

The Land that Made Us is the story of eighty years of farming in the South West Peak. Christine Gregory and Sheila Hine have collated the personal accounts of local farmers and land managers, many of whom have lived and worked in this often challenging landscape for generations. In their own words, the farmers recall the changes to traditional farming in this remote and rugged landscape in the decades since the Second World War. The interviews also reflect the much bigger national story about the changing priorities in land use and food production.

The book and associated oral history archive created from these interviews were undertaken in partnership with the Farming Life Centre and the Peak District National Park, supported by the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

Arthur Slack

Arthur Slack was born in 1931 at Reddish Farm in Whaley Bridge. He worked for Mr. Lomas at Shallcross Farm near Taxal in his youth before moving back to work on his father's farm and then starting out on his own at Glebe Farm and then moving on to Overton Farm. Arthur is the father of Peter Slack and grandfather of Matthew and Sam Slack who also contributed to this oral history of farming in the South West Peak. Arthur died in September 2018.

Sheila Hine talked to Arthur in 2017 about his memories of growing-up and farming in the South West Peak over the past eighty years.

PART ONE – Growing up at Reddish Farm

97A) me Aunty Gerty, she said to me one day 'do you know why you were born in July?' So I said 'no, why, was there a reason?' She says 'your mother had got Harry, who was 3, got Alicia the girl, she was 1 and a half. And she was expecting your Fred.' And she says 'this was the middle of February'. Course she'd got no family. She had to come down and look after me mother, no electric, no mains water, and she said 'it was the foulest winter out'. This was 1929. And she had to go out in the morning to break the ice on the water trough you know, and she said it were terrible. And she says 'I said to your mother, "if you have any more kids, make sure you have 'em when the sun shines"'. And I were born in July and my younger brother were born end of April. Yeah, but she said it were terrible.

14B We reared a lot of stock and we had a lot of hens at home.

14A) Of course we had a big milk round you see at home.

14) Well, we were milking by hand. We didn't have a milking machine. We didn't have electric until 1947 and then we had electric in at home.

66A) Cos we were retailing milk, you had to keep a steady supply of milk you see. We were always either buying cattle or selling them

66) These little Irish heifers, if they gave three gallons you were doing well with them. We used to buy Irish heifers, I went with me dad. There was a fellow called Brocklehurst at New Mills, he used to buy Irish heifers. And we had this Austin car, and we also had a cattle trailer which was very rare, and there was a wheelwright lived at Whaley Bridge, made these cattle trailers.

66B) ~~and~~ we went down to see Matthew Brocklehurst. I was only a lad. And we went and he showed us these Irish heifers. And me dad said, 'oh I'll 'ave that one' and Mr. Brocklehurst said 'take the other one too. They're a pair off the same farm you know'. Me dad said 'I'm going to have a job paying you for that one, I cannae buy two'. I mean it were only 19 quid. 'I shall have a job paying for that one' but he insisted, he said 'Mr. Slack, take 'em both' and me dad kept saying 'I can't afford to'. 'Tell ya what' he says 'take 'em both, I'll have ya trailer back for that one' and he did do. And we called at wheelwrights and he said 'can you make me another cattle trailer' and he said 'well what's happened to the other one?' 'Well I had sell it to buy a cow' and he said 'well how you going to pay for it?' and dad said 'well I hope I'll have enough together by the time you've made it'. And he did make us another one. That's how they were. It was worth it, yeah.

67 Me dad bought some heifers from somewhere. These were Irish heifers and they were in wagons in Sheffield three nights in the blitz. And when they got them home you daren't drop a bucket or anything or shut a door. They were gone. And they wouldn't do a lot of good they didn't. They were shell-shocked. Oh they were nervous, you daren't drop a bucket or bang.

68) They weren't ear-tagged in those days. Your pedigrees would have a tattoo. I remember having TB testing at Reddish Farm with me dad and there was this fella called Birtwhistle, he was a Ministry vet. He lived in Buxton, a pretty religious fellow. He came down and of course the cattle weren't used to people walking about with rubber aprons on and he come down the shippen. There were 20 shippen. He put all his stuff at the far end. Course you know how they have two injections. He'd got these two injectors in his hand and me brother says 'I'll just go up between them Joe and keep 'em quiet'. And of course me brother went up between 'em and the first one jumped across and jumped straight on his foot. Well me brother let such a mouthful out. Birtwhistle came back out and he put all his stuff back in the window bottom. And he said 'Mr. Slack, did you hear what your son said?' 'Oh aye, did he say summit?' 'If he says that every time we inject a cow, I'm not doing any more'. I remember them doing that, testing 'em. But with us being milk retailers, they were very keen with us, testing the cows and always testing the milk.

