

## Mapping Museums project interview transcript

Name: David Wooding (DW) and Robert Allen (RA)

Role: Owner of Twinwood Airfield and founder, Glenn Miller Museum; founder Twinwood Aviation and Aircraft Recovery Museum.

Museum: Twinwood Airfield: 1940s Museums including the Glenn Miller Museum and Aviation and Aircraft Recovery Museum

Location of interview: Museum cafe

Date: 17/2/19

Interviewer: Toby Butler

Others present: Robin Newton-Clare (interviewer's assistant); Volunteers: Brian Morris (BM); Sandra Kenworthy (SK); Nigel Kentworthy (NK)

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The project is based at Birkbeck, University of London. The interview recordings and associated materials are archived at the Bishopsgate Library, London.

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*For readability the transcript has been made using 'intelligent' transcription (removing ums, ers etc).*

TB: So first of all what would be great is could I ask you all just to say your name and your date of birth if you wouldn't mind and if you could just go around clockwise that would be awesome.

DW Yes, okay I'm David Wooding XX-XXX 1951.

TB: Great.

RA: Robert Allen XX-XXX 1962.

DW: Just a mere youngster.

TB: Okay great, the others here would be very welcome to chip in if you would like to, or not it's up to you but if you would like to if you could just say your name and date of birth that would great.

BM: Brian Morris XX-XXX 1940.

TB: So, that's Brian Morris, thank you.

SK: Sandra Kenworthy XX-XXX 1959.

TB: Sandra?

SK: Kenworthy.

TB: Kenworthy, great.

SK: [Laughing].

TB: That's great.

NK: Nigel Kenworthy XX-XXX 1953.

[0:00:49]

TB: Okay, brilliant, that's lovely. Right OK so just to explain what I am, doing. This is part of a national project and we are interviewing particularly interested in the early foundations sort of days really of setting up independent museums. So, the first thing is really kind of an open question is just could you sort of just tell me the story of how it all came about and how it started? And obviously I am interested in the museum, but it seems to me that clearly the festival is a really big part of the story, so don't be afraid to talk about that as well. So, just how on earth did it all come about?

DW: Very simple, we live on Bramsworth farm which is close by and this property came up for sale, this was part of Twinwood Farm. And it changed hands a couple of times between certain property companies / farmers and it came on the market and we thought we would like to buy it because it was the adjacent property to us and that would sort of I don't know protect our rights of way and you know. You don't know who you are going to get as neighbours and all this sort of thing, so we bought it purely and simply for that. And on the property happened to be the what we always called the Camp, you know the old Twinwood Air Field, Twinwood farm Air Field and the control tower. Which at the time was in a terrible state and had been used by the police as terrorist training or whatever.

TB: Wow.

DW: Shot at and probably bombed and God knows what.

TB: Yes.

DW: But it had a tree growing out of the roofs you know it wasn't too bad.

TB: [Laughing].

DW: So, anyway we bought it with no sort of great plans to do anything with it and...

TB: Could I just ask what year did you buy it?

DW: Oh, this would be now I can't be too exact be very late 1990s, very late 1990s, probably 1999 something like that.

TB: Yes.

DW: Because we opened it in 2002 and we were working on it for some time. Now, we were approached by some local people who were connected with the what are they, the Eight, what's it called the Army Air Force Eight Society.

RA: It's Eight Air Force Historical Society.

DW: Eight Air Force Historical Society and they were also big Glenn Miller fans. And they said, and there was sort of a consortium of them they all got together, and they said oo, we would love to turn it into a museum. And I said great, I said you know just rent it off me and you know you can do that. Because at the time I was, well I still am I'm into property and I thought well, if I can just rent the whole building you know for so much a month that would do me. And so, they set up a sort of a fund and went around local businesses trying to get sponsors and contributions and God knows what else. And which was okay, so I let them get on with that. And then started getting people coming up here to look at the Glenn Miller museum you see, so word had got around particularly the Bedford area there was this museum here. So, there were loads of people coming but unfortunately, they weren't capable of accumulating any money, doing any of the business side of things or whatever. And we got, the wife and I got so fed up with people coming up here that we said okay, we will do the damn thing up, you know? We had absolutely I must tell you zero interest in it, absolutely zero interest. So, we said okay, we will do it up and the lady who was the most sort of outspoken of the group said oh, she would come up and be the curator, so she has passed away years ago. But, I said yes, that's okay then. So, we sort of told everybody yes, okay the idea of it being a lot of people contributing and all the rest of it is dead in the water. And we did it up, we you know we basically you know refurbished it to what we thought was thereabouts its original standard. Then opened it up and we opened it up in 2002 wasn't it? Right, were you here then at the actual?

RA: The, I came up the Friday before you opened yes because it was festival work it was a big opening wasn't it?

DW: That's it yes, so this was it was the Queen's Jubilee wasn't it and it was in, was that July, June or July, June wasn't it, it was the Queen's Jubilee. And we had a Glenn Miller orchestra, Beryl Davis, the arena was already built by then because that was originally built for show jumping. And the first show jumping event there was on in 2001. And that was something I did because my daughter was into show jumping and I used to get sort of hauled around all these shows jumping events driving lorries and pulling trailers and getting thoroughly cheesed off with it. And I thought I will make something a bit better so that all the dads will enjoy it more. Because there's nothing for the parents at sort of these dos, so it was kind of. Anyway, that's another story it's a bit boring, but so we decided to have the opening ceremony kind of well, the Glenn Miller orchestra with Beryl Davis

over from the States in 2002 to open it up. And that was the beginning of the actual museum, and then from then on, we decided to move the festival to the August bank holiday. The main reason was that at that particular point in time there was nothing major on in this sort of genre on the August bank holiday, so it was kind of a free date. And we thought well, it's a good date to grab. And also, coincidentally it coincided with when Glenn Miller actually had an open-air concert at the only one for an RAF audience wasn't it solely was here on August 26th?

RA: Yes, 26th.

DW: Which is you know August bank holiday tie, so those were the two things. So, it started off as the Glenn Miller, and then what happened then various people over the years have outreached us. So, Robert he will tell you his story you know from where he came, but he was one of the people who came to us you know and said he would like to be involved and what he could contribute and what his experience was and what he was already doing. And we were saying to people, you know quite a few people yes, that's great you know because we had all these buildings. So, we were saying to people yes, if you want to do that in there and that in there that sort of thing. And it's over the years it's been a bit of an up and a down because some people have been very good and other people we have had traumatic experiences with and we have to have sort of kick them out. So, it's not a smooth passage when you are taking on. I think Bletchley Park is a good example of this, isn't it, they kicked everybody out in the end you know. And one can see why, in our little way you know you could see that there's quite a large percentage of people into re-enactments and things like that you know who you don't really like being involved with very long term do you?

RA: No.

DW: You know on the face of it they are all very nice, but they are barking mad half of them [laughing].

[0:08:18]

TB: I think that's fascinating, so just tell me a little bit more about the problems that you had in that respect.

DW: Well, the people, the people I mean there's people. I think see what we are doing here now it's a true museum and it represents what this site was you know? I mean this is the site where it actually happened, and this is what went on here. And we have got the Glenn Miller thing as well, and we have got the people here are you know depicting it and displaying it for people to come and have a look at. They are not here playing games and pretending they are Nazis and American Air Force and Commandos and shooting guns and you know bring idiots. Because that is what a huge amount of people are into that.

TB: I see, right okay.

DW: And we found that out to our cost, really didn't we?

RA: We did yes.

DW: Yes, you know because they are raving lunatics, they are. This is where all the you know the Neo-Nazis and that come from and all the rest of it. There's loads of people into it, they will drive around. I mean I have come across one group who drive around Leicestershire in a Nazi troop carrier all dressed up just to terrorise the villages just for fun.

TB: Right, I see.

DW: And they think that's good, that sort of thing you know. And so, we now don't have reenactors at all at the show, at all. We have complete evolved, it started off didn't it with that and it's for us it's a distasteful thing. And it got to a point whereby I even had the RAF saying we won't support you anymore because Jews from North London and from America are now complaining about what was going on here. And all there where was a few people dressed up as Germans you know Axis troops and everything. But the trouble is they weren't doing it right were they? They were now becoming it.

RA: You find that some people, it's very strange they put a uniform on, not just German but American and British and they strut around like they are that person you know. It's a bit embarrassing because I often find the people that do it would never join the forces [laughing].

DW: Well, that's true enough.

RB: And if you are a veteran I think you could find it a bit offensive.

DW: Well, it is offensive to the veterans. I mean we actually say for the festivals, you know people all dress up for the festival and mainly now thank God everyone dresses up mainly civilian. You know they dress up 30s, 40s, 50s, 60s you know and even now sort of 70s. It's great, it's great a great big fancy dress party. We don't mind people dressing up in uniform, but we say don't wear any medals if you haven't earned them you know. Because we do have proper service men here as well, we have all the top brass from the American forces here you know based over here, they all come here. And we have a lot of veterans, or we used to have a lot of veterans you know obviously they have died out now. And so, and obviously we don't, we won't have offensive weapons here anymore that sort of thing. So, even if they are you know dummy guns or whatever we won't have it. So, we have sorted all that out, and the actual festival itself now is basically a festival of music and dance through the ages. And it started with Glenn Miller, you know Glenn Miller was the very first pop star in our view. And he was a hero because he didn't have to enter the war effort, he was passed drafting age, he was a multi-millionaire then and getting richer and richer. But he came over here and gave his life, which you know for the cause. So, that in my definition is a hero, you know and that's a good starting point for us you know to start at.

TB: Yes, I see.

DW: And from then on you know we depict music you know through the ages etc from there, that's almost our starting point. And now it's the atmosphere here is better than it has ever been isn't it, it's phenomenal.

RA: It gets better and better.

DW: Oh yes, we are a million miles away from the 1940s scene, we are a 1940s museum, but we are not in the scene, we are completely out of it. [Phone rings] oh, sorry about that.

TB: No, it's fine don't worry it's fine do take it if you want to.

DW: I shall just put him on hold I think. [Talking on the phone].

[0:12:39]

TB: So, just tell me about because I am fascinated as to kind of how it has evolved. So, the so you had the control tower, you decided to do that up. But at what point did that then become a festival or did that become a starting point for the festival?

DW: Well, it became a festival straight away in that it became an event. When we opened the control tower there was very little else was there?

RA: Nothing.

DW: Nothing.

TB: Right, so that was a launch event but?

DW: That was a launch event for that.

TB: But then you thought let's do this again next year?

DW: Oh God yes it was so amazing, I mean I stood there with my wife leaning against the railing looking across the crowd in the arena, waving all their union jacks because they were there to celebrate [laughing] the Queen's Jubilee really.

TB: Oh yes.

DW: But, you know but we were there to do you know all Glenn Miller stuff. And we had Beryl Davis over from the States and she was fantastic, and everything was just wonderful. And I had never done anything like this before, this was the first time I had ever put on a music event you know? And it all went rather well, and it was a beautiful sunny day. And I said to my wife, well this is good we will have to do it again, and that was it, that was it. And then we are on our 18th year now and we have done other stuff as well, we have done other festivals. You know we have dabbled in rock and pop and punk and.

RA: You had the rhythm festival, didn't you?

DW: Yes, the Rhythm Festival.

RA: Ska Fest, Bad Fest.

DW: Bad Fest is you know and all that, but we are now down to, we come back to the one festival. All we want to do it's fabulous, it's complexly totally all consuming. I work seven days a week on it and there's several, you know several people work now all the time. Family are really totally involved with it and there's several other you know people and volunteers here are involved with it. And it's a totally, it's unique you know we are, people come from all over the world. I mean it was the year before last a party came from Alaska, we get people all the time from America, New Zealand, South Africa, Australia all over Europe. You know they are coming to us and it's just now it's at capacity, it sells out. We can't get any bigger, the council don't care how big we get. And I just had an interesting meeting with them because they said there's no limit on, you know they just love it. Although we shut down the bus services and everything for a day, they don't seem to really mind you know.

