

Interview Transcript: David Osborne

In conversation with Ann Louise Kinmonth on 4th March 2019

ALK: *So, David, tell us about your early memories. Your earliest memories of Hickling and your connection with the place*

DO: Well, as I said, although I was born in North Walsham in the Maternity Wing, I suppose it would have been, of North Walsham Cottage Hospital.

I spent all my all my early life in Hickling. Um, my parents had moved to Hickling a week before war was declared in 1939 and they came to Hickling and took the Newsagent's shop in the centre of the village. So that's where I was brought up, and I must say I had really an idyllic childhood.

Hickling was a wonderful place to grow up in. It was peaceful. It was tranquil. Some people might say that it was slow and nothing much happened, but that was wonderful because as kids we were able to play out in the village, um we'd play across the fields, in the woods and it was a very carefree existence.

My parents as I said had come to Hickling in 1939. My mother had been a teacher prior to that and my father was actually by trade a basket maker, um, and he had worked with his father and two brothers and they had made um what they call the skeps for the farmers and hampers, which were actually sold to Selfridges in London and they made wattle hurdling as well, but then when he came to Hickling obviously the focus was on running the Newsagent's shop and then my father, although he was getting a little bit long in the tooth, was conscripted in to the Air Force, so he was away for some time.

ALK: *How old were you then?*

DO: It was before I was born when he was, when he joined the Air Force and he stayed in until I suppose 1946/47 I can't remember exactly.

But the point about growing up at that time, I said it was quite an idyllic life, which perhaps we didn't appreciate at the time.

We were totally unaware of hardship and deprivation through the post war years of rationing because we'd never known anything different. We'd never grown up in a society where kids could go into local shops and buy sweets and what have you, for two reasons I guess, one that people didn't have the available cash so much and, plus, rationing had precluded that from happening,

But we were happy. I went to the village school, which was very different from today, because there were close on a hundred children; all had come

from the village, whereas I gather now a number of the children travel in from Sea Palling when that school closed. Um.

Went through the school, and then in 1955, following the Eleven Plus and there is an interesting story about that, I went off to Grammar School. Prior to that I had - my brother, John, was born one year to the day after me, so for one day in a year we actually shared the same number, but sadly he died in 1957 when he was 12 and I was 13.

He developed leukaemia, something which was relatively unheard of at that time, but it did make a tremendous impact on my life because at 13 I guess hormones are just about all over the place, my parents were grief stricken so I think they were rather unaware of the impact this had on my life, and the thing, looking back, that I feel was quite damaging was school because we were both, I had gone in, I was in what was then the second year of grammar school and my brother came into the first year of grammar school and when he died I, obviously grammar schools in those days used to stream kids and I was in the A band, not at the top of the A band but sort of midway and after his death nobody at school, no teacher ever mentioned it as I went back. Nobody said how are you feeling, there was no such thing as bereavement counselling in those days, it was just get on with life and we don't even mention it.

As a consequence I went from middle of the A band. I slipped down into the B band right through the B band into the C band and sat somewhere near the bottom of the C band for the rest of my time at Grammar School. I hated it, I hated Grammar School. And when I left, I left with not one single, it was then GCE's weren't they, and decided I'd just get a job somewhere.

Fortunately my father was a little bit wiser than me and said "no you're not doing that: you can go to what was then the City College in Norwich and get some qualifications".

I said "Oh I don't want to do that I need to go to work and earn some money."

"No no you're not" he said, he insisted on me

ALK: *Were you 16 then or...*

DO: Yes I was 16. Um I remember I went off to Norwich City College and we had to do an entrance exam. I didn't like it, so I came home and lunch time my father said "what are you doing here?" I said "oh I didn't like it very much", so he said "when I've finished my lunch I'm going to get my car out and we're going back and he said you will go in and if you come out again I shall come in with you and you can imagine how embarrassing that will be for you."

So he insisted on me going back, and, er, which I did and then I obviously did well enough to get in and I think that was sort of a big changing point in my life. I stayed there for, well long enough to get the sort of 8 or 9 GCE's, then go onto A level and I felt I'd changed very much as a person, I developed more individuality and felt more confident than I had done. But that's more about me, we're talking about Hickling really.