69) A fella from Derbyshire County Council come round and he had three medicine bottles and they just held a pint of milk, three of them. And he put them in a brown envelope and sealed it with wax. He took two with him. He used to test them for water first thing, whether they had water in them, and he left one at the farm. And you know if there were any dispute you'd always got a sample to have it tested yourself. But you know they were pretty keen on producer retailers.

18) We had horses at home. I used to deliver milk with a pony and float and we had one more horse and originally, years ago me father used to hire out a horse and cart to the county council. He employed a fellow that did nothing else. He used to come out at 8 o'clock, take this horse out and he was gone all day and if me father wanted to use the horse he had to wait to use it until after 5 o'clock. It'd only been emptying grids. You know it hadn't been doing much really. Emptying grids at the side of the road and sweeping. But it was an income.

58) In 1936 we had an Austin car at that time, me dad had it for the milk round. We had a churn on the back and if it were wet the churn went inside, and me two older brothers and me sister were at school and I hadn't just started. He bundled me in the car one day after we'd done the round and had a bit of dinner. Course, I didn't know. It were a ride out for me and we finished up

at Tarbin near Chester and there was a fellow there called G B Ratcliffe and he was a pedigree Friesian breeder at Poole Bank Farm Tarbin. My instructions were 'don't get out, don't touch anything. I shan't be many minutes', not knowing what they were going to do. He disappeared in this house and about quarter of an hour later he came carrying a calf in a sack between them, me dad and this other fella. And of course, I soon found out why I was on this trip. I had to keep this calf quiet in the back, tied in the back, let it suck me fingers, anything to keep it rambling about, you know. And that was why I was on the trip. And of course you know what calves do when you put 'em in a sack. There was soon steam rising and smells. Anyway, we got this calf home. And he paid 15 guineas for it, a pedigree bull calf. Tarwin Gordon it was called and it made a right good bull, and local people got to know about it. Cos it were pedigree you see, and they brought their cows. Quite a number of 'em did, you know. They'd give us something every time but it weren't a lot.

59) It was a horrible job really, I remember this fellow from up here coming and all his hand were bleeding. He'd had the halter round his hand and the bloody cow had him down on the floor coming through Whaley Bridge, you know, dragging him up the road. He'd rubbed his hands raw on the back. The trouble was, you know, they'd turn up with a cow and the bull wasn't familiar with this cow and they must have a scent themselves and you turn the bull out and of course the first thing the bull would do was tip the bloody water trough up, the wheelbarrow over, tread on the brush and break it, and you had to clear all that away for a start. And then, he'd decide to have a battle with the cow. After about half an hour they'd decide to do what they should do, you know.

21) When I was a lad, one of the fellows that drove the churn lorry used to leave it in me dad's yard and I used to go with him. And we used to go to Stockport Co-op. Sometimes they used to say 'just take it to Congleton Co-op today' and it was just like another half a day's work in them days.

27) When I went with the churn lorry when I was about 10 or 12 when I did this, the most he had on was 770 gallons. He had 11 rows of 7 gallon churns. 770 gallons he had on and we'd go to about 70 farms for that. I mean, ours are doing about 750 gallons a day themselves. So all these farms that've packed up, they've just swallowed 'em up.

46) It was during the war and just after they wanted everybody to be self-sufficient you see. It was a costly exercise to buy all your stuff in. We were siloing with forks and trailers and loading it by hand. I remember one day hay-making and my dad says 'it cannae be dry, look at water running in front of the wheels'. There were some horrible wet times. There were some wet summers **in the '50s**, which started the siloing.

24) There were three lots of threshers used to go round. There was Harry and Percy Joel. They were butchers off Fairfield and they'd got a set and they used to bring eight land girls from the hostel for land girls at Chapel. And then old Harold Cartridge at Sparrow Pit, he had one of them in his (Grisette?). And then there were Jimmy Goddard at Budworth, he had a set. I spent a lot of time with him. He killed hisself with a tractor. He pulled it over the top of hisself he did. He dived with death always. Some of the daft things he did. But I spent a lot of time with him and I allus fed the drum. You know cos some people they used to drop 'em in - the sheaves and never cut the

bands off. And you know the old standard Fordson tractor it would go grrrrr. And all of a sudden it'd gather itself (and keep going).

1) When I left school in 46 there were 4 lads at home, and obviously we all couldn't stay at home and I went working on a big farm locally.

4) I was working for Mr. Lomas then. I started when I were 16.

35) I stopped there 'til I was 20 and my brother had his fatal accident and I had to come home then.

57) I had Friesians, me dad let me have 8 to start off. Of course AI were coming in then. Of course you could soon improve with that. I bought a few. I know I bought one in Leek market and Lloyd Lomas were bringing it back and we were loading it up and he said to me father 'how much did you pay for that damn thing?' and we said '91 pounds, do you remember when we used to pay 19 pounds for them?'

36) My younger brother John got married and he went living at Brandside (?) next to Turncliffe. He got married in '56 and moved out then.

And then me sister, she got married as well and she moved out to a farm.

