



*A voice for our village*

## Interview with Derek Birch

Derek Birch, ('DB'), born 6 February 1933

Interviewer : Irini Tzortzoglou ('IT')

Date : Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> May 2016

Location : The Byre, Mynsome Mill Farm, Cartmel (IT's house)

Recording duration : 43 mins 6 secs

- IT I am Irini Tzortzoglou. It is the 19<sup>th</sup> of May 2016, and I am in the Byre at Aynsome Mill Farm, ready to chat with Derek Birch who has kindly agreed to be interviewed for the oral project of the Cartmel Village Society. So thank you Derek very much for agreeing to be interviewed, and before we start chatting, for the benefit of the record, would you be kind enough to tell us your full name and date of birth ?
- DB Derek Birch 6.2.33 ... 6<sup>th</sup> of February 1933 in other words.
- IT Thank You. Were you born in Cartmel, or the area around here ?
- DB I was born in [1 min] Backbarrow, and I left there when I was roughly about three year old, and I came, we came to live at High Newton, when they were then, in about 1935, 36, they were making what they called the new road through High Newton.
- IT So your family moved ?
- DB Well, mi father came to work on the new road, and that's why we came to move up there.
- IT Did you have any siblings ?
- DB Yes. I'm one of five brothers and two sisters.
- IT In those days big families ?
- DB Big families, Yes.
- IT Now, we met someone today, and referred to you, as the "indestructible" Derek. [DB laughs] So I thought it might be very interesting for the listeners to [2 mins] know, and for myself, to know where that came from, because I have a feeling it has to do with your prowess on the field.
- DB Oh ... well. Well it wouldn't be much at football, 'cos I didn't play much football down here at Cartmel. So it must have been cricket. Was it ?
- IT Tell us about cricket. Absolutely, that's what he said.
- DB Oh, right. What can I tell you about cricket ? There's ... I came ... out of ... when I was ... came out of the army, doing mi two years National Service, I came back and ... I came down to play here at Cartmel. But before then, as a young lad, at 14 or 15, I played at ... Field Broughton had a team then. And then, of course, when I went in to do mi two years

National Service, they broke up, 'cos they didn't have enough players. And then I came down here to Cartmel after the two years, in 1956, [3 mins] and I played on there for 38 years ... at ... on the Cartmel sacred ground, as we used to call it. [laughs]

IT And you didn't just play cricket, did you ? [DB : Yes] You didn't play football ?

DB Oh I played football only for a short while, [IT : Ah, OK] and my football days were very much limited because I played ... probably about ... about one part of a season, end of a season, beginning of another season, and then I got an injury called cartilage problems. I eventually went into hospital to have it attended to, and believe it or not, but I was laid in bed for nineteen days, when I had this operation done. And today, you can go in in the morning, and you can walk out in an afternoon, with a cartilage problem. A lot of people do anyway. [4 mins] But my footballing days with Cartmel were short lived, but mi cricket didn't.

IT And I understand that your association with the club has been ongoing, and still is, in a way.

DB In a way, just only just in a way now, because there's new people taking over, yer know, and ... and they ... a lot of them wouldn't know who I was, down on the ... in the ... 'cos there's different people coming in to play now, so ... some of them ... a lot of them do know me, but there's a lot that don't know me.

IT I find that difficult to believe, because I understand, at the Annual Dinner, last Saturday, at the Annual Dinner of the club, your association with the club was honoured, and I believe you were presented with something, by the club, [DB : Oh], which we have here ?

DB Oh, I [5 mins] see what you mean now. The ... yes when I gave over playing, mi playing days, I went on to the committee, and was a worker for the ... like everybody else, raising funds, in all sorts of ways for the club, and I kept on going, and year after year, and probably ... well, last ... last ... last March, it was 60 years ago since I came to the club, from out of the army, and I'm still with it, and I ... I was ... what was it ... oh, and I ram rodded the race days, for funds for the club, and I did that for ... I did that for six years, and then I've been doing ... working on the racecourse for the races, with the football club, for 30 ... [6 mins] for 30 years. So I've been altogether 30 years on one, six on another, and 60 years, still working for the club.

IT That's wonderful. Long may it continue. [DB : Yes]. And what was it that they gave you in that wallet ?

