**DENNY Graham**

**Introduction for the recording and the transcript.**

This recording is part of the oral history project carried out by the Suffolk Horse Society in 2013 with advice from Cambridge Community Heritage, and a generous grant from the Heritage Lotteries Fund.

In the recording you will hear the voice of Mr Graham Denny describing his memories of the Suffolk Punch heavy horse.

Graham is a stockman and estate worker at Euston Hall.

The recording was made by Juliet Pennell, a member of the Suffolk Horse Society.

The date of the recording was 6th August 2013 and it was carried out at his home in Euston village.

The duration of the recording is about 12 minutes.

Juliet This is Juliet Pennell interviewing Graham Denny for Working Horses, Working Lives, sharing our stories of the Suffolk Punch, on Tuesday 6th August, 2013.

Graham Graham Denny from Euston.

Juliet Could you tell me when your family first came to Euston, you have a long association with this area, perhaps not exactly to Euston, but when did your family first come?

Graham *[sighs]*

Juliet Or which member of your family came?

Graham My father, Alfred. Yes, he came down from Oakham Way, Leicestershire somewhere.

Juliet And he came/

Graham He came down to Coney Weston Hall with/

Juliet Would that have been the ninth duke or?

Graham Yeah, the ninth duke of Grafton. I think, yes.

Juliet And he carried on working for the dukes of Grafton, for the rest of his working/

Graham For the rest of his working life. Yes.

Juliet And that was from... Can you tell me sort of when that was from?

Graham 1932 I would think.

Juliet And he worked with the horses on the estate?

Graham With the horses on the estate, most of his life. Yes. Yes.

Juliet And you worked on the estate as well?

Graham Yes. Yes. I have. I left school... Before I left school, I was about eleven, I used to feed the chickens here, and then I went on the farm when I left school, with the Hereford cows and bulls, and calves and everything.

Juliet And there was a bit herd of Herefords here?

Graham Yes. I would think there was over 200 head of breeding cows/

Juliet Goodness!

Graham /when I was with them. Yeah. And there was... there must have been twelve bulls I should say, stock bulls then.

Juliet And it was all Herefords at that time, no... It was Suffolk Red Polls.

Graham No. No. We had a herd of Jerseys, milking cows in the cowshed there, at the farm but er... I can’t remember ever any Red Polls being here until now.

Juliet Until now. And any Suffolk sheep?

Graham There was, but I can hardly remember Suffolk sheep being here, but er... when Mr Archer was farm manager, I am sure there were sheep here then, and they had a shepherd, and a shepherds hut... I can remember. Yeah.

Juliet But your father worked with the Suffolks on the estate.

Graham That’s right. Yeah.

Juliet And he was responsible for breeding them as well, or...?

Graham Yes he was. Yeah. Yeah.

Juliet And was there always a stallion on the estate?

Graham As far as I can remember. Yes they had their own stallion. Yeah.

Juliet And he broke them in as well presumably.

Graham He did. Yes.

Juliet And did you ever go with him with the horses, have you got any memories of things that/

Graham Yeah I have got lots of memories, but it is remembering them is the trouble. Oh yeah I used to go ploughing with him. I used to sit on the handles of the plough on the [pulp sack], yeah all day long. Or ride on the horses back. And drilling, we used to go over with the old [Smythe?] drills, and we used to go drilling the corn. Sometimes sugar beet we used to go. Yeah.

Juliet And at harvest you would have had wagons out/

Graham Wagons. Yeah.

Juliet /would you have been on those as well?

Graham Oh yeah I would have been on the trace horse, sitting on the trace horse. Oh yeah.

Juliet How many working horses do you remember there being?

Graham I think er... there was about nine, ten... maybe a few more, one or two more, but I can’t really remember. Because as time went on they got fewer and fewer.

Juliet Were they all geldings that you worked?

Graham No. No, mares as well. They used to work the mares, nearly right up until... as long as he could when they were in foal, and then he used to give them a rest.

Juliet And when they were foaling he kept a very close eye on them presumably.

Graham Oh yes he was... he was up and down the farmyard two or three times a night, on his bike. We used to him go out.

Juliet How far from the farm were you then? How far did he go on his bike?

Graham About a mile. About a mile, yeah. Maybe not quite a mile, but he would go backwards and forwards two or three times a night, to make sure they was okay. Yeah.

Juliet And the horses... When they were working they were in stalls/

Graham Yeah.

Juliet /or were they/

Graham In stalls, yeah. Yeah.

Juliet And all through the winter they stood in, or did they go out at all?

Graham They used to go in a yard, sort of during the day. I think some used to go back in the stalls at night, but some used to stay in the yard I think.