There was only me elder brother at home then and he weren't married and we had two vans on the road delivering milk and he had one and I had one, and then I got a tractor. We had got a tractor but I bought one for myself and a pick-up baler and I used to do a lot of contracting.

12) My younger brother farmed at Bosley. You know about 16th of April he could turn 'em out down there. Like every day's a bonus if you can get them outside.

11) They always used to say a 200 day winter, anything less than that was a bonus. The recognized turning out time was 12th of May and I remember because it was the day my brother got killed in an accident, 12th of May. But it sadly started growing forward with fertilizer and that.

91) I look on the toughest bits when I retailed milk with my father. You know in bad winters '62 and '47. You know you had stockings on your hands. There were no such thing as gloves. It was damn cold you know.

92) I went to a house one day and come back and said to me father 'by hell, it's cold in that house'. 'Why? What's up?' 'Well', I said, 'there's mother, father and daughter. They're all sat round with rugs off the floor on them. There's one candle where cold water come into the slops just under the tap to stop it freezing up. No fire'. And he said 'get the sledge, let's go back to the farm and get some sticks and coal and logs'. I thought oh god Arthur, keep your gob shut, I've made meself a lot of work. But me dad were like that. He'd never be a millionaire cos he was too kind ya know. People, a lot of people were hard up when you delivered milk.

93) I remember we pulled up and there was a coal man and me dad were going up this drive to this house and the coal man said 'you wunnae' get paid there this week. There's no money. I've had all they had'. 'Oh well, somebody will pay me next week probably'. And that was his attitude.

PART TWO – Working for Mr. Lomas

1) When I left school in 46 there were 4 lads at home, and obviously we all couldn't stay at home and I went working on a big farm locally.

4) I was working for Mr. Lomas then. I started when I were 16.

1A) And this farmer had two sons, one a bit older than me and one younger. And we were milking and we'd tie-ins for 72 and we milked about 76,

2) [That was a big milking herd in those days].

3) Oh it was. We used to milk with 8 units you know and I didn't do a lot of milking cos I was busy mixing corn and feeding and cleaning out all the time. But no in those days we got up to 24 cans in a day. Which, you know was a hell of a lot. That was 10 gallons in a can.

56) Mr. Lomas and his brother that farmed at Mosley Fenn, and they both used to go to Ayr. They used to drive to Manchester, leave the car and go on the train up to Ayr. They'd have their breakfast in the railway hotel in Ayr, then buy a load of cattle, and they'd come down in the night. They'd come down in a cattle lorry that would turn up about 3 o'clock in the morning with them.

26) [It used to be lovely and warm in the shippen in winter].

Oh it did, oh aye, **you get your head on the side of a cow, milking, and you'd soon be asleep. Oh aye, it was lovely them days. Yeah, but I wouldn't go back to 'em.**

20) The milk from there, it went in churns down to Stockport Co-op. It was collected on a lorry. He came in the yard and we had a churn stand in the yard. Fidges used to come and pick it up from Ashford but they went mostly to Stockport Co-op and then they started sending it to express dairy at Wythenshawe.

31) The biggest problem when I were at Lomas's, were short measures. Oh God, it was horrible. The churns, you see, you only had a mark on. It wasn't accurate. And of course anyone that filled a churn full of warm milk, you go back later and it would be down that much. We were sending 24 cans and when they came to tip it and weigh it properly, it was short. And every day we used to get that short measure ticket.

I know when I used to go to farmers union meetings it was always the main topic. They used to do trial runs and the farmers would complain and they got down to Stockport and there was a gallon bloody short in the churn from when he set off.

They just paid you what they received cos you couldn't really argue with it. They've got you, you know.

30) When we sent milk into town your only contracts were like little corner shops and then there were no phones. You'd get a telegram or a postcard on the Monday morning. 'Oh, it's Oldham wakes this week. Everyone's gone to Blackpool, we don't want any milk.' And of course this is why farmers' wives had to make cheese and butter.

15) I didn't do a lot of milking. I was always cleaning out and mixing corn and getting hay. You see hay was loose in them days and there was a great big barn full of hay and I'd have to get a hay knife and cut a big lump out and carry it up on a bin ready for night and so much straw. Cos there was a fair lot of grain and you know we threshed a fair lot and they were fed a lot of straw in them days. It were all jolly hard work you know. Some people fed them a whole sheaf but that were a waste of time. It goes straight through 'em. You could tell by the muck spreader. You could see the birds following the muck spreader cos it was full of grain. But we used to take grain down to the corn mill and we'd have it rolled or ground depending on what we wanted it for. Very often it were for the horses.