TB: Yes, because it brings people in.

DW: Because it is so unique, and it has, it's just literally grown on its own. It's just developed itself, we have kind of just followed it in a way.

TB: I see, gosh.

DW: I mean well, we have steered it a little bit, I mean like I say we steered it away from all the lunatics and that was a major, that was a milestone though.

RA: You have tweaked it, but you have, I was saying to Robin what you have done is I think you are quite clever now. You have had to learn, you have had a few mistakes and all that, you have learnt the hard way. but you have got your hand on the pulse now and you always seem to get it right. And you are always adding something new every year which people that come appreciate it don't they?

DW: Oh, yes, I mean now we have sort of built up quite a head of steam, now we can do things if we think it's the right thing to do, we can take calculated risks now you know. I mean I just this month I planned it six months ago, I decided to go with the National Trust which just for one page was £21,000 and that's just a one off. But they only have six adverts in the magazine and they only do I think it's four, three or four magazines a year.

TB: Right, I see right.

DW: They have a readership of 2.5 million and then it gets passed around, so that's just the starting readership. And I thought these are the sort of people we want, so we look at. We look at the sort of people we want here you know, and that's not necessarily advertising in something like Fly Past is it?

RA: No.

DW: It's like looking, it's all about demographics and saying right, it could be we look at rugby, the rugby club crowd you know, you see what I am saying? You wouldn't advertise with the football club crowd.

TB: Right, I see.

DW: The National Trust people whatever, like Countryfile BBC they have got a magazine and I thought yes, you know that's the sort of thing. People who are probably interested in a little bit of culture you know because the festival is high class as well, you know, and it is good. You know the music is good, there's nothing rough about it, everything is very civilised it's for civilised people.

TB: Yes, I see sure, sure.

DW: So, we are aiming at that and that fits in well with what we are doing here.

[0:17:26]

TB: So, how many people do you get to a festival typically?

DW: Well, we are now licensed for 10,000 so it is that sort of numbers.

TB: Gosh, okay.

DW: You know, it all depends on how many we can get in the campsite, I mean we sell out every year, but we have added some more to it this year. We have spent quite a bit of money this year on it and I think we will be you know.

TB: So, it sounds to me like you have moved it from military focus very much to social history or at least cultural kind of music and.

DW: Yes, without losing this you know.

TB: Which is at its heart.

DW: As a starting point, this is what it was, and this is depicted beautifully here. But there's no silly games played, this is what it is you know.

[0:18:06]

TB: Sure, well let's just, because just thinking now about the museum, there seems to be sort of two big phases. The first phase was the control tower and that core exhibition which I don't know if that has changed much since the beginning?

DW: No, not a lot no, no I mean just just been tweaked but basically it is as is yes.

[0:18:22]

TB: So, let's just talk a little bit more about that and the first thing you said was that initially there was some attempts to try and do some fundraising and so on to get some money to do that but that didn't work out. So, is that something that you financed yourself the conversion?

DW: Yes.

TB: Okay, and so was that for very much a business kind of thing, I will get the money back on the tickets or?

DW: No, there's no money to be made in museums, they don't make money. They do if you turn them into you know if you have cafes and all the rest of it, I think you can you know sell souvenirs, you can sell coffee cake and coffee and tea and all the rest of it. And I think that's probably where a lot of people generate their money from. But I think it's very difficult to make money out of, purely out of that sort of thing you know.

TB: So, if it wasn't that then and given that as you said initially you didn't have a particular interest in the subject, what was your motivation for putting all that effort and money in.

DW: Art, art.

[0:19:17]

TB: Art, tell me about that.

DW: Well, this is a work of art, I have got different views on art to what some people have but I believe what I do is a work of art. I am being creative, and I think that's what we have done here we have created. Well, we have recreated what was here, you know but and that makes us you know. We are not in it really commercially, but because we have done it good, and we have done it damn good it is now commercially successful.

TB: Yes, I see.

DW: If you were to write a business plan for what we have done and present it to somebody and said here we are, invest in this it will take you 18 years to make some money [laughing].

TB: Yes.

DW: They would say hm, thank you but no thank you.

TB: [Laughing].



DW: You know they want to be able to buy and sell a business in five years and make a nice profit, you know. But I think with music festivals anybody in the music festival industry will tell you it's a 10-year plan. Most people in the museum business will probably tell you, well you tell me you have met more than I have that there's not a lot of money in it [laughing].

TB: Sure, yes.

DW: You know it, so we are not commercially motivated.

TB: Okay, so for you, so that's fascinating, it was a creative thing, it was something which you got satisfaction out of doing in its own right really.

DW: Yes, yes.

TB: But you could have done that, and it could have been appointment only or it could have been a private kind of archive thing.

DW: Yes.

TB: But you opened it to the public so.

DW: But you see if you are good at art there's, the measure of how good you are is if you can sell it. So, if you were you know creating stuff sculptures say right, they are beautiful, but you can't sell any there's a question of how good you are at it, how successful you are. But we have done something here which is successful, so we know we are kind of okay at it, I won't boast and say we are brilliant at it [laughing] because you know. But you know we have got, we have got it right and I feel we have got it right because we have done it to the best of our ability. Everything we have created there's been a lot of painstaking effort put in. I mean like now everybody works you know they are not swanning around having fun, they are here working, every week you know during the year [laughing].

RA: But that is our fun [laughing].

DW: Well, yes okay but yes at the end of the day, but I am seven day a week on it you know, and I start at 6am and it just carries on you know. And the family is involved quite a bit as well to various degrees, but I am totally immersed in it because I consider it as a creation now you know. The further it goes the better it gets, and people say to me you know well, you are mad. Like all my friends the same age as me they are all retired, and they are all going out and playing golf. Yawn yawn and fishing and cruises, and I said to one bloke who was just about to go on a cruise and I said to him you know I want a cruise like a hole in the head. Do you know what I mean, I would be looking around at the ship and thinking well, what could I do with this?

TB: Yes [laughing] sure.

DW: You know, that's it, that's basically it you know. So, I think we all enjoy doing it and we enjoy it more and more because it's now it's rewarding us back which tells us we are doing it the right way you know.

[0:22:36]

TB: Well, just tell me about those rewards, so how is it rewarding? You have already mentioned that there's a satisfaction of seeing people come and pay money and you know they appreciate it.

DW: Yes.

TB: But what other rewards are you getting out of this would you say?

SK: it's the comments book isn't it as well?

RA: Yes, the visitors book.

DW: Oh, it's the people, yes, we don't get anybody, we just do not get people criticise, do we? We just don't get that whether it be on social media whether it be on some of these websites where you review something you know. The only comments we get are the road, that's all we get is the road. I say well no, that's the road, you know it's not that bad [laughing] it's bad but you know. At the end of the day I mean you know it's something where okay, we have spent a lot of money but if you said to me look, here's £200,000 to invest into the museum what would you do? I would make this a bit better, I wouldn't spend it on the road, but the road would be £250,000, I wouldn't. Because they will still get up it and we still chuck ballast and sawdust and it don't get any worse and people still come. They still being their lovely classic cars and have little rallies up here on a Sunday and you know. We get the odd person um, road is not all that good, well no, it's a second world war airfield, what do you expect? But most people just rave about it, rave about it so it is the comments.

SK: The hidden gem.

DW: You know, yes, yes it is the comments of the people.

TB: And is there something about you know meeting here every Sunday and some of that social sort of side of things I don't know? Or working actually on these amazing exhibitions I mean perhaps actually it might be different for different people. But I imagine that there must be some pleasure out of that too.

DW: Oh yes, I am sure there is.

RA: I think we are like a big family, I mean the aviation museum I mean we all get on well, we all know what we are doing and what we are doing it for. And the big buzz for us is when we are open on a Sunday you get people coming around and they come in and say well, that was fantastic, I didn't realise there was so much here. And that really lifts you up and it spurs you on to do more. Because when people give you a good comment it's a lovely feeling.

DW: The beauty nowadays is there's never any disagreement on anything. I mean going back over the years there used to be disagreements on things, you know we have had people we had no, we are not going to do this, oh we should be doing that, we should be doing the other. And there's been a little bit of tension you know over the years. But in the last I would say three years or something I can't think of anything, can you? Now just now it has like taken on its own thing and we just ride along with it now you know. It's sorted, and you can tell it's sorted by the fact that there are no issues are there now.

RA: No, when we originally like because originally, we set up over there originally in the end and we outgrew, and we came over here. And there were some people saying like this was the flight office building, this particular building and they were saying really, you should turn it back into what it was. Well, there's 19 rooms, you can't have 19 offices. You would be walking in and looking at a desk with a chair and a typewriter 19 times, and you think no.

DW: Well, we have had people here who have been purists and you know I mean okay, I have said that museums don't make money but the purist literally you know. If you want to lose money seriously become a purist and do it as it was. Because you know if you looked at one office and then

you looked at another office by now you are seeing the offices but hang on there's 15 more for you to look at and they are all the same you know.

TB: [Laughing].

DW: And then you know we had years ago I remember one chap saying he came to the festival, what on earth is that children's display doing in a RAF building you know so? I gave him a nice reply, you know nice literally a nice reply.

TB: [Laughing].

DW: And you know but funny thing is you can remember them because they are so few and far between the criticisms. But you do get these people, I think and also particularly people possibly you know the Fly Past readers perhaps you know the aviation people. They probably wouldn't like what we have done with some of the bits and pieces, but they can't really argue because the majority of it here is pretty damn good you know. And we can only go by what people tell us, you know, and I think what we do do, we completely avoid the "experts".

TB: Okay.

DW: And when someone says to me I am an expert that's it, not interested [laughing].

TB: [laughing].

DW: It's true, it's a great litmus test that is when they say oh, I'm an expert in so and so, I think yes you are a bullshitter in so and so because I think to say that.

RA: I wouldn't dare say that [laughing] I would never say, I wouldn't dare.

DW: No, but I hate that [laughing], yes and they always turn out to be the same, that's been my experience, I won't even talk to them.

RA: There's always someone that knows more than you, always, and you are always learning.

DW: As I said we have had our fair share, over the years we have met some right Herberts haven't we, some right idiots, all sorts of people. Ranging from the totally insane to the totally evil, and they are all falling away, we don't come across them now do we?

RA: We used to have the Rangers didn't we in one of the huts, we called them the strangers because we would never know who they were. But they never did, they just come up at the weekend, they would camp in the building, but they wouldn't do anything.

DW: Have you come across the re-enactment scene much?

TB: I have been to Kentwell Hall which is like a 16th century sort of thing, but that's probably about it.

DW: Right, okay well the 1940s that side is, it borders, it is very strange. It is big, it's huge I mean if you get shows like for example War & Peace Show.

TB: Oh, yes, we had that down in Kent.

DW: Have you been there, to that one?

TB: I haven't been to it but yes, I know of it.

DW: I mean that's massive, I mean, and you know there's a lot of arms sales. I mean what's the one at?

RA: Detling?

DW: Detling, yes, a lot of arms sales there, and then there's the other one is it still on, the one at the agricultural centre?

RA: Stoneleigh?

DW: Stoneleigh, yes that's a load of arms sales as well, there's a lot of guns change hands there. You know and all sorts of stuff and everything, all of it is a bit odd to me.

RA: Because years ago, I mean to give you an example of what we are saying. I mean I know you do your thing, but you just get some people they play dress up as American Airborne for example, they would carry a bazooka on their back, they would have a Tommy gun and then have about 20 hand grenades. And they would walk up and down, it's like look at me I have got a Tommy gun I have got grenades, and you think it's sad.

DW: Plus, the medals, plus the medals.

RA: It's sad, I just don't get it, yes it. I have got nothing against people that dress up as Romans and Vikings and English civil war.