ALK: *We're talking about your life in Hickling. So how did you manage to deal with your brother's death then, given what you've said to me?*

DO: I found it very, very difficult um because as we were so close in age, we'd grown up very close, did everything together. We were best friends I suppose. And this had all happened quite suddenly because he'd been off school with what appeared to be a cold and after a week it was decided that really he ought to go back, and I remember in the night I heard this strange noise in his bedroom and he had got out of bed and tried to get to the window to try to get more air.

And my parents were obviously bewildered as to what was happening and, um, they rang the doctor and the doctor came. The doctor sent for an ambulance and he went off to hospital. And the initial thought was that he'd got asthma, and then they decided no it wasn't asthma, it could be pneumonia and he was treated in hospital for a while and after about a week my father was sent for on the Saturday, and said you can come and get your son home. So he was quite excited at the prospect and err my brother had been told, yes you're going home.

So my father went in with some clothes for him and he was excited, both excited and the nurse said by the way Mr Osborne the doctor would just like to have a word with you and so he went in to the doctors room and was told um "Look your son has got leukaemia".

I don't think my father even knew what leukaemia was in those days and he said "what does that mean?" He said "well take him home he's got about 6 weeks to live"

So he then had to go back, and bring him home, trying to look happy because he was bringing him home, tell my mother and tell me and within 6 's weeks he's gone. So that was very sudden, and yes it did it had a profound...

ALK: *He had no treatment, no treatment at all.*

DO: No no. I mean today it could be treated. But it did make a profound impact on my life.

ALK: *Did you think it might happen to you?*

DO: I was always aware from that day that you can never take life for granted.

It was the first time err I had known of a child passing. Subsequently it happened to other children in the village as well, um but that was the first time, so it seemed strange and as I said, the business with school, looking back, disgusted me.

I guess, you know, my parents were so consumed with their own grief, they weren't really able to look objectively at what was happening to me, but as I later became a teacher and it never left me in that if ever, if ever there was a need to be compassionate in situations like that, it was essential that that happened, and you don't ever brush these things under the carpet because peoples feeling are important.

ALK: *Where were you living then, were you living over the shop or?*

DO: **We lived at the sort of the back of the shop, the house and then the shop was at the front, um, yeah, we lived there.**

ALK: *Did you work in the shop?*

DO: **Well, yes, I did. I used to help in the shop from a very early age and it would just initially be serving newspapers and, err ,there were regular customers in Hickling.**

The advantage of living there is that I knew everybody in the village because everybody, but everybody, had a newspaper, so either they came to collect their newspaper or there were two delivery ladies and on a Saturday my father used to do the round for them because there were a lot of reluctant payers and they were less likely to say no to him than they were to the ladies.

So I went round the village with him, when I got a bit older, and in the shop got to know everybody and I remember him pointing out to me, “be very careful of those people who always stress their honesty because they’re the ones you’ve got to be most careful with”, and they’d come in and they’d something like - it was a tobacconist’s as well - “can I buy 20 cigarettes, I’ll pay you at the weekend” and err you have to write it down see, and the weekend they’d invariably say, “No, I did pay you” and you’d have this sort of look, he say “whenever they pay you, take the money and you put it on the top of the till and then give them the change, so if they question, you know I did, I gave you a pound or ten shillings.”

He’d say, “no you didn’t because it’s still here look.” But you learned all those little tricks. Yeah, so...

ALK: *So back to Norwich and the College. You were just getting ready to leave, what’s going to happen next?*

DO: **Um. That was an interesting experience, because when I went to the city college, ’cos being co-educational, discovered girls and that was quite important and I think probably made hay, made up for lost ground, and I remember the head of my department, the department I was in, called me in one day and she said, “Now you’re leaving us in the summer aren’t you David” and I said, “No, no, no” I said “I’m doing an A level course” I said “I’m doing 4 A levels”.**

She said, “No you’re not”, she said, “you’re leaving because you’ve upset, you’re upsetting a few of my girls”.

I thought that’s not really fair, but anyway off I went and she said I was doing English, was doing Geography, History and Economics and she said “we don’t run an evening class for English, we don’t run one for Economics and we don’t run one for Geography. We do History, but nobody has ever passed it yet, so I don’t suppose you will”.

