

*[Start of Side B - 00:00:03]*

KC Aye, the head cheese maker who worked for the previous owner-occupier before we took over an' went bankrupt, he had two guineas a week. And he offered himself to us for £2, but our chairman talked with him and got him to work for us for thirty five shilling. Thirty five bob a week was the head cheesemaker, twenty five shilling was his assistant and then they had a youth, about sixteen year old, who was working for 7s.6d a week.

WRM And then tell me about Benny. You were saying about Benny. What was his second name?

KC Abraham?

WRM Benny the agent at the Ings estate.

KC Oh, Benny Taylor.

WRM Benny Taylor. Which estate was it?

KC The Ings House estate, which is the Metcalfe's estate, which owned the best land around Hawes.

WRM And the farmers used to go up to him...?

KC Aye.

WRM And what did they say?

KC           Aye, well, he used to have his rent day in ‘The Crown Hotel’, spring and autumn, and he used to come and some who couldn’t pay moaned that they didn’t know what to do and they hardly dared face up to meeting the agent. Others of a more jovial nature they just went in and they used to say, ‘Well, we can’t pay all today, we’ll have to send you a bit later on when we’ve sold a cow.’ Or there was the optimist who could go in, same as old Jack Chapman who ‘ad a little farm, and say, ‘Well, there’s nowt this quarter for yer Benny, I ‘ave nowt, an’ you ‘ave nowt, and there’s others wi’ nowt.’ So he says, ‘If tha needs a bit of fence pullin’ down an’ a bit of new fence puttin’ up, I’ll do that instead of payin’ any rent this time.’ An’ this was the way they had to do. We was sufferin’ at that time in our district with a very tyrannical Bank Manager, because the reigning bank was Barclays which was the successor of the old Wensleydale and Swaledale Banking Company, but there was as much difference as cheese and chalk between the Bank Manager at Hawes and the Bank Manager at Reeth. Now the Bank Manager at Reeth was a local man, his family were farmers, his brother was farming Colby Hall, Jem Starr; this was Abraham Starr was the Bank Manager. And he understood the difficulties and problems that the farmers were facing. He also understood the honesty of the farmers, and because of that he loaned to the extreme to keep them going; and I believe that he even loaned the Swaledale farmers until he was called in by his superiors who asked him why he was doing so much for them. Now in Hawes it was just the other way. The Bank Manager, if he could get his hands upon any properties or anything and then things went even worse, then there

was no mercy whatsoever. The Auctioneer was called in, the sale was made, bankruptcy, aye, and tragedy as well as bankruptcy. This happened time and time again until his name was a byword for being a shyster. So our people suffered even worse than the Swaledale [lot]. Not but what the depression was there, but they hadn't such a hard master by the banking system at least, as they had at Hawes.

WRM How did cheese making come into it? They'd be able to make a bit of extra money by making cheese, would they?

KC What?

WRM During the slump.

KC Oh, farmhouse cheese making?

WRM Yes.

KC No-o... farmhouse cheese making, you see, it had to be your only income, and you couldn't sell the farmhouse cheese. We were selling at thruppence a pound from the creamery, so any farmer looking for a customer, he had to have something very good if he got four pence. No, I think the farmhouse cheese makers were in about as difficult a position as anybody during the depression. They tried making cheese, they tried making butter and they tried feeding t'cows off t'milk, and various ways.

WRM When did you become associated with the creamery?

KC 1933, when the old man who bought the milk at five pence couldn't pay for it.  
He was owing me for about six months.

WRM What was his name?

KC Captain Goodwin, and things were so bad that he was owing us £860 amongst us all. £860 today is nothing, but £860 was vital to 30 farmers. So it was not just the loss of the £860 but it was going to be the loss of the creamery; it was closed, he'd thrown his hand in and told us he couldn't pay. So instead of bankrupting him for the £860 we took hold of the creamery and we promised each other that we would pay five pence as long as it was possible. But the bigger thing was, it wasn't the paying five pence, if the creamery was shut we'd nowhere for our milk. Nobody else would buy. So we would have been at a loss because a number of the farmers couldn't attempt to make cheese of it because they hadn't the equipment. Quite a number of them had been selling milk for years to these away merchants, and by way of being unfortunates they'd not got the renewed contracts and they'd had to fall back on the creamery when their Manchester or Leeds buyers had plenty of milk. And so therefore they were at a loss. So we started, and because I was a creditor I was also appointed onto the Committee of Creditors, and we ran this business. We ran it through the summer of 1933. By the end of August we hadn't bought a brush and we were about £100 down from when we started it first in April. We tried to pay out our five pence a gallon. Anyway we were losing money, and so in desperation we thought, 'Well, if it doesn't turn to we'll have to