DW: Well, even at the festival though Robert if they dress up in uniform and they do it reasonably tastefully then you know we don't mind. And there are still quite a few people that do put uniforms on. You know the ladies will be dressed beautifully in their 1940s and the man will probably have an army uniform on. But as long as he is not sort of displaying all the insignias and medals and everything else then that's okay, you know because they are just sort of portraying and they are not acting about, are they? But it's the re-enactment scene which was gone now anyway, but everything else it's all fallen away now. And I mean the last what, I don't know how many years five, six, seven, eight years we have just not been, it's not there is it?

RA: No.

DW: Yes, we have successfully gave it the heave ho.

RA: We originally had people who used to bring military vehicles up.

DW: That was the other thing yes.

RA: What was really annoying was that they would bring a military vehicle up and then have about six people in the back. So, you have asked me to come up, they have brought a vehicle, to give them two free tickets is fine, they have brought a vehicle but then they have got six other people in the back. And you would end up, we used to have an event every year to celebrate when Glen Miller disappeared on December 15th and we had a re-enactment group up here. At the end of the day there were so many reenactors that the people that were paying couldn't get on the dancefloor or even in the hall.

TB: Wow, yes.

RA: And it was overpowering because these people hadn't contributed to keep the place running, they took over, didn't they?

DW: Well this is a problem that the War & Peace Show has, you know there's too much of it and.

TB: Just got too big.

DW: Yes, with non-paying people who have not contributed.

TB: Oh, I see right.

DW: People say to me would you like my Jimmy and you know the six-wheeler thing, and I say no, no thank you or I have got such and such a car, I say great, can we bring it along? Well, you can if you buy a ticket.

TB: Yes sure [laughing].

DW: You know we won't let people, we are not interested in displays. Because again they don't represent great value for money do that, you have seen one Jeep you see another Jeep and how many Jeeps do you want to look at or how many Jimmys or how many whatever you know? It's one of each maybe but we don't even do that, people don't bring them up you know.

[0:31:57]

TB: Well, was there something about the sort of early 2000s where clearly there was a big market for this kind of nostalgic dressing up kind of thing in different respects. And we have seen sort of you have given me a sense of a spectrum here between you know the hardcore military kind of reenactors through to guys that just love the music and dressing up in 40s costume for a weekend. But still, that does seem to be quite a big movement that's happened and clearly you have tapped into something really pretty major in terms of the sort of numbers that you are getting through the door. So, I don't know perhaps you could tell me about you know what do you think your visitors get out of dressing up? It's different to visiting isn't it because you can visit and experience it but to?

DW: Well, to dress up and come to the festival is no more than fancy dress and its fun you know, and you come, and you laugh. You have only got to look at the crowd, they have all got a smile on their face, everyone is having a giggle, look at me.

RA: The women are very glamorous, if you go on the Twinwood events and look at the photographs gallery.

DW: Oh, the women are fantastic, yes and it is a very much a women's event because you can now have your hair done, you can buy fabulous clothes and have make up done you know. And learn to dance and that era the 40s and the 50s were very glam, particularly you know the 50s getting into the 60s even you know. And it's also an era when women and men danced together as couples.

TB: Oh, yes, yes.

DW: You know, you get into the 60s and onwards well, you didn't.

TB: Sort of becomes individuals.

DW: You know it all sort of broke up also and people didn't dress up after that. There's a point at which they didn't dress up, so we are sort of depicting an era when men always wore a tie or a cravat you know the hat and everything. And the festival, oh they are so smart aren't they, I mean you can see and you can get just as much fun watching the guys as the girls Because they all make such a phenomenal effort. And they are all loving it, it's a joke, it's just a laugh isn't it? So, that is

why they are doing that, and they are doing it purely as a fancy dress and they probably might go to one or two events, but we are the number one event, a lot of people only come here you know. But they will dress for here, you know it's a major thing, it's a five-day event now, it is the best, the best bar none in the country. And but then coming onto why do people dress up and pretend they are soldiers in the second world war I think it's a much more deeper problem. I think you know they haven't got a God any more, they are looking for something. I think why do people join cults, why do people join these obscure groups? And what you are really looking at is an obscure group of people who are looking for something which they haven't got in their lives, you know?

TB: I see.

DW: And the other thing you will see is and again a lot of single men aren't there, a lot of single men in it. They are not normal guys, manly guys, you get girls and the girls are odd, they are odd.

TB: [Laughing]

DW: Very odd, but you know you get its mainly men. They are missing something.

TB: Right, okay yes.

DW: That would be my interpretation I think.

RA: I think they like when they are carrying all the weaponry and that, I just think they like the attention like look at me, that's what I think.

DW: Yes, but they have got a deficiency somewhere else you know maybe they are pathetic failures and the only time they feel important is on a Saturday and Sunday when they don themselves up in their Nazi uniform and carry a gun. And now you know I am somebody because I am nothing in the rest of my life, it could be that. But I would er to say it's something to do with a problem that these people have got because they are in themselves problematic, generally not everyone but generally. And even the nice ones are a bit odd, aren't they?

TB: [Laughing] okay.

DW: Even the ones you can get on with and have a chat to, they are still a bit.

RA: Well, I used to go to an event at Blisworth it's called Village at War. And it's a lovely event you know there's people got vehicles and they are all parked up around the canal and that, because it's a canal village, Grand Union Canal. But they do like a battle re-enactment.

DW: Yes, how ridiculous.

RA: it's awful, I mean we went to one and it was Germans vs mixed Allied bunch and it was really outrageous. Because the Germans defeated the Allies which was fair enough, they didn't win every battle. But then a bloke dressed up as a German Officer went around and he was doing coup de gras on the people that were lying down [shooting them in the head], and then all the audience there started hissing and booing. I am like why are you doing that, that's?

DW: Now, wouldn't they have been better off putting on a nice 1940s tea dance.

RA: That's not nice.

DW: Having a band everyone dressed up and having a dance and a laugh and a few beers. They would have enjoyed that.

RA: They do do that but at the end of the day they had this battle re-enactment and it wasn't nice.

TB: It was quite distasteful.

RA: It was tacky and not nice, but I suppose I am a bit anti people dressing up in World War II uniform because the people that have experienced it have not been impressed with it.

DW: I tell you what thought Robert there's a lot more people against it than there is for it.

RA: Yes, I'm not impressed with it.

DW: There's a lot of people who don't like it at all, and I think with very good reason you know. So, but you know we are now, we have got something which is not offensive, you know its informative, its entertaining you know. The proof of the pudding is our success.

[0:37:38:

TB: Yes, just tell me about because I know you have got some reenactors with the beds and so on which you showed me. So, you do have an element of that still.

DW: Yes, they are the ones that have remained that can see it from our point of view. They are scared of me because they don't put.

RA: Yes, they have to tow the line.

DW: Put a foot out of line mate [laughing] you got it. No, we get on alright and I mean considering the number of people we have gotten through or they have gotten themselves through haven't they really?

RA: Yes.

DW: You know, what we are left with is, but it's only the 44 isn't it its Neil over there and his mum and dad come, they are alright, they are alright.

TB: They put some, quite a bit of work into the building haven't they yes?

DW: They have put a lot of work in. but it's a museum its fabulous that is, its brilliant. I mean you know you will find also the majority of reenactors won't do the work, they have got no time for work, they are marching around having battles.

TB: I see [laughing].

DW: They say oh, we will do it, but they can't can they, they actually can't roll their sleeves up and work.

RA: That was like the Rangers wasn't it?

DW: They are all the same though, Bowden all that lot, they are all the damn same. This lot you see, these are different, they actually do, you know the dad will do hours and hours of carpentry for you and Neil will do this and that won't they, I mean they are different. And they have been with us how long have they been with us, about the same time haven't they?

RA: They come over about 2007 didn't they 2008, yes, they have been here a while.

DW: Yes, so they have stuck yes, and they know where I stand.

[0:39:07

TB: Yes, we let's just talk about a couple of very quick questions. So, the very early museum where did you get all the objects from?

DW: Right okay.

TB: All the pictures and so on?

DW: Well, basically we had access to this local lady who has now died, she had a huge archive of pictures. Also, Bedford is a vast archive of Glen Miller pictures because the Corn Exchange all the Bedford newspapers they have got all the photos of Glen Miller here obviously. So, we were able to get a lot of stuff it's all out of copyright, so we have photocopied everything. I have got separate copies locked away safe, we have got thousands of photographs of Glen Miller, so that's where all the images came from. That was very easy for us being here in Bedford where he was billeted, you know because the whole thing is about Glen Miller in Britain and he was only here for a few months. So, he was based here so that was easy. And then other bits and pieces, I mean I bought two jukeboxes I was promised a lot of stuff and then let down. I was promised oh, we will give you that, that, that and that and I thought great, we are going to get all this stuff. And we had got the opening day planned and everything and then oh no, we are not going to let you have it sort of thing. Well, okay and I was panicking, so I went to London and I think I spend £20,000 on two jukeboxes.

TB: Wow, right okay.

DW: You know, and I thought we will just stick them there and we will play Glen Miller music. Hey, it worked, it sounds great, it echoes in and you know. And its fake music as well because it's a modern CD player stuck in the cupboard next to one, but the one in the glass case in there the Wurlitzer that is worth an absolute fortune, that is a totally working fabulous bit of kit.

TB: Wow, yes.

DW: And that is no let me remember 1942.

TB: Right.

DW: Both those jukeboxes would have been brought over and been here with American forces I have got that as genuine from the guy I bought it off [laughing].

TB: Yes, yes.

DW: No, I bought it off two people, I bought one off London and I think I went Sheffield for the other you know. So, I bought those, they were the biggest capital items and then the rest of the stuff we knew a chap who was, had a lot of radios, what was his name who used to be here what was his name?

RA: I can't remember his name now, yes.

DW: Oh, he has died, but anyway he was a big radio ham thing and he had lots of 1940s radios, so we had those. And then people say oh would you like an old typewriter? And we started, and the other thing was there were one or two people still left alive who remember the place as it was, so they said that was there and that was there and that was there so, you know.

TB: Great.

DW: And really volunteers you know and quite a few have passed on, now haven't they?



RA: Yes, Mick made the tables, didn't he?

DW: Mick and Ted.

RA: Yes Ted, gosh.

DW: You know and there's quite a few guys who were very instrumental I mean you know did all the steelwork and that and they have all passed away now.

TB: Yes.

DW: You know, and they did it and I mean I spent a lot of money on it, but it was nothing to what was put into it. I mean I spent £80,000 on it but that [laughing] cost a lot more than that. If you had costed it all out, you know you are looking at £250,000 upwards to get it to how it is now from what it was.

RA: It was absolutely derelict want it?

DW: You know easily, and we couldn't have done it otherwise. But everyone was enthused, I kind of gave everyone the kick start and said right, I am going to do it. And then you got the right people in then didn't you.

[0:42:32]

TB: I see, so those volunteers were they from the organisation you mentioned at the beginning which was the Sixth was it the Eighth?

DW: No, these were just local people mainly, a lot of local people as well.

TB: Okay, so did you, so how did you, how did they get involved, did you advertise or did work get around?

DW: Well everyone knew about it, everybody knew about the place and everybody knew that I was now set a date for opening it and all the rest of it. So, you know all the Clapham village and you know a lot of people came up from Clapham who had been in the armed forces or you know the territorial and they are interested. You know proper soldiers, real soldiers and interestingly enough security for the first years, few years at the festival were all army.

TB: Oh, right okay.

DW: All from one regiment, weren't they?

RA: They were Ted's lot, weren't they?

DW: Yes, you know proper soldiers and they were workers as well you know, they did the job.

TB: So, these were local people that would just say oh, meet in the shop and say oh what are you doing, can I give you a hand or?