DB Well, it was a presentation night for all the lads at end of season, for all the trophies for their achievements, yer know, everything else. And ... this thing came up. And I ... well, it's unbelievable but they made this presentation to me of this ... of this anorak, with my name printed on it, here, and ... to ... 1956-2016, with mi name on it, and committee. And ... I went up for this presentation, and honestly, I could hardly reply. I was ... it's what they call ... I was [7 mins] gob smacked, in other words. [laughs] And I didn't know what the hell to say, but I just said, well, thank you, and I'll wear it with pride. And I honestly ... I was ... I was taken back.

IT I'm sure that you more than deserve it, Derek.

- DB It's ... phew ... it's ... it's out ... honestly taken the wind out of mi sails.
- IT It's acknowledgement of all your good work, [DB : Yea, I suppose it is}, and it's only right and fitting. Thank You for sharing that. [DB : It's alright]. Thank You. So, very important, in the life of Cartmel, because I suspect that lots of people attended the sports days. It was one of the few things of entertainment, I suppose, in the old days, [DB : Yes, yes, yes], [8 mins] and we didn't have all the modern ...
- DB And I did say a few words afterwards, after the presentation of everybody, and I just said to them that this is where you make your friends, and your pals for life. And there's Neil and Paul Airey of the football club, they are big friends, and they've come right through from the juniors, of 8, 9 years old, right through till they went out of their age group, then they went into senior football, they did all the time in senior football, Neil, I think, managed the 2<sup>nd</sup> team for 9 years, now is managing it with Paul Airey, for all this ... I'm on the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation, by the way, of children coming through.
- IT Fantastic, isn't it ? [DB : Yes, it is]. So it's not just about the sport ?
- DB Tisn't just about ... no, course it isn't. You make your friends. And, of course they ... they make their friends down there ... and they used to say down at Cartmel, yer know, that if yer kicked one, [9 mins] you kicked them all.
- IT Which meant what ?
- DB Well, it meant that they all stick up for one another. [IT : Oh, I see]. You see ... if yer kicked ... it's a phrase, [IT : Yes], it's a phrase, [IT : Yes], to say that, [IT : Yes], that if yer kicked one, yer kicked them all.
- IT So is it safe to say that you actually build character, by being associated with sport, for so many years ? I'm not just talking about you, I'm talking about everybody.
- DB Well, each individual has his own character. Some are very quiet lads but good footballers, and others are a little bit ... up front, if yer know what I mean, and ... there's all sorts of different characters, in any sport there is, and however yer take it, yer know, some are ... some are outward going, and some are not quite so outward going, but they're still good players. Yea, yea.
- IT So very interesting, your sports related life, but [10 mins] I was very very interested to hear from you about your professional life, and I'm sure lots of people who listen to this interview would love to hear how the particular field in which you make your earnings, your living, has evolved over time. So tell us what you did, or what you do still.
- DB What I used to do, yes, well, I ... I worked in a saw mill for two years, at Backbarrow, and then, my brother-in-law at that time got my father a job, and mi brother a job, with a big building firm in Grange, which was G F Postlethwaite's. And they did employ a lot of ... a lot of men, up to a hundred at one time. But not just decorating, not ... there was only about four or five decorators, but there was every other trade in [11 mins] the building trade, 'cos they were building the council houses and that after the war, [IT : OK], yer see, in 1949 when I

started, I think. And I ... mi brother-in-law came back and said he wants an apprentice decorator. Well, I had no inkling whether to be a decorator, a plasterer or builder, or whatever it was. And mi Dad looked at me and ... mi Dad was one of these people who wouldn't ... didn't rate much about serving yer time, for some reason or other, but anyway, he let me go and serve mi time and ... and I continued on, served mi time up to I was 21. 'Cos the serving of yer time was when yer left school at 14, even though I came in it at 16, it was ... you came out of yer time at 21. And that's ... [IT : That was the apprenticeship ?] That was the apprenticeship, yes.

IT [12 mins] So you went on to become a decorator, a fully fledged qualified [DB : Yes] decorator.