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close down werselves.’ Then Mr Crosby, who was representing Express Dairies who was a creditor because they’d sent some surplus milk in to this old man, he says, ‘Well now, I think we’ll carry on a bit longer.’ He says, ‘There’s some sort of a Milk Board going to come into being and I have heard that it’s going to be to t’benefit of creameries.’ He says, ‘We’ll see what it does. It’s coming out this back end.’ So we thought we’d carry on, on the advice of Mr Crosby. On the 1<sup>st</sup> October 1933 this new Milk Marketing Board was launched. They had been brought into being because of the national surpluses of liquid milk throughout the country, which was chaotic at the time. And so therefore anybody who could take any milk of their hands, they were only too glad for ‘em. So for the first month or two instead of us having to pay eight pence, which was going to be the price which a farmer would expect in winter, and not mek a profit off it at that, instead of eight pence the Milk Marketing Board offered us it for cheese making for a penny farthing a gallon; and also wi’ closing it, that if we collected it from the farm we could deduct a ha’penny. So a farmer’s milk that we would collect was going to be three farthings a gallon, at the time of the year when cheese was coming into its own for a few months. So we jumped into this, and the man who’d had the creamery before, Captain Goodwin, was one of the creditors with us and he acted more or less as our Sales Manager. And so he sold the whole output of what we produced to Whitelocks of Stockton for 6d/lb when we realised that we were going to get milk for a penny farthing. And so we expected Whitelocks coming. He told us that he’d sold the whole output from now ‘til

Christmas. Anyway, he never came 'til October, so it got so serious stocks was going up because we didn't bother to say to anybody else, we'd just this man comin'. So in t'finish Mr Preston, who was the name of the man, went to see Mr Whitelock, 'Oh,' he says, 'Come in. I can get as much cheese as I want at four pence ha'penny.' He could do because they hadn't done the deal the same as we'd done. They couldn't get milk at a penny farthing. We sold before Mr Whitelock knew that milk was a penny farthing. But he got to know it was a penny farthing and he took us on and got us to sell at four pence ha'penny. Anyway, the outcome of it was he got to paying it at five pence, and they did a deal because he challenged him, he said, 'A deal's a deal', and such like. 'Aye', he said, 'but I can't afford six pence when there's this going about on the market for four pence ha'penny.' So we sold at five pence, and with that we cleared wer debt to one another, at least we'd got some money accumulated up at Christmas. There was no market at all in January, so we made another sixteen pound o' cheese. We made 860 sixteen pound cheese and then we called all the creditors together and we said, 'Well now, we've so much money and it's not our business. I think this old gentleman ought to have it back again. He can't help but mek money for himself now. We don't want to tek money off 'im, so we can pay twelve shilling in the pound on his debts and we'll give a sixteen pound cheese.' So that's how we settled wer debt, we gave twelve shilling in the pound for what were owing to 'im, and one ol' farmer 'ad about seventy pound [of cheese]. He said, 'What the devil is it I'm goin' to do with 76 eight pound cheeses? I can't eat that lot.' He

said, 'Give us twelve bob, it's more than I expected from [unclear 00:14:32]'.  
[Laughs] Anyway, that was 'ow we did it, and so then we carried on. And in 1934 the Milk Board paid us wer price, the average price of milk in the region, and for anything we knew the old man would be boomin'. Of course we could 'ave been boomin' but we knew nothing until the last week of February 1935 when we got this circular letter, 'No more milk to be supplied to the creamery after the 28<sup>th</sup> February. In the meantime the Board will give directions where it has to go.' What's up 'ere? So we went to t'old man. Oh, they were bankrupting on him. It turned out he owed the Board over £3,000. So on the 28<sup>th</sup> February the Milk Marketing Board representative from Newcastle came up, and Mr Crosby arrived who was then the representative for Express Dairies. And of course the price of milk was so profitable now Express would jump at it, because they'd just started building their Leyburn depot as well as having the Appleby depot. And with the [unclear 00:16:23 – shape of?] sub-contracts they avoided the 'The Border Hotel' and we get notified by that morning, 28<sup>th</sup> February that would we meet the Milk Marketing Board representative at 'The Border Hotel' at two o'clock. And so we were all in town, but I was as being knowing amongst the farmers and I told them, I says, 'It's to mek money.' I knew it would mek money with the bit of experience I'd had. Of course I did pump the ol' man. I said, 'How much does t'Milk Board sell your milk for?' Oh, well it had got up to about thruppence ha'penny. And so I resisted, and when the Milk Marketing Board representative came he called us to come and sign this contract, two or three at