And with that off I went and, again, I was looking around for a job and I got a job in Jarrolds and I started this job in the toy department and my father again said “you’re not doing that”, and in those days it was possible to do what is called trainee teaching, which was a bit like an apprentice. So you’d

go and you'd work in a school alongside a teacher. The start pay was about 2/3rds of a teachers pay, but it was amazing experience. In some respects it was more beneficial than doing a college course. And so I went out to a little village called Hainford which is about between Norwich and Aylsham and I had a wonderful year there and then I got into college and there's another story because of the difference of opinion that, not difference of opinion, because of the view of the lady who'd asked me to leave City College, when I applied, because I did get History A level, and I applied to various colleges and each one I'd got a rejection, it was bouncing, and the guy who was teaching History A level, interesting man, he kept saying "how are you getting on with your applications David, how you getting on?".

I said "well they just keep bouncing from one to another".

He said "why don't you apply to St Johns at York?".

I said "I couldn't go there", I said "it's a monastery, all men".

He said "that's the problem I think," He said "Miss X" - I won't mention her name -has said you'll be an ideal candidate for teaching but she can't recommend you for a co-educational college."

ALK: *What did you do?*

DO: Nothing. I promise: nothing. It was very innocent days at that time, but the lady who was the Head of the school in Hainford where I was working, she'd been to the training college at Norwich at Keswick, she said "why don't you go there?"

I said "I really want to go away, you know I don't want to be at home" and she said "well, I've got a contact and she said if you went there you don't have to live at home, you could live there and to all intents and purposes you could be in Yorkshire or Devon or wherever she said because it's a self-contained college."

So that's what happened and so I went off to there in 1963 and did my training to become a teacher.

ALK: *What was that like?*

DO: I loved it. It was great, yes.

ALK: *Who was teaching you?*

DO: At the college?

ALK: *Mmm.*

DO: I had a variety of teachers. When I got there I had to have a main subject, and I was going to do History, as my main subject, but err these things seem to happen to me.

The History Department decided that they were full, so they said, um, you need to think about an option, an alternative, and Miss Duff who was the Principal, a lady that you didn't ever argue with, called me in and she said

"We think you ought to look for another subject," she said, "and I've decided that Divinity would do you".

It was a church college, so I wasn't the only one who came from a family that went to church.

ALK: Was your family Methodist?

DO: Yes, yes, um, and...

ALK: But they didn't, the Methodists didn't manage to support your family well through your brother's death...

DO: Not really. No. No. I don't remember much support at all being forthcoming.

ALK: But the family went to Chapel?

DO: Yeah, yes and...

ALK: Yes, sorry. Divinity

DO: Yeah. So I decided to do Divinity as my main subject, which was 3 years of quite intensive study, plus the other stuff that you did, the educational lectures you know, learning all about the background to education Piaget's theory and what have you.

And then I left there in 1966.

In those days you applied to the Local Authority and they sent you to a school and err I had an interviewer said it would be more convenient if I was somewhere, north, northeast Norfolk. So they sent me to Castleacre near Kings Lynn!!!

ALK: And were you still mainly living in Hickling at that time?

DO: Yes, yes I was still kind of living at home, but I went out there and I had digs in a farm. Very nice people, very nice family. And I used to go in to Castle Acre each day, come home at the weekends.

ALK: What age were you teaching?

DO: I was teaching sort of 8 to 10 year olds. Lovely class, and I can still remember most of the children in that class.

The head was a monster, and I remember when I first went to see him, he said, "Where do you come from?", so I told him. I said "Well, I've been studying." Well he knew I'd been studying at Keswick College you see.

He said "Have you come all the way from the Lake District today?"

I said "No, it's not the Lake District; it's near Norwich" and I asked him if I could take some books home over the summer holiday to do sort of lesson preparation and what have you. He said "No, no they're all out of date. I won't let you take any of those."

I said well could you give me something to do. No, no he said go home and come back first day of term and start then. And that was my preparation.

And when I arrived on that first day, he was having an altercation with parents and there was an official notice which said something to the effect that um "Visitors to the premises causing trouble will be prosecuted". He has this on his desk, as parents came in he lifted this to remind them of the consequences of any sort of antisocial behaviour. So that was my first introduction - but I've kind of jumped a long way haven't I, I've missed out sort of earlier years in Hickling.

ALK: Yes. Lets go back to those days now you've done a sort of outline of you education and training. Um where would you go back to, perhaps just take us over a year in Hickling as a child, what it was like.

DO: Well going back, I know we tended to look back sometimes through rose coloured spectacles.