DB I learnt a trade from ... from men who were ... were pre-war decorators, if you know what I mean, who, in a way ... yes, time did mean something, but they were the quality decorators of that time, and there was ... they were really clean and tidy, and yer know, when you were apprentice, you were ... used to say "seen and not hard", [laughs] yer know, keep your nose clean in other words, don't be spouting up too much. And anyway, went on, I leant mi trade, and continued on from that really.

IT Thanks. How would you say that trade ... because, these days, your son [13 mins] has inherited the family business, hasn't he ? [DB : Yes, he has, yes] So how has ... and you've seen all the progress, how has that trade changed over the years from when you started. Could you give us some examples, or a feel of that ?

DB Well, yer see, when yer first start being an apprentice, you are "the boy". And of course you get all the menial type jobs that men don't want to do, the boy .. the lad will do that, whether its sweeping up, or brewing up, or whatever, yer know. And bit by bit, yer progress on, and you ... you're at the top there, on that ladder, up there, that's your job, not me, tradesman down here. I'm getting the ladder work. And as it goes on, and yer pick up bits and pieces, and yer learn, and then they let yer to do these different things, and then yer start learning, then of course ... the paper hanging, really ... was one of those [14 mins] jobs which you had to have a lot of practice at. Well, I went home after I'd learnt ... picked it up from the tradesmen, and I went home and practiced at home, which I think pleased mi mother and mi father, [laughs] they could do with decorating at home, yea.

IT Was wallpaper similar to what it is today, [DB : No, not really] in terms of look or how it came when you bought it ? [DB : well ...] Was it ready to hang, and paste it, or ...

DB No, it was ... it was ... it had to be trimmed. And sometimes, if you phoned up ... sometimes they used to phone ... but there was a machine to take of the edges, 'cos there was a certain edge left on, so that the edges that yer going to butt up together weren't damaged. And so they'd put it onto a thing and they just put it through a machine and it took all the edges off. And [15 mins] that's how it was in those early days, and then they started, in latter years, they started trimming it before yer got it, and then it was wrapped up, and then the edges ... and then of course it was machine done, which was precise trimming, for the pattern and everything else. But no, the wallpapers in the early days was floral papers, mainly floral papers, there was some plain ones of course, and ... there was always a technique of how you put it on ... things that you had to follow if you walked into a room through the door,

and you would look to see where to start from. You always started from the window, and you worked round, and then the idea was, that if the joints weren't that good, they were facing away from you. [laughs]. That what called it, that's what they said, and they always finished in [16 mins] the shortest bit above a door, actually. But that's how we were trained in, yer know, to do it in that way. But the papers of quality were, oh dear me, if you got them pasted, most of them you had to get them on right away, because they were like tissue paper, they got wet, and that's how it was. But progressed on ... years ... and it ... And of course yer know, decorating really is a ... is a passion. Because change ... passions change ... passions change in clothing, and everything else in life. But it does. And it used to be anaglyptas ... anaglypta papers which you emulsion painted over, and then came in after the anaglyptas, came in the ... the blown vinyls, which was a flat backed paper, which were easier to hand than what the anaglyptas were. And ... and the [17 mins] thing was that, anaglyptas, you had to paste them, let them soak for so long, then put them on. Well, the blown vinyls, you could nearly pick 'em up off the board and put them on. But then the passion changed as regards to that because, wallpapers, anaglyptas and the ... anaglyptas and the blown vinyls, they emulsioned them over to the shades that you wanted, which suited your room, that it's in, also suited to your soft furnishings, which was yer curtains, and yer cushions, and other things that yer had in yer soft furnishings, and that's how things changed. At one time, it was a passion to have striped paper up above, and a floral one up forming a dado, with a broad band of patterned border going right [18 mins] round, and I think that now it's gone out of fashion. And we do come across them now and again but it's another passion thing. Very rarely now, at this stage of 1916, 2016 should I say, that we don't put as many floral papers on, unless it's a special feature on a wall, in a big room, or a room ... that's how it is now.

IT Would you say that wallpaper came in at a time when people started perhaps having a bit more money, 'cos ... I suspect in the old days, people would just paint. What would they use ?

