

Alec Bull's First interview held in his home in East Tuddenham, Norfolk (first part carried out by volunteer of LOHP on 3rd April 2012)

A summary mainly of Mr Bull's year spent in Garboldisham

Born in Hicham, Suffolk.

Father an owner occupied small farmer

Went to school in Bury St Edmunds and left aged 14 to help on the farm in war (WWII). Worked on the land from then on.

Married at 20 and lived in Icklingham then moved to Timworth to look after a herd of cows for 2 yrs. Farmer had a short fuse and Alec was given a week's notice. He placed advert in EADT (East Anglian Daily Times) and 2 days later he had 11 replies. Chose to go to Garboldisham to John Laurie started in late October 1951 til Oct 1952. Moved by general haulier, carter, coal merchant with coal yard at Smallworth (Alec Bull not sure?) or on common joining Broomscott near mill.

At J Laurie's farm he was one of 6 cowmen looking after 100 cows. Now it would be 1 cowman to 600 cows. Worked a 6 day week with a rolling day off and every 6 weeks you had weekend and Monday off making it 3 days off together. Pay reasonable £7 per week 5am to 5pm with 1hr for breakfast and 2 hrs lunch, overtime in evenings done with no additional pay, as/when needed. (Making it a 54 hrs week).

Alec had the first house passed the farmhouse with a pond in front. All houses in the Ling were occupied by farmworkers.

6 cowmen and 1 pigman who lived with his wife and 10 children. He doubled up helping with milking cows, did all Ling shoe repairs.

Percy Alderton, a retired blacksmith, was second cowman. Turned his hand to lots of other jobs: teaching others how to lay field drains, making clay lump bricks (no local clay so several men had to dig out the ditches a further foot deep removing the clay, drying it out then mixing it with straw. A horse Bonny trod the clay and straw to mix it, then it was ready to cut and mould into bricks then dried out for use. These clay bricks were used for repairing all farm and domestic buildings. A real hard worker.

Fred Shaw had a cottage near woodmill with his wife and daughter. He died aged 49. Took an ounce of shag tobacco a day. No smoking allowed when milking, rest of farm work was permitted.

Another worker was Ernie Tole/Toll with wife 14 yrs his senior and a female lodger. Had a bad temper.

Hugh England married one of Fred Shaw's sisters.

When John Laurie died his son John took over the farm and reduced staff cowmen to 3 (from 6). Harry Shaw moved to Honnington farm when jobs were lost.

There were fights between some the farm hands esp Ernie and Hally and Percy, resulting in Ernie having to find a new job and his lodger was expecting. Alec lived closeby and heard Ernie's method

of moving out disturbed by a tremendous crash caused by throwing brass bedsteads out the upstairs windows.

One farm hand moved to Scotland and set a builders business in Lossiemouth.

There were 33 farm workers and only 2 of them were over 40 years old, one being the gardener who was in his 50's.

Stumpy lived in a cottage on the Ling and was a tremendous strong worker able to chop and top 2.5 acres of sugar beet in a week by himself (done by the chain ie 22 yards). Much of the work was piecework including hedging and ditching and some harvesting.

Had to tar the outside of farm buildings in time between haymaking and harvest.

A tall German man who was married to an English woman moved in as general farm worker, memorable because he wore a brown uniform.

John Laurie died of a heart attack aged 49 had a son John and two daughters. Jimmy was youngest son aged c. 16 in 1951/2, he learnt boxing and in a fight, put Ernie in his place.

Alec heard from old Mrs Laurie aged 92 about the family.

The cottages on the Ling all had good sized gardens around half an acre and the workers pooled their resources and many of the gardens were ploughed by Percy and then sown with same crop either potatoes or sugar beet, when harvested they managed to send a lorry load to the factory (got a permit for this) . This would have helped boost their wages.

This links to a later interview carried out by Mike Harding with Alec Bull.

Sarah Day

Volunteer for LOHP