DW: Yes, and they remember the place because you know people that live around here remember the place with affection because as kids they played in there, you know and all this sort of thing. And it's here we are, it's being done up and the guy is a welder and he comes up and he says do you want any welding doing, I would love to come and do it? This is what happens isn't it people come along, and they feel that they can have, do a little contribution.

RA: You come up here once there is something about coming up here that you come up here and if you help out once it's a bug. And it is such a nice place, it is such a nice place to be.

DW: Its Hotel California, check out but you can never leave.

TB: [Laughing].

RA: Brian is my brother in law, my sister she is a volunteer as well, but they came up. You come to the festival, came over, didn't realise I was up here and they said oh, do you need a hand with painting or I will do some painting for you. And they haven't gone since [laughing].

DW: The place itself has got a good vibe.

RA: Yes, it has definitely.

DW: I mean you have only got to walk through here late at night, I used to before my dog passed away I used to do a lot of my planning at night with the dog. And we would go in the fields and we would walk back, and we would wind our way down there and I would find a place to sit down. You know, and the old dog would sit with me and I would look, and you start to see things. A lot of it came from that, but it kind of I don't know, there's a vibe there, it gives you things, it suggests you should do that. You know you look at something oh, that is obvious, we should do that you know all these things. And there's so much more that we can still do, there's so much more that we could still develop here.

RA: Yes, definitely.

DW: And that's the fun, and that's why when I come back to this art thing you know I look at everything as being a creation now. So, you know when we hit, like in the wood. We wanted to another venue and I sat there, and I looked at the wood and I could see that there were these scrubby old trees that weren't no good and they were really not helping the beautiful big canopy around them. And I could see that by taking them out we would open up a glade. So, I thought we will put a rustic stage in there, we will have a bonfire in the middle, play a bit of music and open it up as the woodland glade. And it went, oh it was so successful, and now we have got another one called La Mond and we have all the lights don't we, great big Chinese lanterns hanging in the trees.

RA: Yes, it looks lovely.

DW: And again, and I look at them as works of art, you know you look at it and you can see it in your mind's eye. And then you take it through to its fruition, you know a lot of people well say oh its rubbish, it's not, nothing to do with that but to me it is. And I think that's all I care about, what it means to me and to us.

TB: So, you kind of sculpt the atmospheres almost aren't you, for that?

DW: Yes, you see it, this is a wonderful three-dimensional work of art still with so much more potential and that's the fun. We are extending at 49 at the moment, we are doing all sorts of things you know we extended the soul shack didn't we you know bits like that. There's so many things we can do to improve it and add another element onto it you know without taking anything away from what is here. That's the main thing, we are not damaging the original provenance of it is like rock solid you know. The actual fabric and the history, that's not ever going to be tampered with. But from that there's so many areas that you can go off.

TB: That you can be creative with, yes, I see.

DW: Yes, be creative with it.

[0:47:02]

TB: Well, I am fascinated about the structure that you set up here because I mean I assume that this is in terms of a museum, I appreciate this is actually a number of museums. But in terms of the site I presume it's still a private business as opposed to a trust or a charity or whatever?

DW: Yes.

TB: And clearly you know you are in control of it and still but what you did was kind of give people spaces it seems to me, organisation spaces to do things with. So, just tell me a bit about that, about how that came about, was that always from the beginning was that your idea or what's happened?

DW: Well, yes and this is when we got approached by all different types and groups of people and everything. And because we were totally, we couldn't do it and we had no knowledge, I had no knowledge, I knew nothing about sort of second world war airfields or museums or whatever. And we were approached by certain people and that's where the process of elimination started. The people who we obviously realised were re-enactors and not proper museum people fell by the wayside and the people who actually you could see were delivering the goods stayed on. But we don't have I mean you say you are in charge here, but we don't have that sort of, there's not that sort of hierarchy, there's not that sort of way that we run it. It's that it runs itself doesn't it, it completely runs itself, it works so well there is no need for me to sort of even give one directive. When was the last time I said we have got to do this?

RA: I don't think you ever have [laughing].

DW: Well, no I mean if there's something if we do something and I am not happy I will go oo, I might sort of say oh, I am not happy about that or you know. But that's very few and far between, we just get on because I trust everyone does such a damn good job you know so it is a good relationship isn't it? Unlike a lot of museums which are always bitching, I don't know if you saw that there was a programme on the BBC, was it the BBC? And it was a transport museum they had busses and things in a few years ago, what was it Doncaster or somewhere did you?

TB: I didn't see it.

DW: Yes, oh.

RA: Is that something behind the scenes?

DW: Yes, oh it was, oh Liz and I were howling with laughter, it was the highlight of our week when it came on because we knew exactly what it was all about because there's all these power struggles within museums, there is though isn't there?

RA: Yes, definitely.

TB: Do you mean sort of between the volunteers or, the volunteers right okay yes, I see.

DW: Oh yes, yes there's all these experts who are trying to rule over the others you see and everything, and that's what we don't have here, it's gone.

TB: But how have you done that, is it because you have said look, you have that hut and you do what you want with it or?

DW: I suppose it is because I ultimately am in charge, so I can say to the bad guys, oh off, you know because I mean otherwise you couldn't, could you? You know if there's groups and they are all sort of jostling for dominance and all the rest of it you are not going to get anywhere. But if you have got someone over the lot and just picks the baddies out and tells them to clear off. And I think really that's probably been the difference hasn't it in that you know ultimately, I am in charge and that probably is just enough to make it or has been to make it work. But now, I mean it's sort of I just let everyone get on with it and it's just fantastic. And I am forever surprised you know, I don't walk around an awful lot but every now and again like during the festival I walk around, I will take a few friends around. I will say look, look at what we have done, I am looking and thinking Christ you know I didn't know that was there [laughing], brilliant, brilliant who did that?

TB: Wow, yes.

DW: So, yes so, it's almost pleasing me as well.

[0:50:42]

TB: Yes, so when the airfield, when the control tower was done then it seems to me that this was the next big building that got converted right?

RA: Well, that was a few years after because when we first came up here I approached David and asked him if we could perhaps create a museum up here.

TB: And what year was this 2002?

RA: 2002, and it was later in that year that we started it in that end building down there. The wall wasn't knocked through at the time and we created displays in there. And then we quickly outgrew it and David said well how about do you want to move over the other side and start doing some work in there you know? So, we had much more opportunities when we came over here because we had the big room where we could put the displays out of there but then we could open up a bigger world sort of thing. Because then we could create other displays in the other room and David very kindly gave us permission and then we started. We did the main lecture room first and then we opened up the rooms one by one.

TB: I see.

RA: And worked our way down the corridor. And people love it because it's like exploring [laughing] when you go over here or into it's like another world. You don't know what you are going to find in the next room, so that appeals.

DW: A phenomenal amount of work has been done though I mean 18 years on, it's 18 years work. I mean that's what always surprises me, I am not sort of breathing down their neck at all I know good things are being done. Then when I do walk around I am incredibly pleased by what I see [laughing]. And appreciative as well, you know with the way it's done and everything but there is a lot of work in there isn't there, a lot of work.

[0:52:26]

TB: So, just tell me a little bit about how that work kind of came about then. The first thing is can you just for the recording just say about your organisation or when that first came about? Because you came from an archaeological sort of society, right?

RA: Yes, well originally, we were known as Northamptonshire Airfields & Aircraft Research Group and we started in the 80s and we used to do research and recover aircraft engines. And basically, a lot of these items we had got in storage in garages and things, so we would take them out to church fetes and shows and things like that, but it just got too much you know. We are all getting older and carting these things about isn't easy, and you know we always thought we would like to get a sort of museum site. And I found David on the internet because there was lots of news stories about the new museum was going to open with the control tower and I thought you know I wonder if there might be an opportunity. Although it is Bedford it's just down the road from Northampton really, I wonder if there was an opportunity. And I contacted David and he very kindly said oh, come up and we will have a chat. And we came up, we had a chat and he very graciously let us start over there. So, that was great, we started restoring the building, putting a new ceiling in and all the rest of it and painting. And then we started to move the bits and pieces over one by one and then as visitors came over they saw what we were doing and either wanting to join or donated stuff. But we really quickly outgrew over there, it was only there probably for about three years and then we knew we had to do something else. And David very kindly said well, this was empty and derelict he said go over there. So, we did, and it was the best thing ever really for us. And we are privileged that David and his family are so kind to allow us over here and we always say that, that we are, though he don't like us saying it we are indebted to him. Because without him we wouldn't have a museum and that's a fact, so we will always do what we can to help because we are happy to be here, we love it.

TB: Yes, so organisationally are you still together as that society?

RA: No, once we, once David gave us permission to come over here and start we changed the name to the Twinwood Aviation Museum. We are still members of the British Aviation Archaeological Council and Brian is our representative. Really, we do limited archaeology now for the simple fact that we have got so much stuff that still needs cleaning that it's pointless. Let's leave the stuff in the ground, it's better in the ground where it is until we can sort through what we have got. So, we concentrate now more on the museum aspect and as I say another thing we learnt is that people want to see things they can relate to as well. A twisted piece of metal although it is historically important, and we love it you have got to have something that everybody can look at and instantly relate to. And that's another thing we learnt as well.

DW: That you know museums do have to be slightly commercial, you know otherwise they are not successful at all. And you know I meant what I said look, once you have seen one Spitfire engine do you want to see another one? I mean they are great but how many do you want to see?

RA: Yes, and it's the story behind.

DW: That was my input into it as a layman.

RA: It's the story behind them but what you are saying is right because if you, I mean no disrespect if you go to the Battle of Britain Museum in Kent you will see a line-up of about 30 Merlin engines literally I am not joking they are just boom, boom, boom, boom, boom. And in one section there's row after row of armour plate, it's like a graveyard with armour plate.

DW: Well, if you take the War & Peace Show you get the same thing, you will get 50 Jimmys lined up, 100 Jeeps lined up.

RA: But each one has got an individual story and they are, that's pure, they are purists. And what they are doing is fantastic and its wonderful, they are preserving a piece of history. But do you want to see 30 armour plating, everyone the same but it's got a unique story?

DW: I will tell you what for me what really works, and I first discovered this at Elvington that's at York.

TB: Oh yes.

DW: Because we went up there for the, they have got a control tower identical to us painted up. And we went up, my wife and I went up there on a Sunday to get the colours. We met with the person, the curator of the museum there who has helped us, and I brought back scrapings off their control tower you know [laughing].

TB: [Laughing] yes?

DW: To get the rail colours and everything. But one of the things that struck me, and I found fascinating were the photographs, the photographs of the young guys and the young girls. And they had lots and lots of photographs and I can look at photographs forever, you know because my dad was there and this and that you know. And you can, it gives that personal thing which is why I like the Glenn. They tell me one or two good photographs tell you more than an inanimate object of a bit of metal. But that's what you put with them anyway don't you? You know here is the Messerschmitt mangled engine and here is Herman Von Whatsisname's picture and this is his history. You know and that's the interesting bit, not the bit of mangled metal, it's this you know it's the fact that this was his and here is his hat badge or you know all this sort of thing. And that's what people then sort of think that young man died there, you get the human element. But you know that's what really got me the photographic side of it.

[0:0:58:11]

TB: Well, yes, I think that is very powerful. I am just wondering, you mentioned earlier that you know that you generally distrusted anyone who calls themselves an expert. But I was wondering if you actually have been given any advice from any museum networks or the local area, I don't know museum officer or anyone like that.

RA: Well, we are members, we joined about three years ago Bedford Museums Group which is brilliant. And they give you help and assistance and things like that. I mean one thing we are doing now is we are actually cataloguing everything that we have got, and we have also, we have started doing proper accessioning of items. And we have had a lot of stuff donated from another museum and everything has been catalogued with the description and a size, everything has got a number. And then we have got another list that what cabinet it goes into, so we can locate it if we need to, so there's all these things. That's something that we are having to learn and develop because we have got literally thousands of items in the museum and I said now, this is the time now that we have got to start cataloguing so we know exactly what's what and where it is.

