

GLYME LANE PROJECT

TRANSCRIPTION OF RECORDINGS MADE IN JANUARY 2020



Judith Yarrow - winter allotment

The recordings explore the following themes: working across generations, children and community involvement, sharing and caring, international links, connection to nature, peace and quiet, meditation, mental and physical health benefits, exercise, good food, commitment, wildlife.

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Allotment holders: Tony Carter, Charlie Withers, Liz Morland, Sophie & Carol Harvey, Clive Rand.

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Cathy Elliot who has been involved with the Millenium/memorial wood since helping plant it.

Tony Yarrow – Glyme Lane beekeeper.

Anuk and Roger Nauman - Glyme Farm vegetable plot growers.

Lin Cornwallis – Glyme Farm - organic farmer and naturalist

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Liz: I've had an allotment – a half sized one – since 2007 I think. So that's over 12 years, isn't it? When you first start you think you'll never get to the end of it and you'll never get it right, but when you've got it straight you always wish it was bigger, because then you could try more things. If I do make the effort to go up then I never regret it, because I like to get out. Especially outside the summer, outside the main growing season, I like to have a reason to get out, not just walking around aimlessly. So, I sometimes go up there just to look around, make sure everything is firmly nailed down, hasn't been blown away. It's good to do some preparation outside the main season, especially when you have a new allotment and you're trying to knock it into shape.

Charlie: It was the rural idyll. I can remember sitting under the plum trees, eating the plums. My father, he spent a lot of time abroad, and he was stood there in his underpants hoeing his garden – not expecting to see a soul it was that quiet! And nurse Stacey went by, she was the district nurse, and she said: 'evening Mr Withers', and he said: 'good evening nurse Stacey!' I couldn't tell you the rest of the story, but they were colourful characters, there was a little fun there. It was all integrated, and people lived – there were pigs on the allotment, my mother kept chickens. It was a complete entity.

Sophie: When I was little, my dad and I used to garden quite a bit. We used to live in Africa, and we used to plant marigolds and carrots and that sort of thing. So, when we moved to the UK, we wanted to do a bit more gardening, so we decided to have an allotment. I think the difference mainly is the seasons. It's quite exciting though, because you get the run up to it, and then I think the picking is my favourite, like picking berries and raspberries and things. So yeah, it's exciting. There're not as many people my age, but I think the main thing that I like about it is that there's a real sense of community, and that families come. So, you see little kids enjoying digging in the dirt, planting things, picking berries -

you know, stuffing their face full of strawberries. It's really sweet to see kids out and about. And then of course you sort of get an older generation as well, which is really lovely because I think there're not many places where both those generations come together. There's a real sense of community which I think is really special.

Clive: I had it when I retired, knowing that it's not something you can just dip into and out of. You've got to give it a full commitment of time. But I was able to give it a good attention, adding a lot of manure to the soil over the years. Every year I add something like 20-30 barrow loads of manure. You get a lot of veg off it, fruit particularly, and the moments when I show people my allotment and they're impressed – well they say the right things, they say nice things. Then there's my grand-daughter and grandson, who seem to really enjoy it, in a way that I – I didn't expect that. But they really do enjoy the food and picking the food. But they enjoy things like watering, a little bit of digging. There are moments when I guess my granddaughter, obviously she knew about potatoes, and she'd seen them coming from the supermarket and they're in a bag, and then I suddenly realised, does she know where they come from, really? There was that moment when I said 'let's dig up some potatoes', and she wasn't sure what was involved in that, and I put the fork into the ground and lifted up the haulm of potatoes, and she was very surprised. It was quite delightful, that appreciation about where food comes from and the strangeness of this product emerging from the soil.

Tony Carter: There's a lady – as I say, the Indian lady in the houses there – who watched me from when her children went to school. I made friends with them when they came, and she said could she come and learn gardening? Because she'd never had a garden, because she'd lived in Mumbai and she'd never been out of there. This was completely new here. And nobody spoke to her and she didn't speak to them either. Only me. I mean, in the early

days, it was families that had them, because they needed allotments because they had to feed the family, really. Because you couldn't buy the vegetables in the shops then as you do today. So the allotment was your feeding place.