School was very different from today and the head teacher was Mr Fred Drake, err. We felt he was quite a fearsome character. He was not somebody who was blessed with a great sense of humour and we knew that he was quite prone to using his cane and saw the remnant, the result of that with a number of children.

I remember once he had a gold watch and it was stolen and he was convinced that it was stolen by one of the children. Police came in and we were all very upset by that and very frightened. Nobody ever quite knew, although it mysteriously re-appeared in I think in the saddle bag of his bicycle which was parked outside the Greyhound where he was a frequent visitor, and um... A number of rumours circulated as to the perpetrator of that particular crime, but nobody was ever charged with anything.

But, yeah, it was good. We all got on well, the odd scrape with the boys, you know.

But I remember looking back it seemed that the winters were much colder and we all had skates because the Broad would freeze over, if not every year, most years, and people would go on the Broad and skate, and just slide around and there'd be... I remember seeing a horse and cart out on the Broad and seen people riding motor cycles and people with cars on the Broad, but I haven't seen that for many years. Even the Beast from the East didn't um bring too much of that.

And I also remember the filming of the film 'The Conflict of Wings' where a lot of local people were engaged as extras, and you've probably seen it, have you seen it? It was filmed as you know then partly in Ludham and partly at the Pleasure Boat and that was quite a time of excitement.

And then there was the occasion where Prince Charles visited my parents shop. I looked that date up: it was 4th January 1958 and, er, I'd gone off to Norwich to watch football and there used to be a bus that would go every week for every home game, pick people up at the Greyhound corner and then various places on route.

I remember coming in and my mother said, "You'll never guess, you'll never guess who's come in the shop". I said "who?" She said "Prince Charles". I said "no". Because at that time there used to be a, they used to shoot coot

on the broad, there used to be a gathering at Whiteslea Lodge and George VI had always been there when he was alive and prior to that George V. And it's said that um the game keeper at the time of George V, Jim Vincent, had actually taught him to shoot and he used to come down and there'd be a party of them out on the Broad, local men would be employed a beaters to go out and raise the coot. But on this particular occasion, it was I said 1958 and it was Prince Philip was here and Charles had come as well. And every time there was a party in residence at Whiteslea Lodge, they would always ring up and order more or less every newspaper, national newspaper.

Usually George Bishop would come and collect them and take them back down there or one of the staff would, but on this occasion my mum had heard the door open and she walked into the shop and there stood Price Charles. And he said "Could I have the papers for Whiteslea, please" And I think my mother was sort of taken, very taken aback and then he looked round and he bought one or two things in the shop.

ALK: *Did he have any money?*

DO: Yes, yes he did.

ALK: *Say I'll pay you Wednesday week???*

DO: No he didn't say that, he didn't say that. Whether he just tapped the detective for some money I don't know. But that story is has become quite apocryphal because when Gwen Amis was here she loved to tell the story of how Prince Philip and Charles had gone to the Pleasure Boat when Whiteslea had flooded and stayed and she ran that story into this one, but this didn't happen and that time was a separate occasion. So that was quite exciting for my parents anyway.

What else can I tell you about? I mean, as I said, I knew most people in the village.

ALK: *Do you remember your form? I mean do you remember who was sitting next to you, that kind of thing in the class?*

DO: Yes. I was at school with Paul Borrett, David Lambert. David Lambert was..., well, they're both obviously the same age as me, Rita Martin, my own brother John was in the same class because it was a small village school.

Um and, er I can remember most of the kids that were in... If you've got photographs I can look at them and say "that's so and so, so and so and so and so.

ALK: *And your best friends?*

DO: Well I was always friendly with Paul and with David Lambert, we used to hang round, and with er with Huggy. He lived just down the road from me. He was what my mother described as a "loveable little rascal", and he was: he was, there was no, there was no malice in him, but he was into everything. So, yeah, we used to play around a lot.

ALK: *What did you do around the Broad let's say coming on into the spring and summer?*

DO: Used to sort of wander round and birds nesting was quite popular in those days and collecting eggs which was a bit naughty but that's what everybody did.

Um, I didn't ever sail and I didn't ever fish; they weren't things that I was interested in really.

ALK: Go to the Dipping Place?

DO: Oh yes, yeah.

ALK: And swam?

DO: Yes went to the Dipping Place.

ALK: What was that like? Any stories from there?

DO: Well, it was just...

