heather: We'll probably stay here for a long time. I'd like to see it done up, perhaps as some holiday accommodation, or a catering place, or a team building place, or something with the wildlife. Maybe my children might want, or my son might want to take it on, or my daughter, you know, who knows. But I don't think I want to grow old here, because it is very isolated, difficulties of getting up the lane in bad weather and things like that. It's a bit cut off for amenities, but as long as I can, I'd like to stay here.