

AUDIO INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

Dennis, Barry: transcript of an audio interview (30-May-2014)

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Biography: Mr Barry Dennis (b. 1946) worked in the Deards waste management group from 1964, and progressed to the Board of the company. He is former Director General of the Environmental Services Association (retired 2014), and is a Trustee / Director, and past President of the Chartered Institution of Wastes Management. He is also a Director / Trustee of the Waste Management Training and Advisory Board.

LF: Lynda Finn

BD: Barry Dennis

LF: Barry, can you tell me your full name?

BD: Barry Edward Dennis.

LF: When you were born?

BD: 1st March 1946.

LF: Where you were born?

BD: In Finchley, North London.

LF: And your employment status and that of your parents?

BD: I'm the Director General of the Environmental Services Association. My father ran a family business to do with transport and waste management and he was one of the owners of the business. My mother worked before she became a housewife in that business as well, funnily enough.

LF: Thank you. Let's start with your childhood. Tell me where you grew up.

BD: I grew up for the first five or six years in Finchley, which was opposite the family business where we lived. Then we moved to Totteridge in South Hertfordshire, where I lived until I married.

LF: You went to school then, initially, in Finchley?

BD: I went to Highgate School, which is a public school in North London, where I was a day boy up until the age of 11, and then from 11 until 18 I was a full boarder.

LF: What were you favourite subjects?

* Interview conducted by Ms Lynda Finn, for the History of Modern Biomedicine Research Group, 30 May 2014, in the Environmental Services Association. Transcribed by Mrs Debra Gee, and edited by Ms Emma M. Jones and Professor Tilli Tansey.

BD: Sport has played far too big a part in my life and my family's life right the way through many generations. My favourite subjects in those days were, without a doubt, geography and maths. I really enjoyed those. I wasn't particularly academic, I couldn't wait to get out onto the games field and probably suffered academically in exams through not paying attention. I've often said that if I had paid attention at school the way I now pay attention in business meetings with Ministers, Secretaries of State, people from Europe, when you listen to every word that's said in those meetings because you have to. I've often said if I'd done that when I was at school I'm sure I would have attained A-levels.

LF: I want to come onto what happened, what you did when you left school, but before that tell me a bit about your parents' business, your father's business, and your involvement in it as a youngster.

BD: As a youngster, well the key to it was transport. Transporting materials all over London and the country, long distance haulage, and also waste management where we had a number of contracts with the Port of London Authority clearing all the waste from the London docks when the ships went in and out. That went way back to the 1940s and we also did work with local authorities, clearing the household waste with the Grand Union Canal Company, going back well before 1930s. As a youngster, I would have been very small, I used to go across to the yard with the night watchman, helping to muck out the horses and feeding them at weekends because it was fun, and riding them with a few sacks on their back round the yard. So we were not involved with the business but we certainly played around there. We weren't allowed there during the week, obviously, or during school holidays but at weekends we would go over there mainly to feed the horses and that would be in the late 1940s, early 1950s.

LF: Did you have brothers and sisters?

BD: I had an older brother. My older brother... died only recently.

LF: Right.

BD: And he would be there as well. He and I were also at the same school.

LF: How far back had the family business gone? Was it back in previous generations?

BD: Yes, a previous generation before my father. There were three families involved in that business, and three separate families who owned that business and it went back to the, it started in the late 1800s. And that was my father in Hertfordshire who came to London because he found that he had aggregates in his farmland, which were dug up for obvious reasons and then he had holes in the ground so he came to London collecting rubbish to fill in the holes and that would have been the early landfills.

LF: Do you have any memory, I wonder, of your grandparents who might have worked in the business?

BD: They didn't work in the business, funnily enough. My grandfather had a bodybuilding business in Kentish Town in London, which was, I suppose you would call it panel beating. And he would make racing car bodies for Colin Chapman, way back, which were all made out by hand in those days, and panel beating.

LF: So it was really your father who ran the business?

BD: Yes.

LF: Tell me a bit more about what you did as a child and a young man, and a teenager?

BD: Sport. We played some football and cricket and that took up pretty well all our time, to be honest. I was never a great reader of books. We obviously went on holiday once a year, normally to Cornwall and then

in later stages abroad. Being away at boarding school, your whole day was taken up which was great fun, and that's why I wanted my two sons to go to boarding school, which they did. And so during spare time, holidays, it was football and cricket and, you know, being with friends, doing those sorts of things.

LF: Tell me a bit about this work you did in your spare time, helping out with the business.

