

*[Start of Side A - 00:00:13]*

WRM Your own upbringing then, I mean your family wouldn't have an awful lot of money, would they?

KC No, we just 'ad eighteen shilling a week, and then there was eighteen pence deducted for house rent. We lived in a house belonging to t'quarry owner, so there was eighteen pence knocked off for that, and then when the National Health came in there was another four pence knocked off for National Health, so that the gross weekly wage that came in was 16s.2d and there was Father and Mother and three children to bring up on it. We kept a few hens and a few geese, and these were the mainstay for any extras which you liked. And when eggs were as high as a penny each - that was twelve for a shilling - we hadn't to have any eggs as they were all to go to market. When they got to sixteen for a shilling, then we could have an egg now and again.

WRM What period was this, Kit?

KC That was in the pre-war days, the pre-World War days, 1910, 1911 and 1912. And when they got sometimes as high as eighteen or twenty for a shilling - I should say as low, not as high - then Mother used to put a number of 'em down in a water glass. We didn't sell at that price until we'd got the bowl of the water glass filled. And she used these for baking during the winter months when eggs was dear. But I have a vivid recollection of Bob an' I (Bob was two years younger than me), that we were to be favoured with half

an egg each. And this was the general practice, an egg for Father and half an egg apiece for us. And I got old enough to say to me Mother, ‘Mother, I could eat a whole egg.’ She says, ‘Could thee?’ I said, ‘Yes.’ ‘Ah well, tha might be, but tha’s not goin’ to get a whole egg.’ She says, ‘Half an egg was good enough to bring up Lloyd George, and if it can bring up Lloyd George it can bring up thee.’ And rather vividly [sic], I ‘appened to get hold of a little penny pamphlet on the life of Lloyd George published by *The Daily News*. It was just a penny pamphlet that came out about the time the National Health Scheme that were doing an old age pension scheme, and here was this story that Mother had said. It was recorded in this ‘ere penny pamphlet of the life of Lloyd George.

WRM And now and again they’d go and kill one of the hens, would they?

KC Eh?

WRM Now and again they’d go and kill one of the hens?

KC Oh yes, aye, we killed an old hen which had stopped laying an’ was castin’ its feathers; then we’d ‘ave an ‘en. That was a feast when we had a hen. And then we used to keep these few geese. We generally had five geese and a gander which wandered about. From about October ‘til laying time they were wandering about the village and at laying time we had nests in the back scullery, and all the five geese knew which was their nest and we used to hatch these goslings and they were sold at a fortnight old varying from 1s.10d to two

shilling each. If it were two shilling there was a good market. This was at between a fortnight and three week old with these goslings at two shillings. 1s.10d was the general price. And this money was considered to be for replenishing our clothes an' that for the spring and the coming summer. And I vividly remember that we had an' old gander which... he liked to pick at people in t'village and I think he'd bin misbehavin' itself; that or somebody had given 'im a stroke across t'back wi' a stick. Something 'ad 'appened to 'im anyway. But anyway we carried on through that year, and that spring the geese laid their eggs and sat down to hatch them and for some reason the old gander had been infertile and there wasn't a fertile egg. Well, this was a terrible disappointment and a blow, because that meant that there was no money for replenishing our spring clothes. An' in those days, more so than nowadays, it was always thought that it was a tremendous disgrace if you hadn't something new for Whit Sunday. On Whit Sunday you generally put your new summer clothes on. We had a little Sunday School anniversary on Whit Sunday, and we always liked to show off in our new clothes. An' this particular year I had to carry on with the old clothes of the last year, I hadn't anything, not even a new cotton on nor anything. And I went to the Sunday School anniversary in disgrace in me own mind. As I've looked back on it I've thought I was worried, but I don't think I would be as half as worried as my mother was worried because there was no money because all the eggs had been infertile.

WRM I suppose that she would bake everything in the house, would she? Baking day would be a big day in those days, they wouldn't buy much?