Carol: For me, the allotments have been important for my family, both for my daughter and for my husband, because they've had quite serious health concerns. My daughter she has a joint condition, so for her just going up to the allotment, just being there in nature really helped her a lot. To just have the quiet and birds singing, just to have that time. And for my husband as well. So he had cancer, and he's had it off and on for 6 years, several operations, lots of treatments, and for him going to allotments was the best therapy of all. We also have roots in Canada and Africa which have wide open spaces, and for us to have our own patch of land was essential. And of-course the lovely fresh vegetables, and also from a health point of view it helps. The produce that always comes back is wonderful. This idea that we have to have perfectly straight carrots and uniform vegetables is just crazy. Just to have wobbly, natural vegetables is brilliant. Fresh, no sprays on them. You know, questioning what they have put on them to keep them looking fresh from the grocery store, so it's been a very, very important part of us. And we've just moved here, we've only lived in Chipping Norton four and a half years. The allotments have helped us settle in, so they're very important.

Roger: We've had a plot just next to the Cornwallis farm (Glyme Farm), where we grow a variety of veg. It's about 2 or 3 allotments in size. There was so much to weed, we left one patch for wildflowers, and the other patch we grow a range of vegetables and fruit on -

Anuk: But once we've grown the vegetables we then share crop with Lin and Rosalie, and it seems to have worked quite well.

Roger: Yeah, it's an informal arrangement but a proportion of the crop goes to them and then whenever they need veg as things are growing they go and pick them. We're doing a certain amount of experimentation with some permaculture methods, using green manures to maintain the fertility, and we also get a certain amount of manures and hay, which we use as mulches, from the farm. So, while we're not part of the farm enterprise we do benefit considerably from it, and I think they benefit from having the veg. I suppose we draw our ideas from a variety of different sorts of – I mean partly from the experience you've had over a number of years of doing this, and new ideas coming in. The one we've got into most probably has been from a Chinese born friend of ours, who's very into this thing permaculture, and we've tried out some of those ideas. Where you don't do too much digging, you sometimes grow things on heaps that are quite fertile, and you always try to keep the soil covered. You don't do as some gardeners do, have a very definite fallow period where you see these very neat patches of bare soil. In our opinion leaving too much soil bare in the winter is not a good idea, you get a lot of leaching from rain, and it's better to have things growing on it all the time if you can.

Lin: Farmers Son, raised in Lincolnshire. Everybody was an organic farmer in those days and I was always going to be a farmer. I mean, abroad I was working as a wildlife ecologist and a museum curator and a biology teacher. So, what we do is as good as you can get, which is totally organic. But then, how do you build your fertility if you don't get it out of a bag, which you shouldn't. And then, how do you get rid of your weeds? It's rotation to get rid of your weeds. Fertility building - herbal leys – a ley being temporary grassland, and it has a whole load of legumes, members of the pea family. I mean lots of clovers and birdsfoot trefoil, which is quite common. But the one we really love for this area is sainfoin - the 'pink fields of Chipping Norton' are mentioned in Arthur Young. The field in front of our house is called sanfin, which you know is from

sainfoin, which is a fantastic crop. I mean with the pink flowers, it's 40% protein in the leaves, and the deep roots, so it's totally sustainable in these droughts.

Tony Yarrow: A bee in the winter lives a few months. In the summer it's only a few weeks. So, these bees, that are going to come into this coming spring that's just about to start, will never have experienced a spring before but they know exactly what to do. As the days lengthen, they start to feed the queen. The queen lays more eggs. They know exactly which plants to forage for, they know how to go and find them, they know how to come back and tell their sisters where to go and find them. They can go a couple of miles and come back and tell the other bees exactly where to find these plants that are 2 miles away. They know to defend the colony. They know to get all the right jobs apportioned in the right quantities, so that you've got the right number of nurse bees, the right number feeding the queen, the right number foraging. They just know what to do.

Sophie: One of the main things I've learnt is more about the wildlife. You wouldn't think that if you had an allotment, you'd learn more about the wildlife, but I love taking pictures of the bees and the insects and that sort of thing and learning about the hedgehogs. We've made an area of the allotment where we have logs, so that the hedgehogs can go and eat the insects and things. So yeah, just encouraging wildlife.

Cathy: The trees are in a network, and communicate via these fungal networks, and so it's important that the trees are actually together and not just isolated in the middle of a field. And because the trees have been there for 20 years, there's not just trees. There's lots of insects, animals, flowers. And that biodiversity has grown in that time. There is a threat to the wood, because there's the threat from this new link road that's maybe going in the new development, and it's

possible that it will either go near it or hopefully go near it, hopefully not through it, but somewhere near it. And I think that would be a terrible shame, because it's a green space that people can access, and more and more people will be able to access it because of its position near the new developments.