DB Oh, it was distempers, just on to plain walls, really, unless they went down to ... well, we used to joke about it, I wonder where they got this wallpaper from. If the customer got their own, they might have got it off Ulverston Market day, [laughs] probably one and sixpence [1<sup>s</sup>/6<sup>d</sup>] a roll, which, I think, one and six, [19 mins] what is it, seven and a half pence [7½p] in today's money. But that's what we used to say ... but ... no, a lot of people ... things of course ... things have changed so much in people's lifestyles, and things have moved on, because ... then, there wasn't quite so much decorating done in the winter.

IT Why is that ?

DB Well, the thing is that ... in my belief, that once houses got central heating in, and then people become more affluent, and then fitted carpets came in, yer see, and that's ... that's I think, in my mind, [phone starts ringing in background] that people ... people could then decorate, people could then decorate in winter without ... 'cos the house was [20 mins] warm for ... yer know, the people didn't like to be disturbed much in those days in the winter. And that's how, I think, how it used to be. [background conversation on phone] What's that ?

IT The phone.

- DB Oh well that's normal, isn't it. It happens on television.
- IT It does. Talking about price, you mentioned the price of wallpaper at the time, how has figures changed in terms of earnings from when you started ? What would you be earning when you started, after you finished your apprenticeship ?
- DB That is ... that is laughable. [laughs]
- IT In today's money or in those days' money ?
- DB In those days ... in those days it was simply laughable, 'cos they said, well, the boss of the firm in Grange, that I went to work for, [21 mins] will put you on trial for three months. And it was eight and a half pence [8½<sup>d</sup>], oh ... wait a minute, half a ... eight and a half pence, but not today's pence. Whereas you have five pence you put the 'p' at the bottom, don't yer ... in them days it was the 'd' at the top, it was that kind of eight and a half, eight pence, eight and a half pence, then it ... and after mi three months, it went on to eleven and three farthings [11¾<sup>d</sup>]. Not a shilling an hour, eleven and three farthings. [IT : an hour ?] An hour. And I can't just ... I've forgotten how ... it was probably about ... it was probably less than two pound [£2] a week, I think, I can't just remember. But we did have to put some hours in, because they were working out of the district, and at times I was putting in 49½ hour weeks, and 46½ hour weeks, 'cos them days, we worked 8½ hour days, [22 mins] and Saturday mornings, which made it up to a 46½ hour week. And that was a normal working week for everybody in the building trade. Yea.
- IT And how much would you say Neil, or any other decorator, would charge now, per hour ?
- DB D'you know, I'm not so sure, but its into the teens ... I'm lost on what he's doing now, but its into the teens, pounds. I don't know whether its sixteen [£16] or seventeen [£17] pounds an hour now. But we're on ... we're in the building ... classed in the building trade, but yer see plumbers are in the building trade, electricians are classed as in the building trade, as is brick layers, plasterers and joiners. But ... the plumbers and that, as I've heard, have just of recently, are anywhere between twenty four [£24] and twenty seven [£27] pounds an hour, for plumbers, and probably electricians, and they are. So things have changed quite a good bit.
- IT In terms of clothing, what [23 mins] did you used to wear to go to work ?
- DB Well in Gr... in ... well you had to follow the trend as what yer tradesmen you were working with was boiler suits, white boiler suit, with a belt on, and a lot of those fellars ... well every Monday morning, you had to have a clean pair of overalls on. And ... the ... course you being the lad, you got some of the dirtier jobs, but when you get older overalls, you tend to have a ... yer good ones for ... yer know, the clean work, and sometimes, if yer had an awful dirty job, well then you would have another ... I used to have another older pair, 'cos I liked to always look clean in mine. And some of the old ... lot of the old chaps there ... and I got into the way of it as well, that I ... that they wore a tie, had a tie on. [IT : underneath the overalls ?] Underneath the overalls. [IT : For what ... you wore a jacket, a shirt ?] Well, yer has a shirt, [24 mins] a pullover, and a boiler suit, and put a tie on 'cos yer looked smart going into

people's houses, 'cos there was some class houses, and customers that we went into, some beautiful houses.

IT Well, I was going to ask you, presumably the people who afforded decorators were the more affluent people, would you say ?

DB One would nearly think so. Yes,yes. I would nearly think so, yes.

IT But you did commercial buildings as well ?

DB Not ... well if you call ... I don't know. It was mainly ... it was mainly private houses when I was serving mi time. [IT : Was it ?] But after I'd served mi time, then there was, if you call hotels commercial buildings, [IT : Yes], then it was commercial as well as private. Yes, yes.