ALK: Were girls there?

DO: Oh yea, yeah, yeah. But I was very young in those days, not, not quite reached the stage where they were very interesting.

And I remember when, it was much later of course, when we the Go Between was filmed, and part of that was filmed down by the Dipping Place. I don't think it's as accessible today, is it? I don't think John Tallwin likes people going down there.

And then later obviously I was playing football, um played football in the village and er learnt to play tennis in the village; there were two grass tennis courts around where the Barn now stands and did that from about the time I was 13/14 and I still play tennis so that was something that's been with me ever since.

ALK: Do you remember the flood?

DO: Yes, I do. And prior to that I remember the occasion when a ship went aground off Eccles and had to throw all the cargo over and the cargo were oranges, and we all went down to the beach and filled bags with oranges and brought them home. And I think Jack Martin, who ran the village shop, I think he had a wonderful time with crates of oranges that he managed to get.

Yes and then the flood of '53. It was a wild night and I remember the next day when everything had calmed down, we went down, my parents and I went down to Sea Palling and stood at the gap where the old pub had been and er...

I mean it was devastated, the whole place was, and of course there'd been about 7 people lost their lives in Sea Palling.

ALK: They've rebuilt something there, haven't they?

DO: Oh yes, yeah they have.

ALK: Nothing like the old pub.

DO: Oh no, no, no, no.

ALK: And were there more of those little - you know sort of - sand houses along up towards Horsey in those days or Waxham going up towards Waxham?

DO: Do you mean along...

ALK: Along the field side of the dunes. You know, like they are going the other way.

DO: Yes there probably were...

ALK: It's not something you did.

DO: No.

ALK: Did you do the beach?

DO: Oh yes, yeah. It's how times have changed, hasn't it, because often after school, this is when we were at Hickling school we'd go down to Sea Palling after school.

I mean nowadays if kids did that, parents would be so anxious, you know, they'd be calling the police or what have you.

Well, we used to do all those things, we'd go off in the morning, um have your breakfast and go off and you's play with your friends. Perhaps come home for lunch. Go out again, come back again five, six o'clock and that was it.

Nobody said "where are you, where have you been?" They might say "what have you been doing?", but there was no anxiety over the fact that you weren't home at a certain time.

ALK: And do you remember the summer school trips with the school, taking you to the beach?

DO: No I don't. I don't ever remember doing that.

ALK: Probably stopped by then, I should think.

DO: Because the beach was so accessible, and because we used to go whenever we wanted to, even now people say go so and so, you can go to the beach. And I'm thinking that was no big deal: we always went to the beach and, you know, it was just part of life growing up.

ALK: What about links with farming around the place? You farmed in the harvest, that kind of thing?

Not so much.

DO: Not so much. I remember when, when the harvest took place - this is before the days of combine harvesters - when there used to be a binder dragged by a tractor. And of course, as the binder went round and the corn in the middle got smaller and smaller, then the rabbits would run so we all had a stick and go rabbiting. I don't remember anybody ever catching one, but we all had a stick to go rabbiting.

ALK: *So now, what about coming back to your sort of more present situation and your involvement in Hickling. How would you describe your experiences?*

DO: **Well I suppose it's always had, will always have a very special place in my life because I, having grown up here, it's home. Er, it's changed, it's changed considerably, I mentioned the school when I went there were about 100 kids there between 90 and 100. When I retired from my job as Head Teacher of a school, I'd left the school with almost 500 pupils.**

ALK: *And that was some way away?*

DO: **That was in Gorleston, near Great Yarmouth: that's where I was.**

ALK: *Yes, yes, we've glossed over your brilliant career.*

DO: **I wouldn't say brilliant!**

ALK: *You moved. When did you actually leave the village, then, for the first time?*

DO: **Well I went, I worked in Castle Acre. Then I came back, I lived at home for a while because....**

ALK: *The shop was going then.*

DO: **It was at that time yes and, er, I worked at North Walsham at a primary school there for 3 years and then - it's quite unusual, because I'd done a couple of things for the Head at Stallham, Roy Turvey, soon after he came and I used to do a lot of stuff with the guitar and he asked me to go and do some work with him on a course that they were running, a sort of weekend conference with the kids, and then he rang me up and said "will you come and work for me?"**

Well, that was unheard of in teaching in those days. I suppose I was flattered as much as anything and it didn't seem that I wasn't going to get any further where I was, and so I said "yes". So I went, I moved to Stalham to the High School and I was there for 6 years and loved it. It was great.