SHEDS - Charlie: I've now got two allotments, full of sheds that I've built from absolutely nothing. I've just built a large 14' x 18' shed, and it's cost me 18 pounds. It's a greenhouse, it's to change the climate. I've saved a ton of water in 10 weeks from it, so there will be water there. I grew 78 spaghetti squash last year, which I've given away. 3 buckets a day of runner beans, broad beans - and I feed the families on the block. Because I can remember when there was nothing, and I look at young families growing now, and they just have money but they still struggle just the same, they haven't got the chance for vegetables. 14 families get something from me, old and young. People give me things. They give me a polytunnel so I give them vegetables, they go on the list. The young families - I used to put the Gherkins over the fence, and they used to say 'the fairies, the fairies have been, there's vegetables here!' And I don't see them often, but they always talk about the vegetables. They've never forgotten it.

Cathy: It's a wood that was planted in 2001-02 by the community, on part of the William Fowler allotments, and it's thought of really by the community as the millennium wood, although its official name is the memorial wood. A lot of people in the community planted it - a lot of the scouts planted it. I planted trees with my young son. Quite a lot of people have memories associated with the trees that they planted. People remember their relatives that planted them and go back and look at them, and it's now been going for 20 years. It is a most beautiful area, 7 acres of broad-leaved trees, with a lot of wildlife - insects, butterflies, birds - and it's like

a sort of oasis really near and accessible to Chipping Norton. In the spring you get the flowers carpeting the wood. In the summer you get the butterflies. In the autumn you find the trees change, you get beautiful colours – I think Judith's done a picture of the trees in the autumn, with the red berries. It's used by the community. At the entrance to the millennium wood there's a plaque, and it says it is a community wood for the townspeople to walk in and enjoy, and that's actually what happens.

Tony Yarrow: We keep bees, and the apiary is probably the best one I've had all round: it's flat, it's sheltered from the 2 sides you want it to be sheltered from – which is the West and the South, because that's where the wind comes from most of the time – so the bees get the sun in the morning, which is good because the sun gets them out of their hives. And then the really important thing is the flora. The flora is amazing, because it's been an organic farm for at least the last 30 years. There's a plant called sainfoin, which is like a lupin. It has a pink flower that comes out in June, and that's good partly because most of the main honey flowers either come out in May or July. It fills a gap, and it produces a very tasty honey in great quantity, and you don't find it anywhere else!

From a beekeeping point of view there's a richness of flora there: you've got hazel, catkins, there's pussy willow, there's blackthorn, there's hawthorn, there's dandelions, crab apples, there's lime trees, there's horse chestnut trees, there's sainfoin, there's blackberries, there's the manuka trees that we've planted there, there's dogwood. I mean there's just all kinds of things, and it makes very – if you've ever had it, it makes quite a rich honey because there's this blend of flowers that is unusual. You know, the more years you leave a meadow the more species you get.

Anuk: I think the time pressure is also the business of the conflict between our own garden at home, which is quite big, and we've got lots of things going on there. But when we're there

you just lose everything else and lose a sense of time and it's just a beautiful place to be

Tony Yarrow: I find it totally absorbing. I mean when I'm up there, you know I think we've all got things like this in our lives, you know, time stops, and you finish what you're doing and you've no idea whether it took a quarter of an hour or two hours. I mean there are so many things of interest up there.

Tony Carter: If you sit quiet up there in the afternoon it's amazing what you can see, with butterflies and insects and birds. You never see them normally, but if you sit still. I used to get a robin up there that used to come and sit on my hand. It used to get closer and closer, and eventually he'd come and sit on my knee or on my hand. It was just fun. I love gardening, that's all it is about it, really.

Cathy: I've been reading recently about Octavia Hill, one of the three founders of the national trust. Basically, she says our lives are over-crowded, over-excited, over-strained. 'We all want quiet, we all want beauty, we all need space. Unless we have it we cannot reach that sense of quiet in which whispers of better things come to us gently.' That's how I feel when I walk in the wood.

Clive: Yeah, I can get engrossed very quickly. Whatever is happening around about, in terms of wind and rain, you can soon forget about it, and you get engrossed in your work, and I have to tear myself away from the allotment. You know, I've got a time slot and I need to get back and do things and appointments to keep. So it is quite engrossing, even though it's repetitive. I think there is something therapeutic about the repetitive nature of the tasks, and it's what people say about how gardening is so good, because it's something you can get absorbed in, it's using different parts of your brain, and so it's almost meditativepossibly. Yes, I would say it's meditative.

Charlie: I was stood there the other day and I twiddled a piece of string, and I thought 'my mother taught me that', and it came back to me. And we're talking – I'm 73 next birthday and I learnt that when I was 9, and I'd forgotten it, and all of a sudden there you are back in your childhood in a beautiful place, at peace.



Jill Colchester - digging



Judith Yarrow - allotment