Juliet And then in the summer could you turn them out? Did the mares and foals/

Graham Oh yeah, they all went out. Yes. He used to turn them out sort of in the evening, when there wasn’t so many flies about, I suppose, with the foals for a couple of hours, and sometimes get them back in. But when they were big enough they used to stay out all the time, during the day.

Juliet Do you have any memories of when they were in the field? Any stories really about the mares and foals?

Graham Oh yeah, when dad used to go out to either get them in, or give them some food out on the meadow at night. He used to go to the gate and just call them, and they would be there in a couple of minutes, they would be there. And they used to pinch his hat. I used to laugh, you know they would run away with his hat sometimes. They were lovely old things. Yeah.

Juliet And the Suffolks. I mean they were used on the farm, but were they used for anything else on the estate, because it is a shooting estate, did they use the Suffolks?

Graham Yeah they used one, I can’t remember her name now, for the game cart, and they used to have a pony in a little erm... what they used to call the trap, that used to take the beer for the beaters and the guns for dinner time, and the wine. They used to cart that round. Yeah, I can’t remember the pony’s name either, but er...

Juliet Did the Suffolk.. did she mind the sound of the shooting? Did she mind/

Graham No. No. She was very quiet. Most of dad’s horses were very very quiet, he brought them up right. *[chuckles]*

Juliet Because I think you said you used to walk under them even when you were little.

Graham Oh yeah, yeah when I was little, when they stood in the stalls. And he told I would get my brains kicked out, but I never did, perhaps I was lucky. *[chuckles]*

Juliet And can you tell me, when he was ploughing with them, how did it work? You had to set up a field for ploughing/

Graham Yes.

Juliet /can you tell me a bit about/

Graham You used to stetch it... stetch work and dad used to pull the furrows out, stetch them, you know and er... he was very good at it, nice and straight.

Juliet And there would have been several teams ploughing in one day?

Graham Yeah they’d be, as many as four or five on the same field, pairs.

Juliet And these would all have been estate horses?

Graham They used to bring... There was a man, Jimmy... *[sighs*] Jimmy Baylem from Honnington, I think he used to have three or four Suffolks, and he used to come in at harvest time, and ploughing time, I think and help them out do a bit, but otherwise there used to be our own horses do the work.

Juliet And your father, I mean he was ploughing for real, he perhaps didn’t... I mean did ploughing matches exist then, or not really perhaps?

Graham I don’t think father done any ploughing matches. No.

Juliet But did he show the horses?

Graham Yes he did. Yes at Suffolk, the Suffolk show and erm... I don’t think he ever went to the Norfolk. I think that was the Suffolk show he took his stallion to, because I can remember him walking him up and down the road here.

Juliet Why did he do that?

Graham Get him used to traffic. Yeah. And we used to run around with a bucket, hitting the bucket making a noise, to get him used to noises and one thing and another... Yeah. We used to have him out in the farmyard, when they first had the old tractors and one thing and another, make sure he was used to everything.

Juliet And did other mares come to him, or was he just used for the estate mares?

Graham I can’t really remember, but I think they only used him for their own mares. He only sired their own mares.

Juliet And it must have been incredibly hard work, I mean before you started your day’s work with the horses, your father had to look after the horses. I mean was it a very early start for him?

Graham Oh yeah, that would be five o’clock in the morning. Back up the farm at six I should say to feed them and then it would be saddle up and away they go. Yeah.

Juliet And when they went, I mean the horses went before he retired. Were there any horses left.

Graham No. Not when he retired, they had all gone. They cost too much to keep I think, so they had to go. Father didn’t like it a lot but you know, that was that... that was just that thing that had to happen I suppose.

Juliet And was he still alive when the Suffolks come back to Euston, did he see those Suffolks, or was that too late?

Graham No no, he went with Lord Euston, Lady Claire’s husband and sort of helped him pick the first one that Lady Claire had. I think that was for her birthday, I am not sure. Yeah dad went with Lord Euston. Yeah. James.

Juliet And was he able to advise them on the Suffolks at all? All his experience.

Graham I think Lady Claire used to get in contact several times, just to see if everything was all right.

Juliet All his wonderful knowledge and experience from the horses. Now I think... I mean your father worked on the estate, you worked on the estate, and your son, I believe works on the estate now.

Graham Yes he does. Yeah.

Juliet But obviously not horses anymore/

Graham No no.

Juliet /what does he do?

Graham He’s a spray man, tractor driver.

Juliet And in the winter. What does he?

Graham He does a lot of chain saw work in the winter. He says, you know, he likes to get on the chain saw, to get some weight off. *[laughs]*

Juliet Well Graham thank you very much for sharing your stories of the Suffolk Punch with us, is there anything else you would like to add? Any other memories you have of them?

Graham I don’t think so, I’ve got a bad memory. But if I think of anything I will jot it down and send it to you.

Juliet Thank you very much indeed.