KC Oh no, she did all the baking, everything. It was once a week, was baking day, an' that was t'day that we came home from school wondering what there would be, whether there would summut extra expectant. But many-a-time there was the same old bread and, I'll not say margarine because we somehow hated it, bread and butter it was. And then even jam; oh, we'd never go to any jam. I can never remember us buying jam; jam was made, and marmalade was made. I don't know whether I've told it to you, but I 'ave told it many-a-time, that on New Year's morning we set off for our New Year's gift and mother used to give us a pillow case and we called at every house in the village and wished 'em 'Merry Christmas, a Happy New Year, Please will you give us me New Year's gift'. All the children of the village was doing it, there was quite a shout and you could hear it all around the village at different parts. Anyway, the farmers and maybe one or two semi-retired people used to give us a penny; a bit lower down, to general tradesmen and such like, we might say, 'Give us an orange,' or 'Give us an apple.' We were told what to do, we had to put wer pennies in the purse, we had to put wer apples an' oranges in the pillow case, and most of the working families of the quarry owners and such like, especially those with big families, used to give us a ginger parkin. Well, we were told we could eat these ginger parkins as we went round, they kept us up and sustained us at wer shoutin'. But the apples and oranges we hadn't to touch 'em, an' we had to put them in t'pillow case. When we got

home, Bob an' I, both of us we 'ad our little parcels in wer pillow case. Apples were selected aside and put into a drawer, and those were to use for apple pies. Oranges was put aside, and mother used to bring some sugar and make marmalade with the oranges. An' as far as the ginger parkins [went], we'd eaten the lot. The few coppers that we had we tipped it out, and Mother counted it, and Mother accepted that she'd got the right money, mebbe 2s.3d or 2s.4d. An' then [on the] first Tuesday after we'd come back to school in January - we came back to school on the Monday of the New Year - on the Tuesday she came down to the market, and Simon Moore, who was a leading Grocer and Draper, had a clothing room. And we had the pleasure of in our dinner time coming down into town and Mother would be waiting of us and we'd go into Simon Moore's and we'd get a card which would [have] written in 'Kit Calvert 2s.3d', 'Robert Calvert 2s.2d', maybe. An' we'd ever the pleasure of 'avin' this card. This was wer New Year's gift money, an' that stayed in there an' if we could raise a copper by doin' any jobs we could go wisselves after that in't t' shop and put wer penny in or tuppence into this Clothing Club. An' then later on in late February 'e 'ad a sellin' off day, or week, an' Mother used to come down again an' we'd often get green or blue corduroy trousers which cost maybe two or three shillings. Or we might get a new suit or somethin' like that. An' that was 'good-bye' to our Clothing Club card, 'e took it back in. That's where we spent our New Year's gift money.

WRM You wouldn't get pocket money, would you?

KC Religiously, as regular as night follows day. We got a ha'penny on a Tuesday: the Tuesday ha'penny. It was thought a stigma on a family if they couldn't raise a ha'penny for the child on the Tuesday, an' we used to get this an' come to old Tommy Metcalfe's, Tommy Spiff's as we called 'im, an' the old lady used to be waitin' for us 'cos every child had a Tuesday ha'penny. Some of the more fortunate, we were aware that one spoilt child almost had a penny, but eighty percent of our quarrymen's families had wer Tuesday ha'penny. Occasionally times was bad in some families, an' they jus' couldn't raise it, an' that was considered serious. But I don't think we ever missed wer Tuesday ha'penny. An' there were ol' Mrs Metcalfe standin' waitin' with a lot of boxes on t'counter with sweets in, where we would go an' look an' decide which we'd 'ave. An' she 'ad a Church magazine beside her, an' every time we picked, when we picked anything she tore a page out o' t'Church magazine. She was adept at just twistin' it and spinnin' it and puttin' our sweets in, then out we would go wi' our ha'pennyworth of sweets. I'd chosen that, some o' me mates had chosen summat else, and there we would exchange to make wer ha'pennyworth of sweets go round to a wider variety by exchanging one for another or two small 'uns for a big 'un, and such like. An' that was the adventure of a Tuesday morning, it's the only time we had... And as far as our family was concerned, I don't know whether it was instilled into us, we'd to bring any money we could earn home to help us to keep the home going. So much so that if I got tuppence for doing anything in Hawes I daren't for the life of me spend it, for fear that word came round and they'd told me

Dad and me Mam as they gave me tuppence, so therefore it would be clear on.

