

Transcripts for Farmland Museum Displays

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Sandra Barker in Basketmaker Display

Transcript

Sandra Barker: Hi, well, I am Sandra Barker, and I am a Yeoman Basketmaker for the Worshipful Company of Basketmakers, in the City of London and I have been training as a working basket maker for over 30 years now. People say to me how on earth did it happen? It is the oldest craft. It predates pottery. It probably happened because primitive people saw that animals, birds were weaving nests or constructing hides and put themselves and nests underwater and copied - made their homes from weaving what was growing around.

My material, its got commercially from Somerset, that's the main growing area. Little patches are grown at the at the side of Bedfordshire where I can get some of the wonderful coloured parts of the willow - but mainly in Somerset. The willows that I use are commercially grown but from a particular type of willow grown as a bush in a field. It is pollarded every year right back to a little bush and then the grower will then bolt it into a bolt which is an unusual measurement which is actually a bundle which is 37 inches diameter which is six inches up from the ground.

It comes in a variety of colours. There's natural colours, we got bark colour and we've got willow that's been cut, wood stripped which is a golden colour and hence the dance which is all to do with the position of the rods and the stripping of them. You've got white willow which is cut and then put in a ditch until spring and then stripped and I'll bring home bolts of varied sizes. When I get them home, I have to soak them to work them, and I can then start to weave my basket.

Bob Giddings in Farrier Display

Transcript

Bob Giddings: My Father was a plougher cause he was a horse keeper. He come ere as a horse keeper.

Well I went with him leading the young horse because thats we used to do. We used to break two young horses in. I used to go with him. We'd put them on a load of wood on the grass for a start and start to drag it around the grass areas.

Anyhow, then we'd take em on a plough line and lead with an old horse or two old horses and I'd lead with a young horse in front, you see. My father drove the others and then he'd try to put it in a cart. That's what happened every year.

They all had funny names. Roper, Jock, Pepper, and er Ginger- The old Suffork. Well we, we had one Suffolk Punch. Mostly it was Percherons - what we always called Persians - we didn't know the name Percherons. We didn't see them till the First World War in France and decided to buy them. And um we had one courser and um my father.... Woke up at half past six and feed them...give em a carrot, brush em down before they went out.. ya know...

Peter Carter in Fenmen Hut Display

Transcript

Peter Carter: My name is Peter Carter. An eel fisherman on the Fen. We were out setting the eel traps. Always set 'em in the evenings and er we'd go down just about dusk. The reason you never wanted anyone to know where you're setting them because they used to sabotage them. When I was a boy, I used to get paid by the old man and can't let the other boys let em out of his traps. He didn't get more than the other old boys.

Once traps were out you'd bait them up and one of the best baits was road kill - one of my favourites was an old dead cat. The reason for an old dead cat is nothing smells like an old dead cat. Somebody asks how do you get an old dead cat in the trap. Well, we used to have an old thing called a mincer... Its surprising what you can put through one of them.

Then in the morning your get out before anyone was around and go and set the traps and get the eels out. And the eels we put in a big crate, which we kept in the river, ready for market and after about ten days they'd be packed in ice and sent off to London for jelly, and the old restaurants and the like.

The great thing about an eel was, they can actually travel across land and when we were kids we often used to go fishing. On one occasion an eel managed to get one of my old mates sleeping bag and down his trouser leg whilst he was asleep, and he jumped up screaming and he run up and down the bank in sheer fright.

But er, in the olden days the old boys used to go out shooting wild fowl with the big old punt guns. These guns were up to 11 ft long

and 2 inch tall. They used to fire about 2lb a shot. It was a big old load you could imagine and they were basically miniature cannons fixed on boats. Then they'd punt them way out on the water in early morning, laying flat on the boats waiting until the birds come, creeping very, very slow, until they got to about twenty yards away and when they were there, they would then wait for the birds to lift and if they run too early, the shot would go straight over their heads so as they lifted that was when they used to fire... if they fired on a good day with a thick fog, that was when the danger started to happen.

Often, you'd get two punt guns coming in from totally the opposite direction after the same amount of birds. And on occasion they did happen to shoot the other punt gun coming the other way. So, there was a lot of risks. The other problem was if the barrel was loose or not properly primed it would blow up in your face killing you and then often go back to work next day with half your jaw broken or teeth missing because they had to make a living. That's how we used to go out wild fowling.

Bill Saberton in Dairy Display

Transcript

Cows Mooing

Bill Saberton: I remember the dairy, we had a herd of cows, and what I remember is the milk being put into the cream separator. The milk was put into this hopper, and you wound the handle until it went 'ting, ting, ting' 'til it got up the speed. When it was quiet, you could turn the tap on and let the milk go into the machine and the skimmed milk went out of one spout, the cream went out another. I think it was separated centrifugally. The skimmed milk was no good; we value skimmed milk now, but we didn't then and it was fed to the pigs.