a time as he only had a little room, I rallied the farmers together and said what we weren't signing without knowing more about it. And so I challenged the Milk Board representative, I said, 'I don't see that we need sign until we know more about it.' 'Well, I'll explain everything.' 'Aye, in twos an' threes'. 'Well, what do you want?' I said, 'A public meeting.' So he says, 'There's no way to have a public meeting, we only have this little room.' 'Aye, but there's this great big building across 'ere,' I said. 'Oh...' He didn't know there were such premises in the village. I said, 'It's not a village, it's a market town.' 'Ah, well,' he says, 'can you get it?' I says, 'I'll get it.' 'Well, you get the building and I'll bring Mr Crosby along and we'll have a meeting.' So I went and booked the market hall. Then we stood in a group. Eventually he comes out again does Mr [unclear 00:18:44 – Pepper?], the Milk Board official. 'Now come along gentleman, the sooner we start the sooner we'll get you all signed up because I want to be making back to Newcastle.' 'We're not inclined to come.' 'Well,' he says, 'if you don't come there's nowhere for your milk tomorrow.' 'Oh,' I says, 'yes, we have.' 'There's nowhere you can sell your milk other than to the Milk Marketing Board.' 'Aye,' I said, 'we can find a place for it.' 'Where?' I said, 'Maybe down the drain.' 'There's no farmer is going to produce milk to just pour down the drain? Whose goin' to pay for milk down the drain?' I says, 'Maybe the Milk Marketing Board.' He says, 'The Milk Marketing Board will not pay for milk that's wasted.' 'Well, they do what they're told.' 'Who can tell 'em?' I said, 'Somebody will tell 'em, maybe the biggest manager in the Milk Marketing Board.' He said,

‘Explain yourself.’ ‘Aye,’ I said, ‘I can soon explain myself. You said we were goin’ to ‘ave a public meeting if I got this building, and I got it. And you said that you would bring Mr Crosby out, but you haven’t done. So you’re failin’ not me.’ ‘You’re right, sir. Mr Crosby must come along.’ And Crosby came and then we went at it hammer and tongs, and it was about a week between me and Crosby, but the outcome was that we could have 500 gallon of milk if I could get a company for ‘im, because I hadn’t a company for ‘im, and so that’s how I got started with the Board. I got a company formed and I got my 500 gallons of milk.

WRM I was just thinking that this milk, I mean the sale of the milk would be absolutely vital during the ‘30s, wouldn’t it, to the farmers?

KC Aye.

WRM I mean, they made their money more on milk than on sheep did they?

KC They what? Oh yes, they made more on liquid milk. There was a sliding scale, yer see? There was the liquid price, then there was the cream price, then there was the chocolate price, and then there was the cheese price and then bottom of all was the butter price. And they made their prices; they had an elaborate system of how they got them.

WRM This was under the Milk Marketing Board?

KC Aye, the Milk Marketing Board. Yer see, I don’t know how they fixed up the

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cream and chocolate prices but in negotiation I think with... oh, and there was an ice cream price as well. But anyway, as far as the cheese and butter were concerned it was based upon the price of imported butter on the docks. It was that price based upon how many gallons to make a hundredweight of either cheese or butter. So translating it down we'll say butter you'd have 150 shillings for a hundredweight of butter on the dock, and it took three gallons of milk to make a pound of butter, so therefore it was 336 gallons of milk to make a hundredweight of butter, and it was 150 shillings, then there was a labour cost, and they got it down to what the price of milk for butter should be. That was the butter. Cheese was the same way, and then when the month end came they took all the gallons of milk and all the prices they'd got for it and they put it all together and then they paid the farmer the average price out.

WRM Oh, I see, yeah. Actually Kit, during that time of depression, you must have formed a very good impression of your fellow dales folk must you?

KC Oh, yes. Oh, that was the making of me. I was in a fighting trim in those days.

WRM How would you sum up the dales folk really? I mean, they've always been accustomed to adversity, haven't they?

KC Always what?

WRM They've always been accustomed to adversity?