BD: Well, we were very small, we just went across, you know, it started when frankly we shouldn't have gone across to the yard. We climbed over the fence at the back, just being naughty kids and then the night watchman saw us and started chatting. He knew who we were. And he said, 'Well, come and make yourselves useful.' So that's how we started mixing the feed for the horses and mucking them out and things like that. It wasn't until I left school that I actually got involved with the business properly.

LF: Let's come on to that.

BD: When I left school in 1964, or 1963, I forget now. So it must be 1964 because I've been 50 years in the industry this year. In the business we started off, in our, what we called our Maintenance and Purchasing Department, because in that department you got involved in all the various sections of the business. So you got a grounding. It wasn't like, well, today, go and work in this today and then come to the boardroom this afternoon and put your feet up. If anything we were given any rotten job as the sons of one of the owners, and each of the other owners had a son in the business as well; one older than me, one much younger. So he wasn't there and there were only the three sons. And any rotten job, you can guarantee we got. We were not, how can I put it, mollycoddled. Everybody else had a company car, we didn't, if you know what I mean. We were kept under a very strict rein, and I got involved in that Purchasing Department, and I then went and spent about a year working with the company accountant to understand some of the business management there, and then got involved in the waste management side of the business. My brother worked in our contract hire side and then ran our builders' merchants, and the other son ran our storage / commercial / domestic removal business, and our long-distance business.

LF: I haven't asked you for the name of the business.

BD: It was Robert Deards Ltd.

LF: Thank you. So this was your apprenticeship, you worked your way through.

BD: Yes.

LF: Tell me about some of the other arms of the business in which you worked. We've got you in maintenance and purchasing...

BD: Purchasing, because they were involved with the vehicles of all the departments and obviously we were then buying, purchasing the vehicles, the tyres, spare parts. We had our own workshop of fitters, mechanics, we repaired our own vehicles, and we had over 450 lorries on the road. So that was the grounding, if you like, because you got a good overview of everything that went on in all the different departments.

LF: When did you then move into the waste management side?

BD: I started in 1964, and I got involved in the waste management business in, I think 1967/68. And then I was just, somebody was away sick on long-term illness, and there was [a] void in what we called a B section, which was the waste and aggregate business with tippers and rubbish clearance. You just went in there and reported to the manager, Harry Hutchins, and got on and did as you were told. And we worked from seven o'clock in the morning, and we were in the business until seven or eight o'clock at night, because you couldn't go home until the last lorries came in.

LF: Tell me about a typical day.

BD: Getting in at seven a.m., seeing the lorries out, then giving the men their worksheets and their timesheets, and then orders would come in, you would pass those across to the drivers. Eventually we put radio telephones in the cabs so you could pass instructions across but basically the lorry left the yard in the morning. Some went out before seven a.m., well a lot went out before then. Once they had all gone, you were then basically doing the paperwork from the previous day, booking it up so it could be invoiced to your customers and doing the general admin, taking orders for the next day and all that sort of thing. So it was a fairly full day and you couldn't really go home until all the lorries were back.

Interestingly enough, we did have one contract with the Ministry of Defence, which was at the Mill Hill barracks where we had a horse and cart there until 1973, believe it or not. And then that contract was a rolling contract with a year's notice and it wasn't until the gentleman that had dealt with that contract for many, many years in the Ministry of Defence, i.e. passing over invoices and dealing with any queries, he died and a new person took on the job and he saw an invoice for the first time saying, and this was in 1973 'Hire of a horse, cart and cart man for the month of "X" for "X" pounds,' and he rang up and thought we were having a joke. It wasn't April, I can assure you, and I explained to him, I said, 'Well, look at the contract number on the top of the invoice, go and get the file, have a look at that and then give me a ring back if you've got any queries.' And he rang back about 10 days later and said, 'I've got the file, you're absolutely right. I've spoken to the officer in command down there and he said your man's there every day, he does a brilliant job, they're all very pleased with him,' he said, 'but we're going to have to give you notice.' I said, 'Well, that I expected. It's your prerogative.' They gave us a year's notice and I went to see Joe, the cart man, and he was probably in his mid-seventies by then and I said, 'They've given us notice for a year.' And he said, 'Well, I've been expecting it,' and he worked his last year and the horse went into a rest home for horses in Borehamwood. Joe used to visit it two or three times a week, and Joe died within four months of the end of the contract and the horse died shortly after him. We're all convinced that, you know, they had been together for so, so many years on a daily basis, one couldn't live without the other. And the horse just died more or less within a week, I think, of Joe dying. I think he just couldn't cope with it and gave up the ghost. That was in 1973.