5) Course, we used to grow a lot of green crops then as well. Cabbages and potatoes and kale and all sorts. It were all labour intensive, yeah. We used to cut kale with a binder and feed it through a chopper into a big wooden silo. That was bloody work you know. We cut kale by hand. I mean I did cos there was that marrow stem kale with a stem as thick as your wrist and there was leafy stuff. Course you could cut the leafy stuff with a binder you know and we grew acres of mangolds at this farm. Course it all had to be harvested by hand and then in winter it had to be chopped and mixed with corn.

6) We grew a lot of cabbage. I think we put in 21 thousand in one year. There used to be a fellow stood in Bakewell market from Stone in Staffordshire. At a certain time of the year he'd be there and his lorry'd be there and it was in bundles of 200 and we used to take them home and chuck 'em in a dolly tub or a bath. Cos they were dried out you know and then we used to set to on planting them in twos. One of 'em had a shovel, dug it in and sort of prised a bit of a hole behind him and you popped it in and stomped your foot on it.

7) That all wanted cutting and carting in the winter-time. We'd feed the whole cabbage to the cows and we'd go between them and drop the cabbages in front of the cows. They'd roll them round a bit in front of them but they cleaned 'em up. They had mangolds and turnips. Course they didn't use them at the same time. They'd use the mangolds then the turnips. And they were covered up for the winter and we had to go and uncover them every day. When the cabbage was done we had to change.

We used to have trucks of beet pulp come into Shawcross sidings. We used to have to cart that home. After they got the sugar out, it came from the factory in trucks. It came up from Bury St. Edmonds and places like that and there'd be nearly a trainload, you know. You could go there and there'd be about 6 farmers carting it. You used to have about 3 loads at a time about 60 ton. We had 3 traction trailers and carted it and chucked it in to a silo. We had some of those concrete silos.

9A) There were always a lot of mowing, muck spreading to do and you know there were plenty of work. There was always wheelbarrow work. It was all wheelbarrow work in them days.

9) There was the boss Mr. Lomas, and Walter and Dennis his two sons and myself. And there used to be a fella would come about 4 hours a day. They worked in the bleach works on 8 hour shifts and they used to come and do 4 hours. There was quite a few of them used to come, one at a time. They probably started coming at hay-making time. They used to muck in you know.

10) He had one of the first muck spreaders. The first lot I ever did, it broke and I thought 'this is some bloody use'. I had to clean it up. Cos a muck spreader is one of them things - they only break down full of muck. I had to fork it all out and find the chain link. But I spread thousands of tons after that. The trouble was we used a lot of bedding, a lot of straw and when you used to set off, you would overload it obviously and a big heap would fall off. And we'd have days where we'd go out muck knocking and spreading it out and layering those big bits of muckheap out.

13) The thing about when I went working there, I was amazed how little I knew about farming. You know I never questioned anything about what me dad did. Cos I thought that was it and there was only that way. And I went there and did things totally different. I used to think 'why have they done that?' And then you realize there's more than one way of doing a job.

16) At Lomas's farm, when I went there, there were 16 horses. I wouldn't say they were all working, but a lot of them were and they never seemed to get rid of any. One of the first jobs I had was burning all this harness.

17) I didn't do any horse farming. They had a Standard Fordson tractor and then they had a 'sit up and beg' Major 47 when I were there and then they had a little Ferguson while I were there.

23) We used to spread a lot of lime be hand too. We had those little, what did they call them? It was like a car axle with a disc on top, a car back axle but instead of the prop shaft being forward it stuck up and they welded a big disc on the top. 'Little Herberts' they used to call them. And of course we used to load the trailer up and it had a centre cone and you stood on the trailer trying to chuck it on the cone and the cone spread it out. This was before we had lime spreaders. And we spread tons and tons of small lime and by night we couldn't see - the eldest lad and me. It didn't do the breathing any good. That's why I've only got 40% now. It was all this dust, it didn't help, it was everything. We spread tons and tons of lime.

25) Oh you never wore masks, no. I mean when you went in the shippen and there was this white dust everywhere.

28) Anyway, I stopped with Mr. Lomas and I enjoyed it. I had all my meals with 'em, everything, they looked after me. Mrs. Lomas was a lady. She looked after me very well you know and I'd three meals a day every day and you know, she was wonderful. She just treated me like I was one of her own. Cos she had two daughters and another son besides.

32) I worked half seven 'til about half seven at night. I did six days. I never worked on a Sunday. You know the lads used to say to me at the farm 'what did you do yesterday?' Cos me dad had a milk round I went on that on Sunday and they always had this saying 'Six days shalt thou labour and on the seventh do odd jobs'.

33) Of course he had three tractors and we'd fill them up with fuel and grease and oil them. You know you were never still. You know farming was a life, you didn't know anything else.

34) I was involved in Young Farmers and the boss hated me going to Young Farmers and he'd find me any job he could on that night when I were going to try and hold me back you know. He kept his own family down. He ruled them, you know.