ALK: *And living back at home then?*

DO: **I was at that time, but during that time was when I got married first time and, er...**

ALK: *Hickling girl?*

DO: **No, no, no, no, it was... Vanessa was somebody that I'd met through friends, she had been born in Nairobi, had spend most of her life in Africa where her parents were working. She'd come back with them and I met her when she was in Norwich working at Anglia Television and, er, I was teaching in Stalham so we bought a house in Stalham. Then we had 2 boys.**

It's quite ironical actually because, my brother John died on the 28th May 1957 and my first son was born on 28th May 1977, so I called him John and then my second son was born November 1978.

ALK: *So there was quite a gap then, you didn't reproduce the two close brothers.*

DO: **18 months, that's all.**

ALK: *Sorry I misunderstood*

DO: **18 months, that's all. We lived there and then, unfortunately, the marriage went pear shaped and she went off and I managed, I had sole custody of both boys, which was quite difficult at that time.**

ALK: *You had them in your school?*

DO: No I was working at the High School. Nick, the younger one, hadn't even started school.

ALK: *Goodness...*

DO: **Fortunately my parents were still in Hickling and they were able to offer a lot of support, but, yes, so I was at Stalham until 1976, then I moved on to a Middle School, just outside Norwich at Spixworth, Woodland View Middle School.**

I was there for 4 years and then I got a Deputy Headship in Norwich at Mile Cross which was then the biggest Middle School in the county. I got that one and then during the time I was there was when my marriage broke up which made it very difficult to pursue a career at that time.

ALK: *Is that right?*

DO: **Yes, it was difficult to sort of further the career because, um, the family had to come first and there was this sort of prejudice amongst certain of the hierarchy in education that 'he can't do this job if he's looking after kids'.**

But I was there for 6 years and then I got my first headship, which was at Hethersett. Very nice, lovely school, lovely village, very nice people and I was there for 4 years and decided that I could have stayed there, but I thought one day I'm going to wake up and say to myself could I ever have got any further if I tried and this school came up in Yarmouth and it was a big school and so I took the decision to apply for it and I got the job as different from the other one as chalk from cheese.

Totally different make up of parents and children, social mix. Spent more time sorting out problems than, I was never the head teacher when I was there because things had changed too much, I was more of a trouble shooter and what have you.

So that was my career.

ALK: *And so then, did you marry again, did you say?*

DO: **Yes, yes.**

ALK: *Where did you meet your lady?*

DO: **I met her, I met Theresa when I was working in Norwich and, er, we were married in 1988.**

ALK: *So then from Yarmouth you retired?*

DO: Yes. I retired in 2005.

ALK: And you wanted to come back to Hickling?

DO: Well, we've lived at where we live now, which is at, in Sutton. We've lived there since the '80s and so we've been there a long time.

ALK: So tell me about your link, your own link - not the family link, your link - with the Methodist Chapel and how that's...

DO: Well I grew up in the Methodist Church because as child my parents went there. My father was a Lay Preacher in the Methodist Church, but in those days there'd be a regular attendance on a Sunday morning of sort of 60 people.

Very different from today, quite formal, um religion. Christianity wasn't about necessarily being happy and joyful, it was about being serious and more a question of following rules and regulations - as it appeared to me - than about finding joy and peace.

I think - somebody said to me recently - the problem is that children aren't made to go to church today because if they were then they would grow up to go to church.

My take would be most children who I knew who were made to go to church no longer go because and they found it boring and it didn't mean anything to them and that's the fault of the way the people who were presenting it. I think when I went to college and took Divinity as my main subject it kind of opened my eyes quite a lot, because they were asking questions that I really had never heard of.

They were looking at aspects of the Christian faith that I was quite ignorant of, and so it started me thinking and I've always tried to look deeply at the faith.

I don't consider myself to be a religious person. I'm a Christian.

I was recently playing golf with some friends and, oh, one of the guys sliced a ball out of, out of play and uttered a number of colourful expletives and turned to me and said "Oh I'm really sorry David", I said "why are you apologising to me?" He said "Well, because you're religious. I said "no, I'm not religious, I'm a Christian: it's a big difference".

