



John Prince interviewed by Sue Eldridge

John Prince was employed as a nursery worker and foreman at Caldwell's Nurseries, first at Barnshaw and then at Ollerton, 1960 - 1990

Duration:	01:07:57
Recording date:	03.08.2011
Recording Location:	John Prince's home
Access restrictions:	None
Recording equipment:	Zoom H4N
Recording notes:	Quite a few interruptions - dog, refuse vehicle, daughter in law. (Didn't turn tape off for every single one)
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Interview summary

00.00.00	Born 8th August, 1941, Fingerpost Cottage, Toft 1941 and lived with his grandmother and grandfather. Describes how he moved to Middlewich, his current home, having previously lived at Cranage and a house on the Barnshaw estate. Describes his early life and schooling in Peover and Lostock.
00.02.54	Describes how he left Knutsford Secondary Modern School at age 14 to go farming at Milbank Farm, Over Peover. Describes his boss who was very strict. Left at age 19, because farmer couldn't afford adult wages. Farm later described as 'wheelbarrow farm'.
00.03.41	Describes interview with Mr Caldwell. Description of Barnshaw Nursery. Describes how they planted a variety of trees as well as roses. Describes tasks they carried out, such as hoeing, spraying weedkiller, rotavating and how it was hard work.
00.04.49	<p>The nursery at Barnshaw</p> <p>"Mr Caldwell had bought this orchard about 1957 and there was about 30 acres of apples. There must have been a dozen rows of raspberries, quite a number of gooseberries, quite a number of blackberries. Well you could tell how many blackberries we had because we picked about 2 hundredweight of blackberries and 112 pounds a day of raspberries from these 12 rows of raspberries.</p> <p>Then of course we'd pulled trees up in the orchard, but that left about 5 acres of orchard. We sold these commercially, the apples, we had to wrap them up, box them up. Then the wagon would come and pick them up and take them to Manchester Market.</p>

	<p>We planted trees on it. When I first went there there were trees on it. They'd already started there, trees, some roses, but mostly forest trees, street trees, fruit trees, mountain ash, elm, conker trees, sweet chestnut, English ash, Manna Ash, a different form of ash, you name it we grew it. We got about 20,000 beech every year, 20,000 green, 10,000 purple. They were seedling beech so we planted them one at a time, we didn't have any fancy machinery to plant them. It was me on my own.</p> <p>In summer we would hoe the beech, then we got weedkiller, paraquat. We couldn't do a lot round beech because it kills everything. So we would use hoeing for beech and a rotavator up and down. On days like today, sunny hot days, it was hard work."</p>
00.07.45	<p>A typical day</p> <p>"We would start work at 8 in the morning, well 7.45. The boss would come, tell you what to do – budding, grafting, hoeing, digging trees up. In the morning we'd dig a lot of trees up for orders, from November through to the end of March. These would be collected at 4 o'clock in the afternoon, so they had to be packed that day and the wagon would come and we had to load the wagon up.</p> <p>In the meantime we'd be digging trees up for local – round Knutsford, Altrincham, Mobberley, you name it, everywhere. We'd dig trees up to send out to private houses and we would then start digging trees up, when we'd finished that job, for parks departments, Liverpool, Birmingham, we had some for London. Once we sent a cherry tree to Paris. The roots had to be washed down for that, not a bit of soil on the roots.</p> <p>At half past five you could do what you liked. Stop and work a couple of hours overtime or you could go home."</p>
00.09.43	<p>Describes how Mr Leaman taught him budding and grafting, pruning fruit trees and roses, as well as Latin names of trees. But had been taught tractor driving in previous job. Describes how trees were bought in from Holland and planted, using a tractor and plough.</p>
00.11.54	<p>Describes taking customers round nursery</p>
00.12.50	<p>Describes outside team of landscape gardeners and working with Peter Acton, going out on site in the local area and further afield</p>
00.13.40	<p>Describes moving to Ollerton nursery as foreman having previously been foreman at Barnshaw. This involved organising men, teaching them how to bud/graft, plant, spray and dig up trees properly. Also at Ollerton had to do shop work, which he was not so keen on, though had previously handled money at Barnshaw. Describes what happened when Caldwell's was sold up in 1990, when Mr Caldwell retired, his son went to Australia and nurseries sold to a builder. Comment on growing roses. John was at Ollerton nursery for 4 years, having previously been at Barnshaw nurseries for 20 years.</p>
00.21.52	<p>Describes the range of fruit trees they had at Barnshaw, including picking and selling. Describes doing hanging baskets, going out to gardens. Describes pests and diseases they dealt with, the many different types of sprays used on fruit trees. Describes the different ways of training trees (e.g. espalier, cordon, fan trained). Describes buying in from specialist nurseries. Describes the range of soft fruits grown, as well as other trees and shrubs, such as lilac, fruiting cherries, plums.</p>