IT Any buildings that you have been involved in around the area that we might know ?

DB Well ... I think, I think I'm right in saying that looking back, and tracing my memory, [25 mins] that I think I would ... I think we would work on most hotels in Grange, probably not quite 'em all, but I could go round 'em all and think we've worked at them. Grand Hotel was the biggest. You've heard of the Cumbria Grand Hotel ? [IT : No, is it there now ?] You've not ? Yes, it's opposite the ... if yer ... at the bottom golf course, on the Meathop Road, and yer look back and yer see ...yer can see the ... the Cumbria Grand Hotel, and it is a big hotel. And it was bought over by some firm from up the North East, and they're doing all sorts of repairs and what have you, and when they put the scaffold up, the ... we painted the outside of that, and it is a big big hotel. Biggest that ever ... biggest round here, no question.

IT You've worked, I believe, in an hotel in Newby Bridge ? [DB : The Swan Hotel] The Swan. [DB : Yes] What happened at The Swan ?

DB What [26i mins] happened at The Swan ?

IT You did a difficult room there, I understand ? [DB : A difficult room ?] Yes. {DB : What do you mean in ... how difficult ?} Well, challenging in terms of wallpaper.

DB Oh, right, yes. Well we started ... I went and introduced myself down at The Swan, because winter time, but winter time, winter time was again those times when work was thin on the ground, for inside work, because we stopped painting outside in winter, when end of October comes, and then we're wanting inside work right round till March, and that's quite a bit of time. So I went and introduced myself, but I knew one of the ... the builder that was working down there, and I went and introduced myself. And I said, well if you've any work inside, or want anything, I'm just up the road, and I said I know Tony the builder, that was Tony Woodburn who just lived down the road from me, and anyway, I had to go down and meet the management. [27i mins] And I got some work from them, and continued on working there for 14, 14 or 15 years, I think. [IT : Regular maintenance] Yes, and painted the massive outside, its unbelievable. But we did ... go on ... [IT : No]. And there was a cocktail lounge, which they ... they had a refurbishment, in the cocktail lounge, and that was a big high room, and I think ... we papered the ceiling, which took nearly ... nearly a roll of paper to paper one



length on the ceiling, so we had to have a scaffold up, and we couldn't stop once we got going. [IT : A long room] A long room.

IT Would that be the room of these photographs ?

DB That's the cocktail lounge, that was the completion of the cocktail lounge. And it had to be all stripped down, and [28i mins] it was all panelled work, all panels right round the room, as yer can see, and quite a big job. And of course, with ... with papering inside in panels, you had to be careful with a patterned paper, because you had to have the same pattern on the left side, cut through a leaf or whatever it was, exactly the same on the other side, and sometimes you had to start in the middle, the centre of the panel, so that when you worked out to the edge, then it should work out right, but it was always measured out, tested first, before anything. And then, we went on that, and mainly what through the end of the ... our decorating part about it was that, I said to Neil, I said, d'you know, I think this will go [29i mins] into that British Decorators Association paper hangers contest. Neil looked at me, and laughed, and he said, d'y think so. I said, yes, why not ? And that was for ... that was for England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland. It was opened ... Solvite, the paste makers, it was their ... their thing. And so we did. And we put it in, and of course, the ... after we'd done, the carpet fitters ... in fact the carpet fitters were coming in just as we were putting the last length of paper on, and were working from eight in the morning until eight at night, on that job, to get it done. And ... anyway, they got it finished, the curtains up, and the new furniture in, and everything else. And I said to James, and his wife, [30i mins] Bertlynnne[?], to ... to put a good word in, and I told him what I'd done. I said, if anybody comes to inspect it, I said, put us a good word in, will you James. Jill, you do the same, will you, if it comes round, and you're about. Right oh. Anyway, we never heard another thing, for quite some time. And, it was only set off as a joke really, but we were quite ... we were very proud of what we'd done. Make no mistake, it looked good, it looked really really good. And I got a phone call one night, and it was the British Decorators Association. Would we like to attend a dinner at ... I forget now what the hotel was called, in Bolton. Bolton ? Well yer ... well yer come because it's a prize giving evening. [31i mins] So of course we went down, didn't know anything, whether got anything or not until we got there, and of course we won a prize for the ... well, it was classed as commercial work, was doing that particular big room, and it was a daft big room, I'll tell yer. And then Neil got presented with this certificate. [IT : That would be ... that would be that ?] That would be that. That's what it is. [IT : Well done you] Solvite. Yes. Prowess. Yes. And we were quite proud of it. And we ... we did put it in the local paper, and we got a lot of work from it.