TB: Yes, because you forget who gave it to you or like other stuff, yes.

DW: Well, that's one thing I mean in the Glen Miller museum my wife is more involved in that and we won't take anything now. If someone says oh, do you want a loan of that we say no, give it to us, not interested otherwise. Because years later you get dispute. And we have had this here

over disputes of ownership, I sold that to so and so and then he sold it to so and so who sold it to so and so. So, this person we don't know says that's my gun.

RA: Oh, God.

DW: You see, and then you get people getting very, and again you are dealing with the nutters again, you are dealing with the barmy people. So, I mean as far as I am concerned I know you look at it a different and its entirely up to you. But over there nobody will lend us anything.

RA: No, we don't take, the actual Bedford Museums Group have actually said you know and also if you look at setting up museums, government sites they are all recommending now that you never take anything as a loan. Because the consequences can be quite serious.

DW: Oh, it backfires all the time, all the time because people think of their exhibit as assets to be sold when they want to, and I am not interested in that.

RA: Yes, and we can't be like a storage.

DW: I say if you think it's that flog it on eBay then, sell it, get rid of it if you want the money. We have had it just recently we had a load of Glen Miller records didn't we, people offer us stuff and all that.

RA: Somebody wanted you to buy them, didn't they?

DW: And then this and that and the other, and we'll just say stick them on eBay.

RA: And then a few years back probably 2003 Ted who was gosh, there wasn't a bad bone in Ted's body. A chap came up and donated to Ted a 50-calibre machine gun, a Skellington 50 cal that came from Podington, and we had it in the museum for years. And then about four years ago a dispute broke out, so bloke lay claim to it and I said well hang on a minute that was given to us by Ted it wasn't given to us by you. No, no I gave it to Ted, why are you saying that now Ted has passed on? And we had a massive row and then David ended up. The bloke was really getting mouthy, then he rang David and he got really mouthy to you down the phone, didn't he? We said you are not having it because it wasn't donated by you, we have got it listed as down by Ted and that it is.

DW: It doesn't work, it doesn't work that doesn't. And anyway, you really don't want to base your museum on other people's property because you could have a lovely piece of equipment there one week and next week they want it back.

RA: Yes, it's gone.

DW: You know, and there's also an awful lot of dealers, a lot of dealers, we can think of one can't we in particular [laughing].

RA: Yes [laughing].

DW: Say no names.

RA: Yes, not mentioning any names.

DW: But I mean and basically, they use your museum as a shop. So, basically, they will lend you stuff and they will advise potential clients to go to the Twinwood museum and have a look because it so and so. And then next thing you know they are taking it away because they have flogged it.

TB: I see, it gives it status that object in a way that it's in a museum, so it must be more valuable.

DW: Yes, they are using us as retail premises almost [laughing].

TB: Right [laughing] gosh.

RA: One friend of mine he has passed on, Paul Knight he was ex RAF, and he got a massive collection at home a really good collection. And as a schoolboy he had actually liberated this 50-calibre machine gun again just the casing, none of the insides from Deenthorpe airfield and he had it on display at home. And this one individual went around to see him, and he said oh, I would really like that I have got a museum. He hadn't got a museum, he said I would really like that well Paul said well, I don't really want to get rid of that. You know I got that when I was a little schoolboy sort of thing, he said but I would like it, he said go on then have it then. He said I will give you £75, anyway just like that this chap took it home, that night he rang one of our members up who he didn't know Andy in Bedford. And he sold it the same day for £250 to Andy, and when it came up here I said no, that is, I am not having that, no. And I rang Paul up and Paul went mad because he said I have got a museum, I want it for a museum, he didn't he had already got somebody lined up to sell it.

TB: Wow.

RA: And I hate that, and he has also the same chap has gone up to family members of a veteran who has passed on and said oh, can I, I will buy your stuff off you, I have got a museum. He buys all the collection which should stay together and then he flogs it all off individually.

DW: You think these museums would all be benign establishments but it's all this skulduggery that goes on within.

RA: It's naughty.

DW: I tell you [laughing].

RA: It's naughty, if somebody came up here and we have got everything listed that's been donated and they said to me oh, Robert where's that jacket that I donated? And I couldn't show them it, I would be so embarrassed, I really would be I wouldn't be able to put my face anywhere. And that's why everything, we have never, ever sold anything that's been donated or loaned, well we don't take loans now. But never, ever because it's just not right.

[1:04:29]

TB: Let me just ask you about registration and accreditation, I have spoken to an awful lot of museums who haven't gone down that path for different reasons. But first of all registration, have you, are you registered as a museum technically?

RA: We are only registered with the Bedford Museums Group, as I say we want to look into becoming a charity. And we are now actually as I said to you, we are doing everything as you should do. So, we can actually say well, look we have listed everything, we take conservation seriously how we treat things and things like that. It's a big hurdle to get accreditation, it's a massive hurdle and a lot of museums don't do it. But I would like to because the one thing I am adamant about and I think about it more and more. And just before Christmas it made me think, we lost one of our members Mick and he put a lot of hard work into this place. And his 1940s is one of the biggest things about here, people love it. And I want to make sure that we have, that we can have a lasting legacy. Because I have told everybody if ever anything happens to me I would still like it, I want it to go on. I don't want it just to end because I'm not here, I want it to continue because I think you know we can make a good job of this and make it you know worthy. I mean I have been to other



museums and I don't think they are half as good as what we have got here. And I think we could make this a lasting thing otherwise I think we are wasting our time if we don't.

TB: So, the next step for you would be to set up as a charity?

RA: That's what I would like to do with David's consent.

TB: And after that accreditation potentially?

RA: Yes.

TB: Okay, sure.

RA: Yes, because then we could get funding for like doing like serious things like getting the roof done properly, the piers and things like that.

TB: Out of interest we are looking at closures, museum closures and funnily enough in this sector the airfield kind of air museum sector the closures are relatively low compared to lots of others. But, one thing, one big factor is whether they are a charity or not and the ones that do turn into trusts tend to go on. Partly because they are quite hard to shut down because they have got you know trustees and it's not one person saying anything I suppose. And so, it makes them more resilient you know and also, they have to clearly you know submit accounts and there are certain standards and whatever that I guess you are meeting. So, perhaps and I suppose you are comparing it to individual founders you know who start off with a collection of motorbikes or something and they die and that's it, it's gone sort of thing, so.

DW: There was local, there was a motor museum.

RA: A motorbike one.

DW: Yes where was that, no the one locally yes, it's a coalition of cars and he was in premises in not Hampton but somewhere like that.

RA: Yes, it was on Anglia News wasn't it that he had to sell everything off.

DW: The business rates you see it killed him if you are a limited company or a company or whatever and you are taking money. Well, wherever you are clobbered with business rates, you are either domestic or you are commercial. And the business rate system is grossly unfair, grossly unfair which is why a lot of rugby clubs have shut down and football clubs because they got charged business rates. They are not going to make any money, but they do a service, they put something into the community.

TB: You are paying business rates here I take it?

DW: Well, we are registered for business rates and we were originally paying an awful lot. But we took them to task over it and we are now sort of rated as a small business, so it's okay it's not a problem. But it was getting seriously out of hand because the government were taking a sledgehammer at it, and they are also attacking festivals.

TB: Oh, right.

DW: Because they thought in their stupidity and naivety the authorities thought that festivals were cash cows and they are not. Massive festivals lose money you know again they don't understand it, they don't actually get into the psyche of a festival. And the vast majority of festivals are put on by people who love putting on festivals and again they are a work of art. And at the end

of the day if it can wash its face phew, we can it next year you know and that's how it. The one that just went bust Rob da Bank that was Bestival wasn't it, Isle of Wight?

TB: Yes, that's a great festival

DW: It's bust, that's gone bust you see.

TB: Has it?

RA: There was one in Cambridge as well that has packed up now hasn't it?

DW: Rob da Bank yes, not the Cambridge Folk Because that's run by the council that can't go bust.

RA: No, what's it called, the strawberry fair or something?

DW: Oh, yes there's loads, oh no that was a big one, that was Screed Garden Party had 30,000 people that went.

TB: Crickey.

DW: You see people think God, I mean work it out their turnover is in millions, oh you know but it's.

TB: That's year round.

DW: But the business sates people thought that festivals were like I said they thought they were a cash cow and they soon realised, well the realised once the festivals got together then they realised that they weren't a cash cow. And the farmers renting the fields to the festivals were getting clobbered and had to go back and pay lots of money you know five years back and that. That all went pear shaped, people own these stately homes I mean another one Latitude that's at Southwold and the people who own the stately home there, they were seriously clobbered. So, funny thing everyone got together it was great camaraderie throughout the whole festival thing and out of that we got the best guys in the business and a lot of us got it all sorted. Fairly as well because this place sits empty.

RA: Yes, we are only open one day a week aren't we and we are not open to visitors.

DW: Yes, and I mean we are not generating astronomical sums of money and you know that's the fact of it. But I said to local, a very well-established property commercial property valuer, estate agent a very big company. And I said to the guy there because I had it valued because this was all going on. And I said to him David, look, I will tell you what if I gave you this everything its yours, do you want it? He said no way, no way because it would bankrupt him, the business rates alone would bankrupt him in a year.

TB: Really, wow.

DW: Yes, that's how stupid business rates are which is why we are losing the high streets along with the internet and everything else. But you know it's a completely and there are also other taxes which are completely wrong, it's a completely flawed tax. You have got VAT which is good, you have got corporation tax which is good, you have got income tax which is good but then you get the performing rights society and business rates which are feudal, feudal taxes and they bare no relation to the businesses that they are taxing.

[1:11:36]

TB: Yes, well just going back you said you united with some other festival organisers and that was to negotiate the rates down, the business rates down was that a campaign or?

DW: Well, it was to get together to discuss our mutual problems and then word goes around that oh, talk to so and so, so and so knows somebody in government.

TB: Yes, oh okay.

DW: And we got a route straight through to the top, to the very top.

TB: Okay, so you actually got those business rates changed.

DW: We overrode all the local taxation authorities because we were able through knowledge to get to the top guys who then said hang on, this is all going stupid. But at the local level you know when you have got local taxation officer and then obviously with councils you are banging your head on a brick wall with these people because they are just yes men. They have got their regulations and you are not talking to anybody with any, it's like hello, do you understand what I am saying?

TB: Yes [laughing].

DW: Well, no well the regulation says, computer says no that type of thing you see. So, you have got to get above that but individually I think people find that very difficult but collectively we were able to. Because there was the association of, I'm not a member actually but everyone is great, they are all friendly anyway they will give you as much advice as possible.

[1:12:48]

TB: Right, so that network is going to help. But just out of interest do you think these museums would exist without the festival?

DW: This museum here?

TB: Over these 18 years, do you?

DW: Well, it would be if I didn't have any sort of plan to make money out of it and I just left it, yes.

TB: Yes, so the fact these are resilient in that.

DW: Yes, it barely washes its face, it doesn't wash its face but the thing is it doesn't lose that much to worry about, you know.

TB: Yes, so how often is it open during the summer?

DW: Its open from the first Sunday in May through until the last Sunday in September.

TB: And how many days a week is it?

DW: Just a Sunday.

TB: Just on Sunday and what time is it open?

DW: 10:30 to 16:00 thereabouts or we stay open if you are late.

TB: Yes, and how much does it cost entry?

D: £5 isn't it to get in?

BM: £5 now yes, £5 yes.

DW: £5, kids free of course £5.

TB: And do you keep numbers, do you know how many annually how many visitors you have got?

DW: Yes, we do, I haven't got it off the top of my head, but I mean we could have on a good Sunday we could have probably 60, yes 60 and on a bad one 20.

TB: Right, okay yes sure.

DW: Not massive but the funny thing is it's constant, you know it's like that's it.