KC Oh, yes, yes, we like adversity.

WRM Whether it's economic conditions or the weather or the state of the land...?

KC Yes, they've always been able to... it's wonderful how they would face up to adversity because they'd never... this is the only real time that they seem as though they can be lifted above adversity, just at the present time, because they hadn't... it didn't last long enough in the twenties, because they still had the memory of the pre-war day where farming was a living but nothing [spectacular]. An average labourer or a craftsman anyway like a blacksmith or a joiner, was financially on a higher level than the average farmer, of earning capacity. They were above the ordinary day labourer and such like, was the farmer, but nothing to be sniggerin' about. Well then, when the boom came it lasted for a few years and then it soon swept itself away. It was beginning to fall away by 1927, and it hadn't been dried up 'til into the twenties so they only had five or six years of boom, then they were back into a slow depression. The average farmer he always had to earn his living, you might say; he had to be scared for his job. But now I don't know whether we've reared a lot of farmers who eventually don't know how to farm because it's come too easy for 'em. They may be good mechanics and such like, but that wasn't anything in farming in the old days.

WRM No, in the old days, I mean, it was the adversity that made the dales farmer what he was, wasn't it?

KC Yes, it was. They expected it, yer know, they accepted a better time but expected always... I don't know if this generation say it, but they used to say, 'Aye, but it'll come back, it allus has done, it'll come back.'

WRM What sort of strength could they muster to face it really? It must have been a terrific sense of optimism.

KC Aye, it worked both ways; if they were in depression it was, 'Oh, we'll get through it, there'll be better days. I've never known bad times but that there was better.' That sort of style.

WRM Yes. Is it mainly because they didn't expect much?

KC They what?

WRM *[Louder]* Could it be that they didn't really expect much?

KC No, they didn't expect anything, but they expected a living off the land, and they loved their land and they were part of it.

WRM I sometimes think the characteristics of dales folk are very strong Norse characteristics, aren't they?

KC Aye, aye.

WRM In the sense that they have this horror of crowds, they're very much solitary individual people, aren't they? They don't like to be in a crowd.

KC No.

WRM And they don't like to be beholden to anybody, do they?

KC Oh, an independence, yes. Very much so round here. Now up to the First World War there was a big landed gentry such as Lord Bolton and there was Lord Swinton, and these people, and they cow-towed rather to 'em did the tenant farmers there, but those up here... the Forest of Wensleydale has never been owned by a large lordship or anything like that and there has been a real sense of independence. 'I'm as good as t'next man, even if he does go to Church', that sort of style. And that independence has been so in-bred. And farmers for generations have followed one another on the land until they were part of that land. They felt they were grown to it same as a tree growing to it, and in their simple way they didn't know artificial manure and such like, but in their simple way they farmed it in a husband like manner. And it was hard farming in some ways because of the high altitude and the wet climate, [and it] never could be made to get in a big lot, but it eked out a living. Sometimes in hard days, a poor living, sometimes when things were a bit better maybe a little bit more; but the poverty of the poor days made it so that they still lived on that poor level, living, and put a little bit by for the rainy days we've talked about if things were rather better. They didn't say, 'Well, we'll fritter it away.' And they didn't want to even gamble it in trying to build a bigger farm. They farmed their own heritage, and it's only in recent years that you've

got that dual farmer comin' and buyin' 'em up to run with his t'other farm.

They just stayed on in their own small way.

WRM To what extent over the last few hundred years did non-conformity play in this character? The fact of no drinking, no gambling, always be straight, this sort of thing? I mean, did the Chapel create a fairly high moral tone among them?

KC It did do. It did in those that it elected to it. There was more attended the chapels, far more than there is today, and they attended it and surrendered to its code of conduct, those which did attend. There were also the other wilder type whose ways were wild and still lived their own way, but they didn't mix. Gayle was a typical type; they were not farmers in Gayle really. There was the odd farmer or two among them but they were generally workers, labourers and that, traps men and quarry men and such like. But they went to the two extremes. There was the fervour of the Chapel with their hallelujahs and the sankey [sanctimonious] type, and then there was the others who were coming down to Hawes and who were boasting, 'I'm cock-o'-the-north' and 'I'm t'king o' Gayle', and such like.

WRM So really these characteristics are much older and deeper than the Chapel?