If I got tuppence, I'd to come in wi' tuppence. Mother used to tek this tuppence.

WRM Were there certain weeks when you just hadn't any money at all?

KC Eh?

WRM Were there some weeks when you hadn't any money at all?

KC I can hardly hear ye.

WRM Were there certain weeks when you'd no money at all?

KC We never 'ad any money, only that ha'penny, an' it was only ours 'til we went to Hawes an' then we spent it. Money didn't come into our way of thinking at all.

WRM Was there a lot of barter in the country in those days?

KC Aye, there was a bit.

WRM You know, to get over this problem of money?

KC Oh, you mean in the wider...?

WRM Would your mother give some hen eggs in exchange for something else?

KC Yes, there was quite a bit o' barterin' that went on. I was thinkin' of my childhood, yer see, but among the adults there was quite a bit of

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barter. Aye, I would say that there was exchange of a good cockerel for a couple of hens, and owt such as that. Instead of buying a cockerel off anybody for five shillings they was bargain, 'I'll take a couple o' pullets in exchange for it', an' such as that. Aye, there was quite a lot of barter went on, but I mean that was above and beyond us in our childhood days.

WRM What was the condition of farming at that time?

KC I think farming was considered... it didn't vary a lot in those days, things were very steady. The excitement of it came after the First World War started an' then prices were goin' up. It was accepted as a way of living. We were not farmers then, yer see? Well, we weren't much in touch with it beyond as labourers sometimes with the farmers. I don't know as I knew them well enough, or the stock, when I was young. But it first started... because how I came into knowing more about farming was when my Father sent me to work at the Auction mart and I got there... and there my farming [unclear 00:18:12 – knowledge?] came. When I was a farm lad I tended to the cattle, counted the sheep and did anything that was necessary in the way of attention and care for them. But never seemed to be unduly concerned about values, that was the matter for the boss was values, whether he sold or whether he kept or when it was due to be sold, and mine was seeing it got a good foddering of hay and was attended to in sickness or anything like that.

WRM What was the worst time during the slump, was it the late twenties or the

thirties?

KC The slump? Well, I've just been doin' a bit on this. A few months ago a farmer in Widdale decided to get central heating in and he got the local blacksmith, Wards, to put it in and when they came to put it in they had the cold water system up on the top to put into the attics, for the cold water tank to supply it. When they got up into the attics they found a lot of old paper an' stuff, an' they shouted down to this farmer an' said, 'There's a lot of old rubbish up 'ere, I think it wants throwin' out: a lot of old papers.' 'Oh,' he said, 'Well, chuck it down an' I'll set fire to it.' So they chucked it down, these papers. 'Ah,' he said, 'it's a great pity to set fire to it.' Anyway the outcome of it was that there was a little leather ledger book, an' one of the Ward lads looked in it an' he was interested in it so he didn't bother to throw it in t'fire so he shoved it in his pocket. He brought it down home, looked at it for a few minutes, it's nowt. I think his wife said to him, a woman who used to work for me at the dairy, 'I think it'll interest Kit.' So it landed up to me, an' I got it and I didn't bother with it much meself for a few months an' then I 'ad a look at it. An' I got absolutely entranced in it. It was a strict record of farming on one of the bigger farms up Widdale from 1889 to 1901-2. Everything from buying and selling, choosing the maid, and pricing the maid, and everything that went on at that farm for about fifteen years. So Jim Alderson, you'll 'ave met Jim, I showed it to Jim who was taken with it an' he's built up a good article on it. I left that part with 'im to try more or less and copy out what was in it. An' he wants to build a book on it, an'

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he asked me, 'Could you write an essay to go in as a chapter on the depression of the 1920s and '30s?', which I have done. An' now he's trying to get the farmers round about to allow 'im to look at their records of the 1970s, and it's going to be fifty years of the twentieth century, the depression and then the present time.