00.25.00	<p>Cultivation of fruit</p> <p>“And we cut the ivy off round the building outside. It was going up the roof and everything. I got a rash from that ivy. There’s one or two things I daren’t touch now – buddleia, sea kale – that came up terrible then. Other than that it was a good life, a lovely job. (Question about pests and diseases)</p> <p>In the apple orchard in January we’d spray the apple trees with a thing called DNC obermit (?) and it was bright yellow and it was very dangerous, very, very dangerous. We had masks and we had to turn into the wind as it blew back at you. That was winter wash.</p> <p>If I remember rightly there are about 18 sprays for apple trees – bud burst, green cluster stage, blossom stage, all these different things for apple sawfly. He gets in the flower, that’s why he’s in the apple core, he’s in at the start and eats his way out and then he’s an adult sawfly and he flies off.</p> <p>You had to spray the apple trees, because customers came round and they were buying apple trees, because we’d got trained espaliers, fan trained, cordon. I’ve made cordon trees myself. That’s Mr Leaman’s teaching. (Question about training trees being a specialist skill). You had to train them (trees) when very young; they’re very brittle so you have to train them when they’re tender shoots; you have to bend them down and as you get them down they’ll go further; three tiers, two tiers, seven, cordons.</p> <p>I think we used to buy a lot of peaches, nectarines etc. which were already trained and we wouldn’t do that, that’s a very big job, because they’re all grafted on to the plum stock. They’d come from specialist nurseries like Matthews.</p> <p>We used to grow about 5,000 blackcurrant bushes to sell, four or five different varieties – Boskoop Giant, Amos Black, Seabrook Black.”</p>
00.30.56	Describes the different type of trees at Ollerton nursery, such as conifers, and the wide variety of trees and shrubs grown in pots. Described the acreage at Barnshaw and the number of different types of tree grown
00.35.05	Describes the responsibilities for staff he had at Barnshaw and Ollerton and the winding down process at Ollerton nursery.
00.37.11	Described the accidents and injuries that occurred, and the skills required for propagating trees and soft fruit, as well as buying in stock that was not propagated at Caldwell’s; developing new varieties.
00.37.57	<p>Budding and grafting</p> <p>“When you were budding it was the back of your leg there – ooh it killed. You were bent down like that you see and you’d got the stock here and you’d cut back like that and cut a T-cut. Then you’d cut your scion or budding wood, cut the bud off this with a big long tail on it, stick it into the T-cut, trim the top off and wrap it round with elastic, and it got the back of your legs, not your back. (Did that mean you never stood up, you were just going along bent double) Yes, yes. But you did have to stand up after a certain while it would get too much you see. . But, sometimes you did that and you’d got a young lad behind you doing the tying in. That’s putting elastic round it, twisting it round, and just pulling it through and tying it off, that’s all.</p> <p>Grafting was when things were dormant. What you did when the bud didn’t grow,</p>

	<p>the stock was still in the ground so what you did then, you went and grafted it. You cut the top off it, did a stroke up with your knife, only one not several, straight up and that graft was called a whip-and-tongue graft.</p> <p>But, there's another graft, it's not very good, you did it on thicker trees, which is a cleft graft. You cut down the middle, stick the scion in the top and then you put some arborex round it to stop disease getting in."</p>
00.43.50	<p>Describes his relationship with his boss Mr Leaman and other staff at Caldwell's.</p> <p>"I met Mr Leaman in 1960. I'd just left a farmer who I can go now to his farm or his house. He's a lot older than me now. I can start talking as though I've just left yesterday. When I first met Mr Leaman I thought, Oh dear, I don't like this fellow. He knows that. I've told him. He grew on me. Never go on your first impression, because he was the most wonderful man you could talk to. I could ring him up now. I've got his address. I should go and see him really. 'When are you coming to see me', he'd say. I went to work with him and he said, 'Do you want to go to Reaseheath" and I said 'No I don't, I'm not that clever, I don't want to go'. So he said "All right. I'll train you. You'll regret it, but I'll train you'. And he did. And he probably got it in with a hammer and chisel but it went in. I knew all the trees – oak, Quercus robur, every one."</p>
00.49.00	Describes the process of winding down, including stocktaking and selling off trees.
00.53.00	Describes what happened when he left Caldwell's and how he got a new job at Tatton Park with Sam Youd, how he went as a tractor driver but after 12 months became responsible for the nursery and supplying plants for the rest of the garden. During this period he had a heart attack, but went back to work for 9 months before retirement. He was at Tatton for 5 years
01.01.18	Describes the ups (fruit picking) and downs of life at Caldwell's and reflected again on Don Leaman and what a good man he was.