IT [looking at photograph] And that's you, and Neil ...

DB That's Neil, holding the framed certificate, and Jill and James Bertlynnne[?] on the right hand side, and myself on the left. So there you are. [IT : Well done]. But I always had a thing about decorating, yer know, and I always [32i mins] used to say to customers, what isn't good enough in my house isn't good enough in yours. If something isn't right, it will be right. And that's how I used to ... that's how I built up mi business, because quality was the top thing that we were after. Didn't matter if it wanted another coat of something, at our expense,



we did it, 'cos I wanted it to look as if it was in my own house. So they have ... we were quality ... and I have to say it like that, it's not bragging, [IT : No, no] it's true.

IT I'm sure. And who chose colour schemes, or papers, or was it the client, did you sometimes recommend things, or did you even have outside help ?

DB Well, the ... normally in a private house, we'd take pattern books to customers and, [33i mins] if they asked for advice, we would pass our comments about it, and sometimes we would go ... we'd chosen the paper, and we're in there etc. etc., you measure up and everything else, and then sometimes they would ask, yer know, whether ... what do you think. Well, I said, either of those, or either of those three, are really nice papers, but I used to exercise mi rights to say, just in case, I used to say, well don't forget my dear, when we've done it, and long gone down the road, you have to live with it, we don't. [laughs] And we used to laugh about it. But in the main, it turned out alright, mostly. Except one customer, which was ... which was up Kents Bank, and I think her stepson was ... was in Lord of the Rings, if [34i mins] you can ever remember who that chap was, you'll remember him, although I never saw him. And I said to her, and I took some anaglypta paper there, I said, don't forget, I said, if you're choosing yer papers at that distance from yer eyes onto the table, I said, yer best to put the pattern further away, to see what it looks like, because that's where yer viewing it from. Yer not looking at yer wallpaper at that distance, 18 inches from the ... And she chose an anaglypta paper that she wanted. And we did it all, and did it, and looked great. Then she turned to me afterwards, and looked at me, and head on one side, she said, I do wish we'd chosen that stronger one. [laughs] But that's, yer know, that's how things, that's how things go. But where it's ... where it's ... we'll say for commercial work, hotels, which we did at Aynsome Manor Hotel, just up the [35i mins] road here, The Swan Hotel, and I think there were one or two more, have sat round a table, with different people of the hotel, and, because in these ... the hotels, the people that were responsible for that area that we're decorating, they were involved in the redecoration of whatever it might be. And of course it came about that one said "Well, I don't like pink", and somebody would say "Well, I don't like that green", and nobody could fully agree. And you were just going round and round in circles. So I said, I'll tell you what the best thing to do. I said, we'll .....[?] it out anyway, and I said we'll get one or ... we'll get in fact we'll get two companies, we'll get Dulux paints, and I said and we'll get Leyland paints, at different times of course, [36i mins] and I said and we'll get them to make up a colour scheme, a balanced colour scheme. And they'll give us samples, and sometimes they would do two or three, and I think they did three up there at the Aynsome Manor, and then you can choose which you think looks balanced and looks right. And that got me off the hook a lot of times when ... when I got them to do it, the companies to do it, and they did it free of charge if yer using their paints.

IT So that was a service they were offering ? [DB : Yes, oh yes] I don't think they offer it now, do they ?

DB I don't know, I've never ... we don't do as much of that now.

IT They have all the colour charts ?

DB Oh, they've all the colour charts. [IT : It's down to you] Yea, yea.