The cream was put into pans, and it was churned once a week by Grandmother, in a big barrel. This handle was turned, and it flopped about 'til you could see when the glass cleared and then you'd got butter. The whey was let out, the butter taken out and it was hammered about with paddles until the rest of the whey was knocked out of it. Then it was put into pounds or half pounds and sold to 'Wadelow's' shop in the village. It was collected by Mr. Cracknell, who came round with the van on Thursdays to take orders because the fen was then very remotes, and also picked the butter and eggs up and that was sold in the shop.

Mr. and Mrs. Pell in Village Shop Display

Transcript

Mrs. Pell: There was Mrs. Pullens and there was the shop opposite the old post office that was and the shop in the middle of the village used to sell everything and Mrs. Pullen, who I used to like cos she used to sell sweets cos she had these great big old fashioned jars and you could choose from the jars. That was lovely.

Mr. Pell: When I first knew you you used to have Mr. Harding in his little van - he did come round and sell things at the door, didn't he.

Mrs. Pell: Yeah. He did.

Mr. Pell: Used to buy your washing powders, paraffin

Mrs. Pell: and there was a butcher – Bulls butcher who used to come round every Saturday with meat. And of course the milk. Well, my father was the dairy farmer and I must say that naturally, we got our own milk and Mum before they had a round used to serve milk at the door. Yes, stand at the Worts farm - we lived at the Wort's farm and they used to come round and she used to fill their jugs up. He had horse and trap. I know Mum used to make butter to sell and things like that. She used to sell it from our door.

Amy Austen in Village Shop Display Transcript

Amy Austen: The first thing is there was only one bake house and that was the long shop behind the present village store. They go two steps down and there's children who'd sit in there with little bits of dough that broke up. There's a lovely smell of bread coming in. There was a big white [unknown] and a little white [unknown] the little white [unknown] was the one near the pharmacy and lovely little low windowsill where we used to sell lots of biscuits, and you could see them. Well, so many bits got broken. You went into the front they stood out there...broken biscuits. I mean a whole bag of broken biscuits for a penny and would sit on that little windowsill and eat. The ordinary biscuits were very expensive for people to buy on their own you know...

Interviewer: Yes, Yes

Amy Austen: One side was grocery and sweets and everything to do with them. The other side they started drapery. You wouldn't remember it, there's a material came here, called Sparva.

Interviewer: I don't know it

Amy Austen: Very thin silky cotton stuff and everybody was wearing Sparva petticoats, Sparva dresses, and another shop beside the White Horse.... The fabric house. He was the fire brigade captain. There was a long room and they also sold everything. Boots, shoes, everything you could think of. Mostly long pants, cos all the men wore long pants and whenever you walked in amidst all these long pants [laughter]. Oh dear, oh dear. You can't say they were exactly this or exactly that cos they sold so much...cos they sold everything. Mr. Grove had vegetables in the village. He was even buying, so even grapefruit and oranges and bananas. In the beginning, it was just English grown vegetables. Les used to go there for market vegetables regularly. I ate well. Lived well really in an ordinary sort of way. I used to wear a cap(?) and that's where we got hungry

Alan Wyatt in Village Shop Display

Transcript

Alan Wyatt: Opposite the green was Mr. Crapnels shop which was a very small shop really, made out of the front room of the house. This was rather special because it was the only place you could get a hay penny ice cream. Everywhere else it was a penny. But they had specially small cornets and a little dob of ice cream that you could get for a hay penny and that was wonderful.

Talking about ice cream, one of the other memories is of in the summertime we were coming out of school and there would be a motor bike and tricycle with a container on it holding ice cream. They used to sell ice creams to children coming out of school. Cos, we never got one unless you spent your pocket money on it.

That was the Sutton butter man and he used to come over from Sutton, doing the villages, selling his ice cream. He used to have a bell that he'd ring to make his presence known. You could get a cornet for a penny from him. And of course, we had the Walls 'Stop me and Buy' ones on a three-wheeler trike and you could get an iced lolly for a penny. You could get an ice cream wafer for tuppence and you could have a tup for fourpence. Never had a tub. [laughter]

Mrs. Pullen in Village Shop Display Transcript

Mrs. Pullen: I thought after a while I got a bit bored just pottering around and so my husband pushed me for all sorts of things and one of them was a shop in 1948 and it kept going as a shop until 1999.

Interviewer: What did you sell?

Mrs. Pullen: Everything. Er. Sweets, cigarettes, er...crockery, hardware, stockings. The thing I remember most, because most of them... I had rolls of roofing felt that was spread along the pavement and cut with big scissors. If children wanted to cut they'd be allowed to for their rabbits hutch and the same sort of thing with wire netting about a yard high. And er, if it had three or four yards just to make little pens. Nails from half inch to six inches. Ridgeon's seeds, lending library. You name it, we had it.