43) Mr. Lomas was on the War Ag. Committee. He used to go every day looking at farms and telling them what they should and shouldn't do. There was a chap called Bowsmith who was the top man from the Ministry. A big shooting man, he used to go shooting every day but they'd go round and depending how many acres a farm had they'd say you've got to plough so many acres. Well, these people had only got a horse. So the Ministry decided 'well somebody's got to plough this land'. So they got these two fellows and they used to go round ploughing and that.

64) When I worked for Mr. Lomas, the Ministry came round giving lectures and telling you what to do and what not to do and I went to this one at the town hall at Chapel. Of course, he was always curious to know what had gone on although he didn't agree. We were sat having breakfast the next morning and 'what did you learn last night?' They were talking about winter milk production then. That's when you want to get the milk when the price is better and when it's more needed. I said we were going into this winter milk production getting a calving in August and that sort of thing. He listened to me ranting on and then all of a sudden he said to me 'Arthur, I've never known a cow calf at wrong time yet and the other thing is, don't let the others see cos they dry off'. I always remember that. He shut me down right away.

35) I stopped there 'til I was 20 and my brother had his fatal accident and I had to come home then.

PART THREE – BUILDING A FARM / FAMILY LIFE

44A) When I went to **Glebe Farm**, I nearly ploughed it all

45) There was a bit of permanent pasture left because some fields you just couldn't plough them.

44) There was a bloke he used to come round on this Small Farm Scheme. He used to draw schemes up for you that he thought were the best. Of course, the trouble was we were ploughing up fields that had never been ploughed before.

37A) There was quite a lot of help ploughing and you got so much help for ploughing up and lime, you nearly got that free. You only paid 8 shillings a tonne and that was the spreading charge really.

44B) I ploughed a field on the top after we'd got hay off it and I sowed it down and it was very dry. It must have been **about '62** and it never took. Only a lot of rubbish came on it and I put some heifers on it and my wife was expecting Peter. I had to take her down to Stepping Hill Hospital cos we'd lost one girl previous to Robert and she had had difficult pregnancies. Anyway we were in the car and there was a stirk laid in the gate and I went to it. I looked up the field and there's all these others laid out on the field. I thought 'what the hell's happened to them?' I rang me brother up cos he lived next door, and I said 'I dunno what's gone wrong, get a vet. Stirks are layed out all over the place'. What it was in this field was what they call hemp nettle. It's very much like a nettle or potato top and it lies dormant in the ground until you disturb it like Charlotte does. Normally they wouldn't eat it but if there's nothing else they'll eat it, like bracken. And they got this poisoning through it. Anyway, we lost two, two went blind and we managed to save the rest. We mixed a gruel and got a hosepipe and a tube and poured it down their throats to get them to take some. But that was a rude awakening you know. It was hemp nettle poisoning.

37) My wife used to milk at night for me and I used to go out baling hay for different people. I was milking about 20 cows and we were on churns when I started then went on bulk tank when I were there. It was a big learning curve you know being your own boss and buying stuff.

49) We had a few hedges down on **Glebe Farm** but most of them were walls. In the big field about half way down there was a wall and we did take that down. It's a big job taking a wall out. Well it was. I mean you've got diggers now but then it was a hand job. There weren't a lot of making big fields round here really.

38) I grew kale and that and tried to be pretty self-sufficient and we were very busy. I milked cows and we had this milk round to do and me wife had two little kids and she went out to work. She was at a school for naughty boys and she went there domesticating. There was a pub down the road and she went down there at night behind the bar at times. Oh she was a worker. I said to my lot now 'your mother must have been a hero the stuff she did'. I only had 31 acres and a funny thing happened. I had this 31 acres and the next farm came up for sale and it was about 40 acres and I toyed with the idea to buy it. And I got John Smallman from Bakewell to have a look and he went through the house and everything and I forgot how much it was at the time and I said 'What do you reckon John?' and he said 'oh it's too much money'. I said 'yeah'. Anyway, I didn't buy it, another couple bought it and low and behold there was a knock on the door at night and a chap

and a woman and two little girls were there. 'We bought **Sitch Farm** and we don't want all that land, will you buy it?' They only wanted 10 acres and I bought the land between us, the other 30 acres. It just joined up to mine. It just worked out right you see. And then Foot and Mouth came **along in '68** and the fellow on the next farm along, **Crow Hole Farm**, he bought a farm out at Pickmere but he hadn't moved everything. He left some heifers on this farm and of course come Foot and Mouth he couldn't come and feed 'em so he got in touch with me. He said 'can you feed the beasts for me and I'll straighten up with you after the winter. Make a note of how much hay you use'. And I did this, and it came spring and he said 'do you want to buy that land?' so I said I was interested. So I went to see Mr. Hampton in Buxton because me dad knew him through Flash Loyal Teapot Society and Brook Taylor's. So I bought 35 acres for 3 thousand pounds I think it was. Of course it joined up again you see.