- IT How about things like Health and Safety, which today stops people doing so much, and I have a photograph of you very high up on a ladder doing something, outside a [37i mins] building. Were you aware of that, was there much ...
- DB Wasn't in then. Yer had to have a certain amount of safety built into yer system, if yer know what I mean, yer had to be careful what yer were doing. And if yer had ... massive ladder was up quite a good way, you usually had the apprentice standing on the bottom of the ladder. But then things have changed dramatically in these latter few years. Where you ... it's scaffolding now. You've got to be on a scaffold to do a lot of ... lot of work. You ... in fact if you read through the smaller ... well I'm not saying the smaller print, but some of the smaller print where, I think, a ladder has to be what we call footed by someone else on the bottom of it, over two and ... if its over 2½ meters high, and that's only 7 foot 6, just over, and yer supposed to have ... Well, I mean, that's ridiculous, [38i mins] because you've got two men doing one job. But if you're on a scaffold, and there's a lot of ... lot of gable ends, and a lot of what we call roof work, which is all the spouts, the gutters, and fairly high up, it's a saving in a way, because, on a ladder, yer having to do what you can reach at either side, then y've got to come down, and get somebody on a big ladder, move over yer ladder, and yer up again, yer up and down like a yo-yo, and you know about it by the end of the day if you've been on ladders all day long, yer legs are tired. Since the ... it's ... yer get round yer work quicker, so it isn't the cost of the scaffold isn't all the cost, if yer know what I mean, 'cos yer cutting down yer time of work hours, yea.
- IT Yes, it makes sense. [DB : Yea] Did you have people working for you at any one point, or were you just ... was it you, and later on your son ?
- DB No. The ... [39i mins] I worked on mi own for the first year, and then, I was getting busy, and busier and busier. And there was a chap used to come round every ... every Friday ... the hawkers, d'y know what I mean by a hawker ? A chap who ... the chap who comes round door to door selling the fruit & veg, and that sort of thing. And his son was leaving school. Well, I said, just harness him up, I said, and send him up to me ... just off the cuff type of thing. And, anyway, he came up to me, and he worked for me for 22 years. But in amongst that time, I employed another two chaps, but there was ... there was ... really there was ... most of the time there was four of us. I did on a few extra, [40i mins] that didn't have much work to do in winter which were ... I told yer just before, when I was working at The Swan hotel, because they close for about 12 days, and we did all the ... the rooms that the visitors, yer know, the customers used. And then other places that could be put off, we used to do them when the hotel had opened. So we used ... no, we used to employ probably seven or eight or nine sometimes, just for those few weeks at The Swan hotel. But mainly, it was four employees, four with myself, of course. Yea.
- IT So what happened at the times ..... [?] Neil now working by himself ? Are there more painters and decorators around ?
- DB Well, Neil ... Neil ... Neil has himself and two other lads, [IT : ..... [?] yes, and one of those lads came to me when he was ... [41i mins] when leaving school, and I think this is his 32<sup>nd</sup> or 33<sup>rd</sup> year working for us. [IT : Must be good employers !] And so I don't think we're doing anything wrong ... we must treat them alright. Oh, and another old chap came to us, and he

was with us for 16 years, and from when he was about 50, and he retired here, from us, when he's ... Nice chap, I know, George, he was very good, George Rawlinson, he was very good. But other than that, Neil is just ... he prefers to just have a smaller staff than I did, yea, yea.

IT When you look back to ... I know it might not have been what you intended to do, but this is what you did, but did you have any regrets about what you did all your life? Would you have rather been something else?

DB Well, no, not ... I'd no really any inclination to do, as I said at the beginning, [42i mins] I'd no really any inclination to be a decorator, let alone any other trade, and it ... once I got into it, and ... what pleased me about decorating was that you could stand back and look at it, as I told my apprentices. You stand back and have a look at what you've done. Yea see, I did that, and I'm proud of it, and that'll make you a good tradesman, if you look at your work, that you've done, and pleased with it. That's what you want. That's ideal. That was my thoughts.

IT I think this is a very good point to finish. [DB : Go on then] That's all. [DB : Oh, right] It's wonderful to have lived your life and done something that you always felt good about, and proud.

DB Yea. Oh, I always have done, yes, yes. I would say that I would do it again if I had to ... if someone asked me to ... what would you do again, I think I would do the same again. But we've had some fantastic [43i mins] places to work in.

IT Thank you very much, Derek.

DB Thank you for asking me.

IT Thank You. [recording finishes at 43 mins 06 secs]