TB: Yes, sure and have you thought about opening up you know five days a week, seven days a week or is it just too much bother?

DW: That wouldn't work.

TB: Why wouldn't that work?

DW: You wouldn't get the numbers; absolutely wouldn't get the numbers you know. And I think you have got to offer something else you know, we could open, if we opened up let's see. Well, we are licensed so I suppose we could open up a café and that would be the business. I mean you take our local garden centre it exists because of the café, you take the Bedford Museum it exists because of the café. People go there, they don't go around the museum, they go to the café. People go to the garden centre, I mean I have been to that garden centre hundreds of times, I have been around the garden centre twice.

TB: But you have decided not to do that, is that partly Because you don't want to run a café or?

DW: Well, you have got to spend out £250,000 on the road.

TB: Yes, I see yes sure.

DW: You know for a start and I don't want to run a café; do you want to run a café?

BM: Not really.

DW: No.

TB: Right sure [laughing].

DW: We are not café owners, I mean you know if I wanted to you know great or a restaurant or something, but that's not. I have got no experience of it, I have no desire to do it, so we are not going to do it. We do it how we want to do it you know, but as we are you wouldn't increase the visitor numbers by that many. Because the only people you are going to appeal to are the retired people and I will be honest, I mean we are working on here seven days a week and people can sort of get in and drive in and that. And very, very seldom do you see someone driving and they say, oh is the museum open, I say no I'm sorry.

TB: Right, yes.

DW: And if I get one email a month asking if the museum is open on a weekday that's all I get.

TB: Right, okay sure so don't feel the market is quite there yes.

DW: The market, I think yes, it's a weekend for us that's our experience it's a weekend market and we just stick to the Sunday. Because again I mean we have stayed open haven't we Bank

Holidays and all that, Saturdays a waste of time you know people. Sunday seems to be the right day.

TB: Yes, it sorts of works yes.

DW: That's our experience you know.

[1:16:21]

TB: Yes, can I just ask you, you have got the firemen's museum as well and you have got, are these really all under Robert's sort of remit or the group that does all this or is it all slightly separate?

DW: Well, the firemen's museum is run by Roy who you haven't met, 44 is Neil but overall, I like to, you know I make everyone aware that Robert, you have got to have somebody who is sort of the figurehead for the museum. So, I say that Robert is the guy without going around pushing his weight around, is the guy in charge as it were. And you know if push came to shove then I would back him against anybody else but they all know that they can't let push comes to shove [laughing] so it works beautifully.

TB: [Laughing] okay, sure. It sounds I don't know it's just a really interesting sort of you know structure that you have got. Well, it's not a structure is it wholeheartedly?

DW: No, it's not and I think that's it, you know as I say I think museums have a lot of political problems and a lot of infighting and power struggles and all the rest of it. And it's all rather silly but it exists, and I think that's what we have got away from here and that's why we are now 18 years on everything is all hunky dory and running rather smooth you know.

[1:17:44]

TB: Can I just ask about your own personal interest in, and I am assuming this but although you said you had no particular knowledge of airfields or anything like that. But clearly history of sorts is important to you I would have thought given that that's a thread that's running through a lot of events and things that are going on here. Clearly you enjoy organising festivals, I am just wondering kind of if you could put your finger on I don't know, well perhaps about your past, I don't know what your background is. But do you have, I don't know has this been a long abiding interest or something you have just discovered recently?

DW: No, not at all, no I mean well my mum and dad where you know well, dad was in the war and he was he actually went into Italy invasion of Italy and he was wounded. And he lost all of his friends, amazing, lost everybody, he was lucky he only got shot and not killed. He came back and then he married my mother, saw over the war and they worked in factories and in this area, it was shoe factories.

TB: Oh, right.

DW: My mother was from Northampton and my father was from a local village and he worked in the shoe factories and just Rushden down the road there were 80 shoe factories. And Rushden was then in my view a beautiful town of 17,000 people, 80 factories, everybody worked, everybody worked there was nobody on the dole or anything you know. And to be a thriving, bustling place, the high street was thriving and everything. And that's how I grew up, I grew up as a sort of Co-op grocery boy on a bike, you know, and I can remember Christmases where everybody was rammed in Rushden high street and you had a shop that sold everything. It was wonderful, it was like, you

know it was how I remember Britain in the 50s and 60s. And the culture lifestyle of the whole, just Rushden and the manufacturing and the factories, you know you had a factory with 3,000 men in and the mass production and we produced the world's best Goodyear welted shoes, men's beautiful shoes. It's just the smells and everything and then you know eventually I ended up going into manufacturing on my own, you know my mum and dad were factory workers.

By the time I was 20 I had my own factory, employed probably about 50 people and then a little later I went up to 350 people, I was a manufacturer. Again, I consider it as creative you know, and it was, that's sort of my thing. I have got a big feeling for history, I have got books on Rushden as it was and the old shoe industry, how it started, you know from the early days and everything. Bedford is the same, old books on Bedford they are wonderful. Bedford was a different town, it was an engineering town, Rolls Royce were here and all that you know. They have got their own heritage and that. Of course, it's all gone now these towns and well, they have got no soul no they are nothing. The high streets are charity shops or boarded up you know and it's out of town shopping and everything has completely changed. But that's how it was then, and so I have a very rich youth period to draw on you know and that got into my blood. That was why I went into manufacturing and I started making children's shoes and it just developed. And in the end, I was producing lots of stuff, clothing and everything you know. And then later on in life I was bought out by a merchant bank which left me okay, so I went into retirement. Bought a lot of property, bought his place and that's it. So, this is why this place has been easy for me, but it's been easy because of what I did in the past.

TB: Because of all that, I see yes.

DH: But that's still that thing continues which is why I still work seven days a week which is why I am still wanting to create you know. And I love mass production, I look on it as an art, I look upon you know the whole thing. The factory is a living animal, and it is full of thousands of little components and nothing goes in one end and something amazing comes out the other. And it's created by not only fantastic plan but by the efforts of lots and lots of people all working together. And to me that's a work of art you know, and I could look at videos of factories throughout the ages on YouTube all night long [laughing].

TB: Yes [laughing].

DW: You know and that sort of thing.

TB: And also, these are local towns to, here right?

DW: Yes, Rushden is just down the road, 10 minutes.

TB: So, you are kind of, you really have quite some deep roots here in this area?

DW: Yes, we lived in Rushden all our lives apart from, well I say all our lives up until 1985 when this place came up for sale, the farmhouse and that. And we have four kids and we decided to just move up the road a bit, but we are Rushden people.

[1:23:03]

TB: And when you, so when you bought this, and you saw the tower did you know about it before you bought it about the history of it, Glen Miller?

DW: No.

TB: None of that?

DH: None at all, nothing at all.

TB: Right, so did you suddenly think oh my god I have actually got something really quite special here?

DW: Oh, yes, I realised gradually that yes, this has got some provenance with it you know. And so, you know I started making a bit of noise about that the more and more I learnt about it the more I realised, yes it has got something. It wasn't really my interest, it was just that wow, God yes this is where he was based, this is where he had his only concert for an RAF audience. This is where he took off from when he died, wow and he was the number, the very first pop star, wow. Well, hang on there's something here [laughing] you know sort of thing.

DH: Yes, here's something to play with.

DW: So, but no I definitely wasn't, I wasn't even remotely interested in it up to that point.

[1:23:54]

TB: But you did have this idea about place and kind of its history. And so, what about this, what does this place kind of give the local area or the local community do you think? Let me just put that out there as a question.

DW: Well, it gives Clapham an awful lot of dosh during the festival, that's all I can say. I mean Sainsburys in the edge of Bedford superstore have their biggest day not Christmas, festival.

TB: Right, okay.

DW: The cash, all the ATMs run out, hotels, cafes all over Bedford take on extra staff.

RA: And the hotels don't they yes, they are all fully booked.

DW: Oh, yes so, I mean that's all we contribute, an awful lot of money. I worked it out oh years ago, you know it works into millions actually [laughing] you know.

TB: But is there apart from the economic impact which is remarkable, is there anything else do you think in terms of I don't know just sort of putting the place on the map or local identity or kind of anything like that?

DW: None at all.

TB: Okay.

DW: None at all, no.

TB: So, your visitors aren't local people coming here?

DW: No, no if you go down into Clapham now and you ask a man in the street what do you think to the Twinwood festival he would say what's that mate?

RA: Or the museums, they don't know.

DW: Or the museum.

TB: Really?

DW: Yes, the majority of people in Clapham down there are unaware, but people unaware we are in an age I would say of mass communication when we know nothing. I read a good thing on them getting off the thing now, a good thing now that local people aren't reading local newspapers they are not getting the news anymore, they are only getting fake news.

TB: Oh, I see yes.

DW: You know, and I think that's, it's kind of people are unaware of what's going on. When I was living in Rushden there was a paper called the Evening Telegraph, everyone which was delivered, you bought it, but it was delivered to your house every night. Every man and his dog had one delivered, and every man and his dog read it Friday through to Saturday. Everything that was for sale, everything that was going on was in there and everybody knew.

RA: Yes, we used to have the Chronical and Echo.

DW: That doesn't exist anymore, now its Facebook, Twitter and this and that and the other. A lot of it is false news or whatever, sound like Trump now don't I fake news [laughing].

TB: [Laughing].

DW: No, but it is true and that's why people in Clapham are totally unaware because they don't read the news, there are no local newspapers, there is no local news. So, they are unaware of what we are doing, and you know it. If we were on the high street.

TB: I was going to say yes, it's a remote site.

DW: Yes that's true, but I mean even the festival they moan about the traffic coming in, or some people do but they probably don't know why.

TB: [Laughing].

DW: [Laughing] what's going on? And then they forget I think the next week, the next year you know but I don't think it has any impact whatever on the local other than the local businesses. And the local pubs love it, restaurants all the people down there you know the shops they love it. They are well aware of it and they plan for it, you now even the pubs will put on a Glenn Miller night sort of thing so that you can do down there and have your meal during the festival. And if you haven't had enough of Glenn Miller music damn me they are playing it there as well [laughing].

TB: [Laughing] I see, yes okay that's interesting.

SK: I can't remember where we had a couple of homes come here didn't we, the patients with Alzheimer's.

RA: Oh yes, we did, they were with Alzheimer's and they came to life, they came up here and they came to life. It was two minibuses.

DW: Well, we have had a lot of that though, we have had a lot of emotional things you know a lot of emotional stuff.

TB: Well, I was going to say yes, because there's also like a memorial aspect to this isn't there?

DW: Oh god yes.

[1:27:41]

TB: So, just tell me a little bit about that.



DW: Well, when we unveiled the memorial which you haven't seen because its covered up we cover it up during the winter to protect it. Most people leave theirs open and they are just left to wrack and ruin, aren't they? We decided no, nobody is coming up here, so we cover it up and every year when we unveil it is pristine this beautiful memorial. And we had an unveiling ceremony there and we had a fabulous Spitfire display, didn't we? I mean there weren't a dry eye in the place you know it was pretty damn good. But we have had, we had a guy I remember one guy and he was a rear gunner on a Lancaster. And we brought him out and we took him to the tower didn't we as the Lancaster flew over, well he was in tears you know. And we have had that happen, we have had people break down in the control tower.

TB: Really, wow.

DW: But the thing about the control tower is it's a bit of a, it's got this echo and as you play the Glen Miller music on the jukebox at the bottom it echoes at the top as if its. And you are standing there and it's like years ago, that sounds as if it's coming from years ago, it's fabulous isn't it?