WRM Oh, I see.

KC With the depression, of what I saw of it the worst of it came in 1931, '32 and '33. How I reckon it, in 1931 I started farming. There was a depression on but we had an idea that it had touched the bottom, because it had been effective since the late 1920s. But that year, in 1931, my tup lambs on the first year that I was farming (I had a little bit of land before but when I took up farming to farm as a farmer), my first twenty tup lambs made two pounds each. The second year, 1932, the top twenty again made thirty shillings. And in the third year, 1933, the top twenty made 17s.3d. And Bob an' I, my brother, both of us agreed that they were the best pen of lambs that there was in the three years. And in that year Mr Adam Lodge was in a bad way. In the mid-twenties he'd bought their own farm, that his father and grandfather had been tenant of. It came into the market an' he bought it. He had hoped to get a loan off a distant cousin, [unclear 00:24:35] Robinson, who was a big wool broker. But anyway [unclear 00:24:40] wouldn't cough up so he turned to Barclay's Bank. He gave seven thousand and some hundreds for this farm an' he borrowed £3,500 off the bank for it. The depression caught 'im, an' by the

late 1920s (he bought this in the early 1920s) he'd given up farming it, as 'e was farmin' and cattle dealin'. An' 'e came over here from Wharfedale to Gayle, an' did a bit o' cattle dealing here, and he left the farm on the understanding that the tenant paid the rent to the bank, so that the bank could get its interest on the £3,500.. Anyway, things went so bad that by 1933 he was rather tied to the Bank Manager an' 'e suddenly closed in on 'im. An' 'e put it up for sale, because he couldn't pay for it an' he couldn't pay this 'ere capital, an' it was bid to about £350 short of the £3,500. But Mr Lodge had about two hundred and odd pound in his current account that he was trading with, and this Bank Manager collared the last bidder an' said, 'If you can give me so-and-so' so that he could balance with the two hundred and odd that was his, he would do a deal with him, which he did. An' he closed Adam and left Adam without a penny, he was sunk. Well, he was sunk, an' in a bad way, and near givin' up. An' so I was sympathetic with him, I couldn't do much misself so when we came to the second lot of lambs in 1933 I made a bargain with Adam an' I says, 'We'll tek 'em to t'Auction mart an' we'll offer them but we'll not sell 'em.' I'll turn 'em out as unsold an' we'll put 'em back in t'pasture and you can slaughter off 'em and sell it. And we could get a value. An' they were bid to sixteen shilling at t'auction, so we brought 'em out an' it was agreed that Adam would slaughter off 'em an' he would hawk them in a basket, an' owt they made above sixteen shilling, we joined it. So what you could mek wi' selling skin an' sellin' t'head and such as that, if we could mek twenty two shillings then it were sixteen shillings for me then there was

another six shillings to divide. So I got nineteen shilling and Adam got three bob for hawking them. An' we sorted the whole of 'em that way. Adam slaughtered them and hawked 'em, the remainder of my...

WRM How many were there Kit?

KC Well, there would be twenty to start with, an' then we would continue mebbe until we had done the remainder. Yer see, he just killed one at a time and then...

WRM Is he still living?

KC No, no, he died now.

WRM This was Adam Lodge?

KC Adam Lodge, yes.

WRM And where was his farm?

KC Just in Wharfedale. I can't remember the names of the farms but it's just opposite where the bridge goes over the Wharfe, where you go down below Biggerman's.

WRM Oh, aye, yes.

KC That was the farm. And the Lodges were their own farmers, but he tried cattle dealing, and cattle dealing got him far down and worse than farming, you see?

WRM What was the average farmer doing in the early '30s, just surviving?

KC Them as didn't commit suicide.

WRM Were there suicides?

KC I know of three. I can remember three who couldn't face it, and I know of others who went bankrupt and had to leave their farms.

WRM What were the circumstances, Kit? What brought this slump about in the farming sense?