KC Oh yes, yes, they were, old fashioned like that was deeper than the Chapel, the Chapel came in and swept some off, gathered the cream off that sort into the enthusiasm, the same noisy enthusiasm as they have when they're young. In the nineteenth century they put it to song. But it lifted them, it excited them in

their spiritual emotion, it excited them just as the others excite themselves when they go and lord it with drink.

WRM So really, right at the core of the dalesman's characteristics is the countryside and the weather, those are the two things that have dominated him, and the fact of this honesty and all this sort of thing has just simply been brought about by the fact that it's absolutely stupid to be dishonest with your neighbour in a thinly populated country. In other words, we've got to get on.

KC Quite right. Yes.

WRM And there's no other... I mean, you've got to have high morality otherwise there's absolute chaos.

KC Quite.

WRM And you can't depend upon anything.

KC Quite, quite.

WRM Would you agree with that?

KC Yes, I would agree with that.

*[Interruption in tape]*

WRM Oh well, thanks very much, Kit. So the dales folk are a race apart, aren't they?

KC Yes; oh, distinctly. And that's one of the things I tremble at, that at this present day... only early this morning it [the radio/television/Government] was on about what to do for the rural areas and such like, bring in new enterprise into it and they were trying to save... putting it this way, make another new [unclear 00:33:44] of it up and down in a small way. Aye, well to me the price we'd pay would be too dear for me. The Dales is the Dales and it is a characteristic, and to bring housing estates and a leather factory or something like that in and a new set of people into it, it might bring so-called prosperity but you've lost more by losing the tradition of the Dales.

WRM Yes.

KC The Dales are something which is... well, thousands of people come on 'oliday to see that in the Dales, and that's why they come.

WRM It's basically a pastoral community, isn't it, with the ancillary trades and professions and workers. Would you say that the beginning of the Second World War ended more or less an age in the Dales?

KC Oh, yes; yes, it did. The First World War gave it an active bump and then the Second ended it. You see, at the beginning of the First World War there were villages that were isolated almost to the point of a tribe, marriage and everything. It was firmly embedded in the Dales, he was an outcast... he had to near-about be turned out if he went to pick up a maiden outside the village itself. 'What's 'e want goin' wi' er?' 'She's not part of us, you're not bringin'

‘er in ‘ere.’ Now that broke down, and the Dales were the Dales after, of course they’d seen the wider world the tens of thousands that went out to see the world by the war, and then the Second World War amplified it more; these things too, the wireless and television and such like. I mean, we can’t keep it as it was and I don’t want to, but I want to keep some of the finer qualities of it. *[Pause]* You know, every few minutes you can hear a jet plane coming over. I can remember just down there and our Minister was standing outside and in those days there were local preachers and one said, ‘What do you think of that thing up there?’ There was an aeroplane passing over. ‘I don’t think anything,’ the Minister said. ‘It’s up there, that’s all I know.’ ‘I’m not meaning that. What do you have to say *about* it being up there?’ ‘I don’t know, it’s just up there.’ ‘It’s of the devil!’ ‘It’s of the devil? I didn’t know that.’ He says, ‘If God had intended us to get that high he’d have gi’en us wings!’

WRM *[Laughs]* Lovely.

KC He said, ‘You should be preaching against it Mr Woodmass.’

WRM *[Laughs]* Actually the Chapel and the late Victorian age was an age of great piety, outward piety, in an area like the Dales. Respectability was everything, wasn’t it, with a lot of folk? And that’s why the odd drunkard of course was always pointed out, because it might up to a point be almost considered a normal sense of behaviour, but when you get this terrific sense of piety the

people who are extremely pious look way, way down to those that aren't connected with them, don' they?

KC Aye, quite. There was a lot in the non-conformity that needed further examination. I mean, their private lives. People loved respectability and it stood them in good stead in business life and social life and all that, but there was the social question. How many prosperous business men in the West Riding ever missed any sleep about the degradation and poverty of their employees, who were driven to drink even because of the conditions that they were working under. But these men made fortunes and could have lifted them up if they'd only thought, but it never went through their minds and yet they praised God for all the blessings that were surrounding them.

WRM I know, yes.

KC I must say that there is a social conscience come up in the twentieth century which we've never had before.

*[Interruption in tape]*

WRM What was this, you can remember...?

KC I was saying it were £260 for a quarter, and I can remember the day when owd Jenny and Tommy Taylor received their first 7s.6d - five shillings for t'householder and half a crown for his wife. That was at the beginning of the pensions, and they thought heaven had opened because they were getting 7s.6d

a week pension for life.

*[End of Side B and interview – 00:40:43]*