RA: We have had a lot of families as well who have come over from different places. I was telling you earlier we had the son of the pilot the P38 lightening and that was sort of closure for him. Because his father survived the war and he went on, he ended up flying massive fuel re-tankers in and out of Hawaii, Honolulu there Pearl Harbour. And his father joined the RAF before America was in the war and then he had the option, you saw the photograph had two sets of wings, RAF and them American. And when America entered the war in 1941 anyone that was in, who was American who was in the British forces had the chance to re-muster to the US forces. He did, and he went onto, he was a night fighter on Havocs and Black Widows, but he would never talk about anything other than that P38 lightening crash where he bailed out. And they came over and we went to the site and it was closure, and then a couple of years later his wife came over. And that was wonderful and then we had another family came over with the Lancaster that we did from Aylesworth NG270. The family had, they knew about the crash but hadn't got a lot of information and they got in touch. And we said we have actually got some items and the whole family got together. Most of them lived up in Yorkshire and they came down and they come once a year the Bolsover family. And we had Anglia TV come down and they did a film on that and they said there was closure, to was nice you know and that he was remembered. Because like I said to you before if you don't actually write up the story of these people are forgotten other than by family members.

So, its remembrance and then we had another family come over with the other Wellington that crashed at Coton that dived into the ground. And they came over and they didn't even know the plane had been recovered. And we told them about the story about the recovery and we tried to locate the family as well, that's something we try to do. We could find nobody, but they had actually got their family member George Morman and it's the only photo that we have got of one of the crewmembers on that particular plane. And its quite sad because he had actually started to write a book, he loved science fiction and they brought a copy of this book he had actually started to write. And it brings it home to you, you know these people are not just names, but they had lives as well and left loved ones behind and that. Its closure, definitely a closure thing but we do get family members come back.

And then threes another one it's the 75th anniversary this year it's a P38 lightening. There is a chap called Howard Struball and he travelled all the way from America on a ship because they hadn't even got enough planes for them. And he was the first 9th air force unit to come over, photo

reconnaissance. And they were the 30th photo reconnaissance squadron and they came over they, they came I didn't realise. This is another interesting thing, I didn't know Glasgow had got a port, I thought Glasgow was in land of course it's the Clyde isn't it?

DW: [Laughing] shipbuilding.

RA: When I was reading up and they said about we sailed into Glasgow, I thought how the hell did you sail into Glasgow? So, I did a bit of research and.

DW: Geography was never his strong point [laughing].

RA: No, no the port of Glasgow they came down the Clyde and straight, as soon as they boarded of this ship which was called the Columbie it was an old French steamer, cruiser thing, they boarded a train they came straight down to Chalgrove and there was nothing at Chalgrove, no aeroplanes. They had 25 days in which to turn it from a unit on paper to flying. And the day before they went operational he was test flying this bloody P38 Lightning and I think it was oxygen failure. I think he was altitude and the oxygen cut out and he just dived into this, what was the name, Crosshayes Farm. And there was a little schoolboy who was off school sick, and he was looking out the window because he heard this [whine] like this. And he said I looked out the window and I saw this silver thing just dive and it crashed just at the bottom of his field and exploded. And his father ran out and it was a really deep snow it was 25th February 1944 deep snow. And they went out there and this plane was burning and this poor chap, when the plane had come down he had been thrown out and they said he was all crumpled up leaned against this thing.

Anyway, we got all the, we did a lot of research on it, we got a lot of information and we identified this plane and we identified Lieutenant Struball and we found a letter. And the farmer at the time had said if you remove all the wreckage, don't want any recompense for it you know there will be no problem but as long as you clear it all. So, we thought we aren't going to find anything and then we went over there we got a massive reading. And we dug down and we found one propeller and a load of gear from it and oil coolers. And we went up to Maddingly, he is actually buried at Maddingly. And we had been trying to find any sort of next of kin because he came from Texas, we have had no joy at the moment. But I would love to get a photograph of him because we have got this great story, I have got the letters from the schoolboy that he wrote to his aunty, photocopies of them. And there was an American MP that they moved from Deenthorpe which is a mile down the road to guard it and the family built up a rapport with him. But we are hoping to get them over, so we can say to them look, we have found something. And it was one day before they went operational, it was just a bloody training flight.

TB: Crikey, yes.

RA: And something went wrong.

TB: That's amazing that you know from this crash site that you have managed to piece together such details of this station of the lives. I mean that's really quiet something isn't it?

RA: It was just that the family that they love like the history and they had kept all the documents. And the schoolboy obviously is an elderly man now and he was off school poorly. And he wrote to his auntie about he was poorly, but he wrote down how he saw this, he heard this noise first of all, jumped out of bed and looked out of his window. And the house is at the top of a hill and

it goes down and there used to be a small quarry down there but it's all been filled in. But there's a dip and it went straight in there, there's a line of bushes and that.

[1:35:51]

TB: So, how did you find out about that in the very first place? Were you approached by the family who told you about this or did you find the wreckage and then figure it out afterwards?

RA: A friend of mine said he knew where a P51 Mustang had crashed, he had heard rumours. But I went through all my records and I could find nothing on a Mustang and then I happened to stumble across some information on a P38. And when I dug a bit further it actually gave the name of the farm, so I thought ah, that's it. And it all, all the pieces came together.

TB: I see, right.

RA: Went over to the farm because some people are all for it some people don't like you on their land, but they were all for it. It was a Mr Pollard, he was fantastic he was ex-army man he was. And he was all for it and I remember we went down there and we dug it by hand because I prefer rather than get a digger in straight away I prefer by hand because you don't lose anything. When you get a mechanical digger in its stuff everywhere and you could lose track.

TB: Wow.

RA: And we just found the one propeller blade that was really badly corroded but all the gearing off the prop boss and that, so nice it was really good.

TB: That's amazing, so you go down there, just you mentioned those machines that you said that can scan the ground you have got some equipment?

RA: Yes, we scanned it with a fisher, so we got a massive reading and I thought that it was a.

TB: And is that the Magnetron did you say?

RA: No, this is just it's like a twin box standard metal detector, but it can go down 30 ft.

TB: Wow.

RA: But the magnetometer that will only find ferrous metal, that can go deeper and it's an ex MOD one and that can go much deeper. They use it for bomb location and we used to borrow one, it's quite funny [laughing]. And if I wanted to buy one second hand it would be about £1,500 and I went to an aero jumble at Newark Air Museum. And I walked along and there was one on the floor [laughing] the bloke was selling one. And I thought that's going to be silly money, I said how much mate and he said £25.

TB: [Laughing].

RA: I said does it work? He said yes, so I had it, I snatched his hand off [laughing]. And then everybody else wanted to borrow it because they are the bees knees.

TB: Fantastic, what a find that's brilliant.

RA: Yes, I was lucky.

[1:38:05]

TB: So, some of your objects were literally dug out of the ground but you have got, I mean you must have I would have thought over 10,000 items probably. Where has the rest come from, just give me to sum it up kind of eBay I think was one?

RA: eBay, a lot of them were young schoolboys that saw plane crashes, went over and liberated them.

TN: Oh, yes collectors yes.

RA: There's one in there with some instruments that were like brand new and that was my friend Paul Knight who went onto join the RAF and that. Just at the 1945-1946 and he went on as electrician and he went on the last Lancasters and then Lincolns. As a schoolboy he had heard about his Mosquito that had crashed at oh gosh, just on the outskirts of Deenthorpe. So, him and his mate went over and the RAF, this plane had tipped over and it was on its back. There were no RAF guards there because it was in the middle of nowhere, he had got a bike you see it wasn't going to stop him. And he went over, and he clambered in and he got it, he always carried, and he liberated the compass and the other instruments.

TB: Wow [laughing].

RA: And then he legged it.

DW: He liberated, I like that.

RA: That's what they used to do the schoolboys, I mean there was a. He had a Lancaster crash at Wansford, he went over and one of his mates took a Browning 303 machine gun with ammunition.

DW: Good grief.

RA: And the police were [laughing] went around his house and they got it back. The lad got a slap around the head and when he said to his dad I had that machine gun and the policeman hit me on the head and he took it, his dad said yes, you shouldn't have had it and he slapped him around the head [laughing].

TB: [Laughing].

RA: So, that's how a lot of the stuff is what the schoolboys used to liberate, yes.

TB: Right, yes and so these guys are now in their 70s or 80s or whatever and they will bring it up to you and see, look would you like it because?

RA: Yes, and the funniest thing we ever had we sat in here and this little elderly lady came in and she said, oh I have brought this for you. And she handed me this carrier bag and I went oo, gosh that's heavy and I took it out there was a brand-new service revolver in a holster an Enfield. And I said is it loaded, she goes I don't know dear its been in the loft since 1945 when I left the WAF. I said, oh well let me have a look, and I broke it open and no, but it was like new. But we had to, we sent it off to a gunsmith over in, what's the village with the turbines over thee it was that? Mr Wilcox it was who.

DW: Pavenham?

RA: Yes, it begins with.

DW: Bromham.

RA it's the one over there you can see the turbine, anyway they had to deactivate it, its where the caravan park is.

DW: Yes, the side of that one yes.

RA: They ruined it, absolutely ruined it.

TB: Oh, what a shame.

RA: And it had never been fired but that was the most unusual.

[1:40:56]

TB: Yes, amazing. Okay look last question okay, so two elements to this. What's been the high point for you of being involved with this entire setup really, I suppose for both of you? Can you put your finger on a really amazing moment? And then also what's the lowest point, has there been a really tough sort of stressful time you can think of where its been really difficult to get through?

RA: Probably the highlight for us is whenever we have a family come that's probably the highlight. Probably when we did the Rutherford memorial is probably the biggest highlight where we actually traced all the relatives from New Zealand, Dublin and Canada, Australia. And we actually got them altogether for a weekend, we had a private function everybody altogether. We laid on all the buffet kind of thing and then the following day we had the church service. And then we kept in contact years after, that I think was the best thing ever.

TB: So, was this the, did you mention this earlier about the pin that was given to, the hat pin, the hat badge?

RA: That was the P38, this one was actually we said when we did the recover we said that if we found something that was suitable we would definitely want to put a memorial in the church. And we found tow propellers that were perfect, and they were like new other than they had bene broke off at the hub, and that's what we did. We offered it to the church because they have to take it on as part of their fabric of the church that it can never be taken out of the church, it's a part of that church. And they accepted and then we went ahead, and we did all the tracing. And then they did the official invites.

TB: Wow.

RA: And that was like something very, very special and whenever any relatives come here I think that is special as well. Because they like to see, they can see the story, the end of their relative's you know that part of the story. And they know that they are not forgotten. But I say that none of that would be possible if it wasn't for David though, and David has made that possible for us so that's very special.

TB: Okay, that's lovely thank you. And David high point for you, or you mentioned a couple.

DW: Low point.

TB: Well, high well both but.

DW: Low point business rates people and the stupid people involved with that who would have, who. We were lucky because we were involved with all the other people in the festival business and we were able to as I say get to the higher point with it. Without that we wouldn't have done, and we wouldn't be here, they would have finished the whole site because it is just purely destructive

that tax is destructive. It serves no constructive purpose whatsoever and It could be done so much better, they have got their heads around it somehow. The high point was the festival 2017, weather was unbelievable wasn't it? And the camp sites were like a scene from Ibiza [laughing].

TB: Yes [laughing].

DW: Everybody was so happy. Sales of tickets at the festival were astronomical, we sold about a third of next years festival tickets and people were ringing up left right and centre saying can I have some tickets? I would say yes, did you enjoy it, we haven't been, our friends are there, and we said you have got to come.

TB: Wow [laughing].

DW: And I think it was a combination, obviously a good festival, all the festivals are good but the weather was the best we have ever had wasn't it? Not that, if you were working in a marquee you wouldn't say that, the lady doing teas and cakes in the marquees was in tears, everybody else was in you know having a lovely time.

TB: Brilliant [laughing].

DW: But I think that was a high point because I did say to my best friend who comes every year who I used to be in business with I said to him I said it won't get better than this, it can't do, it can't. That was as good as it will ever get.

TB: Yes, that was the peak kind of year, sure.

DW: `Yes, we will have some good ones, but I don't thin will beat hat you know. So, I sort of I milked it for every second of it because I was enjoying it.