KC I think there was a general depression in the industrial world. Because there were two million unemployed and those that were employed were on starvation wages. We were dependent upon the cotton trade in Lancashire, and the West Yorkshire and Durham pits, and they were desperate. I never saw anything as desperate in me life as I was driven by a Minister friend, when we went up to Newcastle. He knew the area up there an' we came back down through a lot of Durham pit villages. The shops were boarded up, they'd put a bit of a war memorial on the green and there was people sitting like this: pinched, tired, grey features, others was leaning again' wall o' the pit with straws, oh, it was terrible.

WRM So those towns and cities were the market for the dales farmers were they?

KC They were the market for the dales farmers.

WRM And what sights did you have up the Dales? Were there sights like that?

KC It wasn't as bad. It didn't show itself as bad as that. No, it didn't reveal itself as bad, although it was bad and they were hard times. Now there's a lady, a member of our club and she told this story; she was a native of the town 'ere and 'er mother was too. She 'ad quite a big family an' they lived in t' little cottage (it's now pulled down) that joined the Quaker Meeting House, down at the bottom. An' she was on unemployment relief. Because if you were unemployed for six months your general relief had to be examined by the local committee who met at Bainbridge. An' she had to go down to meet 'em, because her husband had been off work for over a year an' she was only getting about nine shilling a week. But she had to go to have it reviewed and they had to tell the full statement in front of a committee of esquires of the district. An' she went, an' she told a truthful story of anything that she had in the way of income, where this went from where to what on a certain day and anything like that. They turned on her and they said, 'But you haven't told the whole truth.' She said, 'I think I have.' 'Well, don't you and your mother go when anybody dies? And you're expected to be called out to lay out the dead?' 'Oh, yes.' 'You've never told us how much you charge for that.' 'Oh,' she said, 'I can do, but we've never charged anything in wer lives.' She says, 'Sometimes they give us two shilling and poor folk doesn't give us anything. It's tragedy enough without paying out for it. We never think of charging.' Stuff as that.

WRM And how did you cope, Kit, newly started in farming?

KC Well, I'd never have weathered the storm if it hadn't been in 1927 I was secretary of the local Institute of Burtersett, and the Minister and I got the first branch of the WEA started in Upper Wensleydale. And by the year that I married, Mr Holman [unclear 00:35:19] had come up for two or three years an' he wanted to ask me if I could widen the scope a bit. An' I got fifteen shillings a class for any class I could get started. Fifteen shillings a night for any class I could get started which would qualify for being recognised as a class of the WEA. And I got three classes going: one at Sedbergh, one at Hawes and one at Gayle on the same subject of local history, where I could repeat my stories. An' I got fifteen shilling a class. That was forty five shillings over twenty four weeks in winter. If we hadn't had that I would have been amongst those who were sunk, and I would have dropped before I had got on my feet at all.

WRM Where was your farm?

KC It was land just adjoining round Hawes, some down in t'bottoms, some on t'back o' here, two pastures up on Wether Fell, another pasture just scattered, another pasture going up towards Widdale: it was an unhandy piece of land. Seventy pounds a year I paid rent for it.

WRM How many acres?

KC There would be, let's see... there would be twenty five acres of meadow, about t'same of inland pastures and then those two old pastures up on Wether Fell. It would have been worth three or four hundred now in rent, but seventy pound I had to pay. But I was only getting five pence a gallon for my milk in summer and eight pence in winter, except for what Jenny my wife sold. I didn't go out hawking it, but I had a certain number of people in the middle of Hawes in their homes there (because I was next door to the Police Station; it was in Hawes was me home), and certain people came out with a jug and got a pint of milk. I used to sell it at three ha'pence a pint and any that I had left over went to the local creamery. But to show you how bad it was there was a man, he wasn't a native of Swaledale but he had come in a few years before farming, and he was ready to give up the ghost. I don't know whether he'd be bankrupt but possibly; anyway it was Moor Close Farm. And I went to that sale at Moor Close Farm, because I used to do a little bit of trading as well, and there I bought the stock... they weren't good ones, he had never been a good farmer, but I bought the stock he used. They weren't good ones, he'd never been a good farmer, but I bought the stock he used, all of 'em at one price, 5s.6d each. An' then I bought the ol' tup that he used for 7s.6d and brought them o'er top. I bought the ol' hens an' the li'l hen 'ut: nine pence for ten. And Jimmy Alderson who 'as the garage, and Willie Metcalfe (who's passed on who was a local plumber 'ere) they were lads and I took 'em over next day to help me fetch them over. Oh, an' another, Butcher Tom who was t'butcher at Gayle, 'e'd bought t'horse an' cart. An' so I promised to bring