39) I hadn't increased me cows cos I was that busy all the time and I did put a Dutch barn up cos you got a lot of grant for putting a dutch barn up. I put this two-bay Dutch barn up and being a bighead like I am I said 'dad, come and see the barn I put up'. He just walked in the field and said 'oh hell, it isn't half big enough'. And it wasn't. You know I put another two bays on and another lean-to on the side. He said 'you must always think big you know'.

39A) Anyway, things went on and the next farm came on the market. I'd been expecting it cos it hadn't been farmed very well and there was a bit of conflict with the father and the son. I know they didn't get on very well. Anyway it came on the market. I went to the sale and I never said a word to my wife and my brother-in-law, he came to the sale. And I bought it and my brother-in-law says 'I'll have to come home with you'. I said 'why?' He says 'your wife's going to shoot you when you get home'. Anyway, we went in and my brother-in-law were grinning. My wife said 'what you grinning at?' cos she didn't know where we'd been. Me brother-in-law says 'he's just bought **Overton Farm**'. 'I bloody hope not' she says, 'he wants to buy more concrete, never mind more grass'. Anyway, she calmed down and she said 'as long as you can pay for it. You can have it'. But it was one of the biggest mistakes I made. You know I should've taken a bit of mortgage out. I spent all me money and I couldn't really get going fast enough.

40) It was good farming. We used to grow potatoes on it. The fellow before me grew potatoes and wheat. Up near the farm there were 30 acres of dead flat land. It was at 950 feet, it is high but not as high as some people are. I bought the moor after. I bought Overton and I made a mistake and I did pay for it with what I'd sold my own little farm for and what I had. I was short of capital all the time cos I put a milking machine in and it took me a while just to get going properly. But the first year, **it was 1976 when I first moved** there and it was that good summer and of course not being stocked up, I mowed every inch there was. It was just a matter of mowing it and baling it and I finished up with hay even in the garage. There were mains water in, there's a pump in the river but that's another story. Anyway, water was no problem and I had all this hay. Me dad just stood in the yard and said 'well if you've got it, you must need it'. I said 'what you on about?' He said 'if you've got it you need it and if you haven't got it you can manage'. And do you know, by the end of April we hadn't a bale of hay left. It was very good. The stock just ate and ate and ate it. He taught me a lesson that way.

41) The house had been split into two and I got a local lad to put it back. There were two staircases and two kitchens and he made it back into one.

45A) Up at **Overton Farm**, when I used to go up there as a lad hay making, it was all herby stuff, short stuff, and when it were dry it would rustle with all those pod things. It was really herby stuff, marvelous stuff. I mean - that's all gone now. There is one field next door, Crow Hole, they only put manure on it. Fred Heeley gets hay off it cos that's still a meadow - a flower meadow that is.

46A) We grew some rich corn down at **Overton**, oats and that. We got that green and that were damned hard work. It were grand stuff when it come out. We carted it green and siloed it in an open silage pit but it were grand stuff, it were just like wine when it come out.

48) There were drainage schemes early on. It was all handwork really, there were no big machines. There were grants for it.

76) I started off with bucket units. Then I put a round-the-shed pipeline in. You know cos I'd gone bulk. And then, I put on a 4.8 parlour in and then I doubled it up to 8.8. And then I put automatic cluster removers on it and then I put automatic feeders in it. And I got to that stage and I couldn't go any further and we had that in 30 years or more. And you know I produced some milk in that. I'd done ever so well.

77) Our two lads had been to college and they wanted to stop on milk and it meant putting a brand new set-up in. You've either got to keep up or fall behind, that's the trouble, and particularly if you've got younger members. You either keep 'em interested or else you don't. Matthew the elder one's a very good cowman. And Samuel, he's good with cows but he's good with tackle as well. By doing their job better and looking after tackle and feeding better they've done well.

72) Last spring it was opening up - the price of milk. We had a very good spring and people started investing more and more and they produced a lot of milk, I mean our lads did. They were averaging 7 gallons a piece no trouble you know on a pretty low corn regime. You know, silage and corn. And then they had this embargo with Russia, China did something, I don't know what it were. Of course Ireland you know, they do a lot of milk and they're expanding all the time.

73) Me grandson were talking and he said 'Oh a lot will pack up grandad'. I said 'Matthew, they don't shoot 'em. Somebody buys 'em'. He were telling me this week about someone at Millers Dale, they bought a hundred Ayrshires on a farm somewhere. And everywhere you go, they're expanding. The trouble is, if they've got commitments they've got to find the money. My lads, they're in dairy co. They had a meeting down near Alton Towers and there were six farmers there and they were all milking 600 and 800 and they were all on rented farm paying the equivalent of 3 pence a litre rent.