TB: Yes, sure brilliant.

DW: But it was lovely just going around the campsites and people weren't particularly bothered about going in and listening to the music.

TB: Okay, that's interesting.

DW: They would go in in the evening and when the temperature went down but people were just sitting around, having BBQs, beers and that and the place was rammed as far as the eye could see. You know, and I went around and how are you, alright, yes no we are alright. I spoke to one lady in the glamping village and she was terribly, terribly posh because they are the glamping you know [laughing].

TB: Yes [laughing].

DW: And she was with her husband and she said, I said to him darling, darling it doesn't get any better than this does it? And he said no darling, it doesn't. And they were sitting in their deckchairs in the glamping village with the wood around them listening to the echoing music from afar.

TB: Oh, really yes?

DW: And that's all they wanted, she said we spend most of our time here listening to it and we are going to come every year. They were all dressed up, it's like I don't know it's a cross between a Miss Marple and a Midsomer Murders I reckon you know.

TB: [Laughing].

DW: Which we did here you know, we did a Midsomer Murders.

TB: Oh really?

DW: Yes, Suzie Quatro was electrocuted on our stage.

TB: Oh really?

RA: it was called The Hatchett Man Cometh.

Tb: Oh brilliant.

RA: That episode, yes that was filmed here.

TB: Oh, I will have to find it.

DW: That was fun, that was fun wasn't it? It wasn't the Glenn Miller it wasn't the Twinwood festival it was the Rhythm Festival that we did, so it was more of a rock festival. And they came, and they filmed it during the Rhythm Festival and then they came back in September and we had to set the whole thing up again to replicate it for continuity of filming you see. And that's done by a company called Bentley Predictions and they are great, I have come across a lot of filming people including the BBC etc and, but Bentley are brilliant. Because they make so much money, they have got it right, oh they have got it right.

RS: They filmed First Light here.

TB: Oh, really right?

RA: Geoffrey Wellum the Spitfire pilot.

DW: That was a good fun thing, that was a good film it was a proper documentary what was he called?

RA: Clever how they did it, docudrama.

DW: That's it, docudrama. That was really a super film but again we had trouble you know I had trouble because it got to the 11th hour and I said you are not coming because you haven't paid me anything. Because they never pay you.

TB: Really?

DW: BBC are the worst; the BBC are disgraceful they try every trick in the book. You wouldn't think it was, you think BBC my money is safe here, no you will lose it, you will lose with the BBC they wont pay. And if they do they will deny it. So, it starts off from a London office where the production office, they then say yes, we will pay you so much for it after an argument. You then sort of invoice them, now that office is not that production anymore it's something else, they know nothing about it. They say but you have to go to Manchester anyway to get your money, Manchester know nothing about it. And all of a sudden you realise what the BBC, how it works [laughing]. But Bentley Productions did the Midsomer Murders, they were super because a) they gave us loads of money Becauswe they were making it. They have got this fabulous sort of you know formula and its Britain how we would like it to be, Midsomer isn't it?

TB: I see, yes.

DW: Our festival in a way the Twinwood Festival is kind of like that, it's rather gentile.

[1:48:54]

TB: That's interesting isn't it, I mean there is one thing which is about we are interested in kind of things about identity. We talked about local identity and issues about whether people know about it and so on. But what about national identity what's going on here?

DW: Well this is it, this is turn your clock back, this is how it used to be, this is why. We have our own cult following, they come because they can dress 1950s, they can bring their Austin Somerset car and park it up there on show and they can walk around. And they are meeting nothing but nice people with nice manners, you know? And it is because everybody is like that it becomes that. There's no litter, there's no rubbish, there's respect, people can have a drink but not get drunk. Or if they do get drunk they are just jolly, it's pretty damn good isn't it?

RA: Yes, no problem that is nice.

DW: That's the beauty of it and we are making it more and more upmarket, we are homing in which is why I went in with the National Trust and I was thinking I have got to get more upmarket people. You know I want people who appreciate the better things and who can afford to pay for it as well.

TB: Yes.

DW: But you know like I can sort of crack a joke with the family and that I said we have got to get more Glyndebourne [laughing] you know and that sort of thing. But why not, you know Goodwood is kind of well no, I don't know we are different to Goodwood. I mean we can't really compare ourselves to Goodwood. I mean as far as everyone else is concerned we consider ourselves although we say it ourselves we are, we have set the bar too high for just about everybody in this genre. You know, and we only consider ourselves in competition with people in the genre, as far as other festivals are concerned we are all mates.

Tb: Right, yes.

DW: But within our own genre, because everybody copies us as, well don't they? That's really annoying, I mean it's plagiarism to the Nth degree we have got a lot of stuff parented though. I am not bothered you know taking people to court and that but it's terrible.

TB: Wow.

DW: How people copy you, but they don't stand a chance, they don't stand a chance do that?

RA: No, not compared to us.

DW: No, we had one big festival that has been going for about 30 years getting between 25,000 – 30,000 people and they decided they were going to go on the same date as us after all those years. They didn't, they couldn't make it, they couldn't make it they actually had to stop, and they finished because they couldn't sell tickets because they were on the same date as Twinwood.

TB: Wow.

DW: You can't do that, and we have had lots of people come, try to come close. Atomic did it the week before, they went bust, Barrow House what's it they tried it, they went out. I just sort of say now come on then, come on anyone want to try it?

TB: [Laughing].



DW: You don't stand a chance because if you have got as choice Twinwood or anywhere else you will come to Twinwood. You know.

RA: It's got a unique setting hasn't it?

DW: But it's the people that make it, you can sit all day and that's the other good thing about the festival. I learnt this years and years ago going right back to 2001, I went to Detling to the something Military Odyssey which is the Kent Showgrounds isn't it?

TB: Okay, yes.

DW: And we went there, it was a long drive down, we went in there doing a bit of research. This was when we were thinking of doing more military paraphernalia stalls, and this is where they all go you know so we thought we would find a few traders who would bring up here. It was wrong but at the time we thought we would do that. So, we went down there, and we got there, massive show where they do military re-enactments through the ages you know they do sort of medieval right through to tanks charging across the arena and god knows everything and all in between. And I said well, we will go and have a cup of coffee, there were four of us, got a cup of coffee, I looked round and I think we got a hotdog or something. And I looked around and there was nowhere to sit, and I was like anyway had a cup of coffee and all that. And then I made a point in this big, big, big how walked around and there was nowhere to sit, nothing. So, what do you do, sit on the grass? Well, most people if you sit on the grass can't get back up again, and I thought do you know what that many shows are missing this.

So, what we have got, we have got more furniture than you can shake a stick at, haven't we? There's picnic tables, benches, chairs, you know pub tables we have got thousands, haven't we? We just manufactured, Nigel has just knocked another 80 out benches, no I tell a lie 120 in lot 49 you know for the venue. Because you just want to park yourself down, and you park yourself down and you will buy a coffee or a cocktail or a beer or a glass of wine and then you will people watch. And it's the greatest thing and you will keep, oh I will have another glass because you are having so much fun looking at all these. And they are beautiful, and it doesn't matter what age the women are they are still beautiful even in the eyes of the young because of the effort they make you know. And that's, and the guys look great. And we have got, we had a group of guys came threes a photo if you look on our gallery this year's gallery, last year's gallery a group of guys must be about eight of them and they came, all ages from 20-60 or whatever. And they came dressed as Peaky Blinders.

TB: Oh yes [laughing].

SK: I missed them [laughing].

DW: They were incredible, they got the old peaked caps on and the overcoats and everything and they stood with the back of the corrugated hangar you know looking mean in a group. And that's what people do, you know one year we had the whole cast of Allo Allo dressed up, and they were amazing. I mean everywhere they went people photographed, you know, and we don't we, we get people just get together. And also, the secret also is that we have found is its not always what you perceive it to be, you have got to get behind the punter and look in from the punter's point of view. And it's more socialising, it's not a music festival you see, it's a holiday, its five days so you come, and you want to be with your friends. So, we do what other people don't do, we let you form groups and we give you space. So, say threes 10 of you, 10 couples in a caravan or motorhome or whatever we will let you book together so no matter what time you turn up you are all together.

TB: I see, yes.

DW: And they get more, people actually get more fun out of being with their friends than anything else. The entertainment is secondary, you know, and I recognise that its about the experience you give people not the headline act. As long as you put on quality you know and threes lots of different things you can do, and you can grab. And I find a lot of people they will spend most of the day in the campsite and then they will pick a couple of acts to see at night and then they will go out at night with their mates. But they are sitting around having great fun, they set their tables out don't they and.

SK: Candelabras.

DW: Candelabras, yes, it's an entertainment in itself.

TB: Sounds amazing.

DW: I have got a little John Deere gator one of these little buggy things agricultural, and I drive around the campsite and its wonderfully entertaining just observing the campsite. Hello, you alright, yes, we are alright, they have had half a bottle of wine or whatever all day, you know. And its terrific, they are all having fun even when last year it chucked down rain last year all day Sunday, all the caravans. They are all in the caravans except the ones who came out and went into the marquees and that. But the marquees were all rammed which you didn't want to be outside because it was chucking it down. So, a lot of people stayed in the caravans and the old generators were going like crazy keeping everybody because we do electric hook-ups you see.

TB: Oh, right, yes.

DW: They were going like crazy, but it cleared on the penultimate act in the arena which was Muddy Boo Otis Reading tribute followed by the Bootleg Beatles, again brilliant. And they just, there was this mist then, it was warm there was no wind. The rain had stripped just a mist and it was magical. And they all came out then for their night out and they were out until 02:00 then. So, they had still had a fabulous day at the day at the festival. And they had been with their mates because what they do also they park their caravans sort of that way, so the awnings come together and that.

TB: Oh yes, sure.

DW: And that's, all they want, they want to be with their friends and its all about socialising or if you haven't got any friends its being with people you feel comfortable with. You know, nice people, same sort of age as you, nothing is initiating, everyone has got a smile on their face, everyone is polite. I mean we don't have any rubbish to pick up, its ridiculous.

TB: That's amazing.

DW: You know the arena, the rubbish bins are full, but the arena is clean whereas you put on a pop festival you can't see the grass.

TB: No exactly yes [laughing].

DW: It is unbelievable.

TB: Yes, they leave their tents behind, now don't they? Shocking, shocking.

DW: Oh, everything is left, everything but the plastic beer mugs you know and all the rest of it is absolutely incredible. But with this one they are so respectful of the property, we don't get property damage, we don't get anything, we don't get any problems whatsoever do we?

RA: No, it's very good.

DW: We have had a very good run with this festival

SK: It's like when they take all our mugs, we come the next day and they are all stacked nicely on the table.

TB: Really oh wow [laughing] that's great.

DW: Yes, we hire in hundreds well thousands of tables and chairs for the marquees and then at the end we have to stack them all up and count them all. They are all there, fire extinguishers I mean god knows how many fire extinguishers I had to put all over the campsite and at the end of the day they are all accounted for. Its unheard of [laughing].

RA: Yes, you won't get somebody who wants to set one off don't you at other places.

DW: Oh, you know, yes but I mean we used to have them missing at other festivals, but this one you know you don't have to worry about it. Because they are there you just go around and like god, they are there yes, they are there, they are all there you know. And it's fantastic.

TB: What a pleasure.

DW: Its understanding what people want you know and its not always obvious. So, you give them a nice time and that and then the rest of it is just they love it, they love, it. That would be my high points then. So, last my highest point was 19, sorry 2017 festival because of the weather and the lowest point was dealing with official idiots who you can't reason with. But luckily everything worked out okay, we are rated sensibly now thank god for that. But that would have been the real killer.

TB: Thank you so much, guys honestly you have been so generous really with your time and I appreciate that.

DW: You are welcome.

TB: Its just been terrific. Great, okay shall I stop it there?

Audio ends: 1:59:42