t'horse an' cart over with me: li'l hen 'ut an' me hens in t'horse and cart, and to drive me sheep I got these two lads to walk over with me to fetch 'em back, and in order to avoid running about too much I would give 'em t'hens and hen hut for their day out; again this barter system. An' these lads were delighted, an' away we went over and I fetched them over, and of course my two shillin' hen hut and t'hens they got that did these lads for runnin' around and doin' what I directed them to. And they took my 5s.6d each sheep and 7s.6d tup back to Hawes.

WRM So there wouldn't be much spare money at all in the dale would there?

KC There was no money. It was in a depressed way.

WRM Had you known one before quite as bad?

KC Eh?

WRM Had you known any times before that were as bad?

KC No, there was nothing as bad as that like, no. Those were the boom years, you know, in the early '20s.

WRM Were they?

KC Up to the war eighty per cent of stuff was sold in the market, then about 1916 stuff was going up, and farmers were finding out that the dealers were taking advantage of them. Because they were giving more for anybody who took anything to t'Auction mart, where there was a bit of competition

amongst dealers, then they were offering in t'marketplace. So bit by bit the farmer saw that it was a better job to fetch 'em into a rising market and get the prices which they never expected they were worth, by letting the dealers knock one another up in the price. And that killed the market and then we went on right up into the 1920s, and up and up it went. Everybody thought it was a bonanza, was farming then.

WRM What was stock bringing at the peak?

KC Oh, up to £45 or £40 each for a new cow calved, that was about the price. And then the slump, you see?

WRM What were cows bringing in the slump?

KC In the slump, the best cow that I'd got... it wasn't really right at the slump but I bought her off Martha Pratt for £19.10s. The same day I bought a very good, useful little cow that I used for five years for £14.5s., newly calved both of them. But that at £19.10s, I kept her all my farming years until I handed her over to my brother, and when I did hand over to me brother I handed him also not just her but two of her daughters, and she was in calf. So I parted with her. He took over in the valley and I went into dairy work and I said, 'Now, I'm not bothered about t'old cow, you can take her.' And he took her, she was in calf. She had a calf and he was living. And it passed on another three or four years, three years anyway, when he said, 'I think t'old lady, she's about done 'er day, she hasn't wintered well; she's calving again but I think it'll be her end. What

are we to do with her?’ Well, I’d lost a lot of interest in ‘er because it was at least four years since I’d sold her, so I said, ‘Do what you like wi’ ‘er.’

‘Well,’ he said. ‘I think I can make a bit o’ summat on her when she calves.’

And this would be about 1936 or 1937. He was shamed wi’ t’old cow because she looked so old. Anyway, John Gringold, a cattle dealer was looking out for cheap buys before they got into t’market an’ he was walkin’ along t’road wi’ this new calved cow down to t’Auction, and he gets it sold for £26.10s!

*[Laughs]* She’d served us for ten year, an’ she made seven pound more than she cost me in the first place. That was all through market flux ‘cos she was done.

WRM How much was being paid for farm labourers during the slump?

KC During the slump? Well, it depends. There was a many a lot was working for a pound a week and their keep during the slump; lots maybe less. I can tell ye how bad it was in the slump, my head cheesemaker that I engaged for the creamery (at least, the Marketing Board engaged him, I didn’t), he had been getting two guineas a week when he went bankrupt. An’ he said... *[Recording finishes]*

*[End of Side A - 00:46:32]*