75) You see this is what's happened. When cows were tied up in shippens you couldn't go any higher. You know if you'd got tie-ins for 30 cows that's all you could have. You couldn't build another one because the only way you could build another one was stone. Then pre-fabricated buildings came out and breezeblocks and they could build anything they want then and of course they went off having them tied up. They went and put 'em in straw yards. They found out they started getting mastitis - all these cattle in straw yards. So they said 'right, we'll put 'em in cubicles' and they soon found out if they put 40 cubicles they could put 45 in, you know.

90) We had a few sheep at Overton. Me daughter-in-law's very good with sheep. She worked with a shepherd fella and she learned a lot about sheep and they bought some Texels. They did very well with them and they used to top the market with lambs. They were very good sheep. I used to take them sown to sergeants at Uttoxeter, the lambs. I used to take 'em to Bagshaw's even. Anyway, lads wanted to milk more cows so they got rid of sheep. We've had some tax sheep, you know somebody else's sheep all winter, and they've just gone off now.

78) When I come living down here, my wife had got arthritis very bad and Peter had got married. He'd got three children. You see my daughter died when she was 30 and she left us with two little girls. One was two and one was six months. The two-year-old had been living with my son because my daughter was so ill with cancer and the baby stayed with us. She lives with me now. She's seventeen Heidi is. She's living with me now I've been ill.

79) But the thing I notice then when I came living here was I miss being sat round the table at breakfast time discussing what we'd done and what wanted doing, you know. And I sort of missed out on that after.

80) I said to the doctor in Manchester Royal. He came round one day. I'd had all sorts of tests, everything you know. I was on bed rest for three weeks, couldn't get off. I was wired up to monitors and he said 'we're having a discussion about you later on today to see where we can go'. He came round next day and he said 'we haven't had that discussion yet'. And of course I were getting a bit weary you know. They weren't making any headway. And I said to him 'you know, my son's a farmer' 'oh is he?' 'If he got out in the morning and up yard, there's a cow laid flat on't floor. He doesn't say to his sons we'll have a discussion about that tomorrow. He's got to do something about it now. You know, start on an elimination process. Has it got milk fever? Has it got staggers? Has it got this, has it got that?' I says 'you can't leave it and walk past. By the time you've made up your mind with me...' So he said 'You're a hopeless case to be quite honest'. I'd had me veins stripped in my legs, they couldn't do a bypass, I've only got 40% lung function and he says 'anaesthetist would put you to sleep but you would nae come back'. He said to me 'we daren't go down that road'. I've got three stents in. I had two in a year ago and one in 15 years ago.

81) I'm never stuck for words.

82) When we come down 'ere I did go back milking a bit and then my wife was ill and Peter's lads went to Reedheath [?] and he has a bloke comes part-time as well and shares him with another farmer you know. I don't go up to the farm a big lot. I don't interfere. If they want me to know owt, they'll tell me. If they don't, they won't. I did used to do a bit of gofering, you know, gofer this, gofer that, and that sort of thing. I'm blessed with a very good family. My son's excellent and he'll ask me things. I mean he rings me up every day or he comes down and he never flaps and that's worth a lot that is. And I mean my granddaughter's the same. I've had two heart attacks while she's been here and she just calls the ambulance and gets everything organised.

83) I'm a bit apprehensive to be quite honest. I don't want to move very far. I mean the doctor said to me 'look Arthur, you can drive, you can knock about, you're 84. What more do you want to do? You know, you cannae do everything and you want to be thankful'.

84) The trouble is, my family are very active in things like I used to be. You see, Peter writes plays for the Young Farmers and he goes out public speaking. Lydia his eldest girl, she goes out, she did three years at Cirencester and came out as top student. She's now in London doing two years at London University. She's just flown to America. She's got a placement at the UN for the summer for four months. And I mean you can't get much higher than that and she does a lot of after-dinner speaking all over the country.

85) As long as I don't get uptight I'm alright. I go out, I go to church, to two different churches, and very often I read the Lesson. I've read the Lesson twice in Derby cathedral when I was NFU chairman.

98) Well I write for the church magazine, you know. They keep asking me to write local things. People know nothing these days, about what went off or what happened you know.

ANECDOTES

61) I've a lovely story. When the Foot and Mouth were on and the AI couldn't come round and they used to leave you a little syringe on the gatepost. My neighbour Walter Mellor, a very good farmer, he decided he wanted AI one day and he thought he'd try this. He was only a little chap. Of course the cows were tied up in the shippen and he stood on a box doing what he should do at his end and his wife used to be at the front with the cow's head under her arm talking to it and stroking it. After a while, she turned round and she said 'Walter, you're not doing it properly'. So he said 'how do you know?' She said 'this cow should be smiling and it isn't'.

62) Funny thing is, he served six cows and got 'em in calf, which was better than AI. But that was a learning curve.