So, my thinking over time has evolved and changed a lot, and I think if I am still a Methodist it's out of convenience rather than anything else because I'm reluctant to cut my ties with where I've always been. I find the Christian faith exciting. I find it, I'm always learning, I'm always trying to find out more and the religion or the church that I grew up with is not the church that I would really want to be associated with now.

ALK: And if you think about the Methodist part and then the Higher Anglican Part at the other end of the village. What are your memories how they related to each other?

DO: Oh East was East and West was West. We never came together. There was the '*church*' people and the '*chapel*' people, and sadly...

ALK: How do you characterise those groups?

DO: They were both very formal. We didn't, we never went up to the Parish church.

It wasn't until the 60's when Noel Henderson became the Vicar of Hickling and er it was the time when I just sort of was leaving or had just left college so I was a bit more mature and I had quite a lot of dialogue with him.

We used to do things together: we tried to do joint bible studies. We did Lent studies and it's interesting looking back at the attitude of some of the people. I remember one, I won't mention his name, he was a member of the Anglican church and we were talking about people in different, not even people of different faiths, but people who were away in different countries and I remember the vicar said "I think we should pray for those people".

One which I think was David Lambert because he was in the army and I think his name had come up and this particular man said "What do you want to think about them for: we just want to think about Hickling don't we".

And that was the narrow kind of approach that a lot of people had. You never questioned. There are a lot of people still today you wouldn't question and I think you have to lift the lid, you have to ask what happened, how did this happen and try and put it into some kind of context.

But I could talk for ages about that but we don't need to talk about it.

ALK: So thinking about how you see Hickling now and the good in it and how you would like to see it prosper, what would be your kind of comments on the future for Hickling?

DO: Well I think the problem is that you've now got a large part of the population that doesn't want to have any real identity with the community, which is not unusual is it. There's people in all sorts of communities, they come and they live, but they don't want to be part of the community and years ago, when, I mean in Hickling, every Tuesday there used to be cinema and that would be in the old Village Hall.

A guy came and showed a film and er it was full, and they used to have regular whist drives and socials and what have you, so the community came together and we knew each other, whereas there are must be dozens of people in the village who we don't know.

A friend of mine, well, you probably know Harvey. Harvey when he was working as decorator and was invited, was asked to go and do some work in a house, and at that time he was Chairman of the Parish Council so he felt he knew most people and, while he was working in the house, he said to the people "Oh so you're knew in the village", thinking he hadn't seen them before and they said "No we've been here 9 years". And he'd never seen them, never knew them to be involved in anything in the community.

So I think that's the sad part. I don't know how you change that, because people have become more introverted in some respects. They don't want to be part of a community. They just want somewhere, it's a nice place to live, you can look out and walk to the broad and look at that, it's peaceful, it's quiet, but they don't want to be involved in anything. I don't know how you resolve it.

ALK: *Good. Well, we're coming towards the end of this I think, but just take a moment or two, were then any stories that in the last week while you were thinking of talking to me that came through. Oh I'll tell her about that, but I haven't managed to give you the chance to tell me?*

DO: Well there are lots of stories and many of which I guess were quite apocryphal.

And some of the characters that were around when I was growing up were very interesting and you'd listen to them talking. I remember one, I don't like to mention his name. Rumour had, well, the story was - this is way before my time - but the story was passed on, and as I said I guess it became quite apocryphal.

When he was about to be married in the Parish Church and when asked "X: do you take Y to be your lawful wedded wife?" and he stopped and he said "No I don't know whether I do, I don't know whether I do", and the vicar said "Now come along". And the lady said "Oh please, please have me". And he said "No I aren't having her she laid away, she laid away". And the vicar had to take them both into the little room and talk to them and eventually came out and decided that he would marry her.

But, as I said, those stories were the sort of things that did the round.

I remember one evening going to the Chapel with my mother and we were walking along and we got as - were just about to get to the Chapel and there was a loud commotion on the Greyhound corner and two of the older residents of the village, who were the worse for wear, had ridden into each other on their bicycles and lay in the road just flailing and punching and... The language was quite colourful.

Umm don't see that sort of thing happening these days. Yeah there were a few things like that.

*This transcription has been made to back up, not replace,
the audio tapes that form the main record output of the VOH Changing Village project 2015 to 2020.
The transcribers used their best efforts and checked back for proper names and places.
We ask for forgiveness for any errors...*