89) Aunty Gerty used to tell me about her husband. He used to work for somebody in Longnor who said 'take those two cows to Leek today' and he had to walk 'em in the road. 'I'll meet you at Thorncliffe' to get 'em into market cos Leek market was in the middle of town then. 'And I'll come on horse and float and bring me wife cos she's going shopping' he said. 'I'm going to Rushton to buy a bull'. So he says 'when me wife's done shopping you take her home then come back for me after'. Anyway, they got the cows in the market and this lady did her shopping, came back and he set off back with her and she says 'you won't have to be long going back. I'm in a hurry to get home'. They were going up Thorncliffe Bank. She'd made him rush this horse to get up there and when he gets to the house she'd had a baby in the float this woman. Never said owt this woman, never said owt. There were a servant girl in this house and he had to fetch her out, then he had to go with the horse and trap down to Hartington and fetch a doctor and come back. Then he had to go back to Leek, all with the same horse, and his boss said, 'where the hell have you been?' He said. 'Your wife's had a baby on't float!'. He said 'oh has it come?'

WILDLIFE

50) I was 55 before I saw a badger but we always had peewits and curlews. I mean when we had horses you used to mark where the nests were and woe betide you if you ever went over that with a harrow or the roller. Everybody knew where it was because you put a stick in and as I say, woe betide you.

50B) We bought some more ground, my brother and I, off Lane Head Farm, three big fields and one of them had these gripes in, watery places where there were always peawits but there aren't any now.

50C) We've no peewits, no curlews. I reckon it's the badgers have done it. I mean, we've had all our badgers vaccinated, or they think they've done them, all against TB. We've just had a third test, 160 cattle and they've all passed so we assume our badgers are clean. The theory is, if we get rid of 'em, TB badgers might move in instead. This is the worry. There's quite an active group. The lady only lives down the road here, she's a nurse and she's taken a gap year off or something. She's got permission to do this vaccination with quite an active badger group. Derbyshire Wildlife Trust have got 50 thousand pounds from somewhere. I chaired a meeting one night at Chapel Golf Club with these facilitators they called them. Where we are, it's like a fringe area. We go from up to the Cheshire border 'til you get to the other side of Macclesfield and you get a bit of TB. Down Ashford way they've always had a problem. They've got this corridor here and they think if they vaccinate all the badgers here it'll be a good thing. You see they did wonder whether to vaccinate all the badgers either side of the M56 that goes across from Manchester and do them all on one side and see what happens. You see, they had a setback unfortunately a farmer in Cumbria who was on four year testing that has supposedly no badgers, no TB. He sold a herd of cattle in Beeston market and these cattle went all over England. So they've gone down with TB and they thought he was clear. That has really upset the applectart.

51) As I say, I miss the peewits and the curlews. Last year, I went with my grandson Matthew to look at a machine down in Cheshire. I had got a doctor's appointment so I dropped my grandson off at the moor gate at the top and said 'you can walk down'. He got out and he said 'quick granddad, get out' and I said 'what's up Matthew?' He said 'listen, cuckoo's just there' and this cuckoo was about 50 yards up the moor. His mum hears it every year but when you're in a car you don't hear it do you? It was marvelous, The younger one anything you can name, he can do it. He made some new garage doors. We had an open cart shed and he put these garage doors on. I was up there two years ago. I said 'Sam(?) look at what you've done'. He said 'why, what's the matter?' I said 'them swallows have just flown 3 thousand miles and they cannae get in'. And they were going mad in the yard cos they couldn't get into the cart shed. I said 'just open that door a foot' and he opened the door and they were in and out like mad.

52) I generally see the swallows and hear the cuckoo about the 20th of April.

WINTER IN THE SOUTH WEST PEAK

[Snow]

96) The churn lorry, he came down the field, he couldn't come down the road, there was that much snow. The ground was that hard. They talk about snow now. They don't know what snow is.

96A) You see when our John was at Branside, Dale Head,

96C) he said 'one night, it were blowing a blizzard'. There was a knock on't door, I thought who the 'ell can this be?' And it were George Mycroft from Thirkelow, his neighbour. 'Av ya any cigarettes John?' 'Yeah I've got two and you're not avin' 'em. Take ya hat and coat, let's walk down to Parks at Harper Hill'. And he walked down to Parks at Harper Hill, had a drink and a packet of fags. Cos what they didn't realise, when they walked down, you know it doesn't snow that way, it snows that way. Wind was behind 'em they were soon there. But coming heading to wind on't way back he were made away. And his wife went absolutely spare. Then another night, another knock and he opened the door and there were four lads. 'What you doin'?' 'Our car's stuck in a snow drift'. 'Where?' 'Oh a mile over the road'. 'How've you got here?' He said 'oh we saw them telegraph wires and there must be a house at end of them somewhere'. They kept coming. Oh they had some wicked weather.

96B) They used to say 9 months winter and 3 of bad weather.

97) Well when we bought that farm we bought it off a fellow called Bob Wade. And there was a garage and this garage was set in the bank and he said 'I never saw the garage nor the car for 16 weeks'. That were '42. You know, it were freezing day and night.