LF: Remarkable that it continued until 1973.

BD: Yes. And I'm convinced if that guy who was signing our invoices at the Ministry of Defence hadn't died, they'd still be there today.

LF: So you were a young man, you were in your twenties, managing a team of people and you...

BD: I did manage. We started the skips in the mid-1960s, more or less when I first started work. Skips were a new part of our business, and for the industry as a whole. I persuaded my father and his colleagues that we needed to get into that side of the business because other competitors were, Biffa, Drinkwater Sabey, Grundon, Hales, *etc.* - all family businesses. I persuaded them, and put a plan together about how this would work and we went and bought our first skip lorry and within two years we had over 18 on the road as well as our other container and tipper lorries. In that department, in the waste department, we probably had 80 or 90 lorries on the road at that time. I managed the skip department, I had a team of three or four people working with me. Then, shortly after that, I started to manage the whole of that subsidiary company.

LF: When would that have been?

BD: 1969/1970. I then moved in, trying to think of the date, we had a big contract with the Port of London Authority (PLA) and the London docks, where we had what was known as the scavenging contract. We were responsible for keeping the docks open, i.e. the roads clear. If it snowed, clearing the snow, clearing all the waste arising. As ships came in and out they would have what was known as dunnage, which would be bits of cargo that had got damaged on the journey, or just if they cleaned the ship out. We had

containers all over the London docks and in the Tilbury docks, and that contract went way back before the Second World War to the 1930s. And we built two incinerators down in the London docks in the late 1920s, early 1930s, if I remember correctly from what I was told. All the waste arising from within the customs wall of the PLA from Tower Bridge to Tilbury had to be cleared under our contract. So other waste companies, if you like, couldn't come into the docks to clear any rubbish arising. And as the docks started to diminish, the PLA started to let buildings for other small industrial units, *etc.* This was moving much further forward into the 1980s before they closed in the late 1980s. And even for those businesses, we had to clear the rubbish.

They couldn't hire in other contractors and most of it was burnt in the two incinerators and obviously what couldn't be, went out to landfill. That's the way the business ran. In the mid-1970s I went down to the docks to run that contract because our dock manager retired, so I went down and based myself there, and would go up to our other depot in South Mimms in Hertfordshire where all our waste lorries were. So I was split between the two. We would burn all sorts of things, the things that we had to dispose of then, sometimes under Customs' supervision, it could be food waste or anything, shirts from Taiwan, or whatever. And when the Customs and Excise went in to levy the duty on it sometimes the importer would say, 'Well, I'm not paying that.' And it was cheaper to dispose of the goods rather than send them back because the Customs and Excise wouldn't allow them to go onto the market, so they had to be destroyed. We would destroy things under Customs supervision in the incinerator. That was quite fun; probably better not go into too much detail about that.

LF: Well, I was going to say it sounds quite astonishing, doesn't it? So the imports, were they illegally imported?

BD: Oh no, they weren't illegally imported, they were coming here but if the importer had been happy to pay, if the shirt was worth, I don't know, I'm just inventing numbers: if the shirts were worth two quid and the duty was £10, they were never going to make a profit and sell them so it was cheaper just to dispose of them. This happened, it wasn't a regular occurrence but it certainly happened quite a few times. We had Hong Kong duck eggs that came in, massive great jars and these were duck eggs wrapped in mud and straw. The Port Health Authority wouldn't allow them to go onto the market so they had to be destroyed, for example, and that was for health issues. And the importers would have to pay the costs, which we did. We had two barge loads of corned beef from Argentina because they'd been unloaded from the ship in the river, not in the docks, and they'd been put into a barge. The barges, for some reason, I know it sounds ridiculous, were tied up too tight and when the tide came in the barges stayed, got flooded, and the health authorities condemned the corned beef. So we had to burn that and it took us about six months to burn a shipload of corn beef. They went into the fires and the tins would burst in the heat so the meat was destroyed. We didn't empty the tins, we just threw them in the fire. In the heat they expanded and just burst, the meat was obviously burnt, the tins were left in the ashes, which then eventually went to landfill.

LF: Yes, one must gasp at...

BD: I could talk for weeks on some of the issues that went on down there. You know, Hong Kong duck eggs; the shirts; a lorry load of mangos...

LF: What was wrong with the mangos?

BD: Well, again, Port Health Authority wouldn't allow the cargo, for whatever reasons, we didn't query why, but we were just told, 'There's a lorry load of mangos,' and they just got thrown in the fire as well, more slowly because obviously there was a water content so obviously you had to feed them in slowly.

LF: Whereabouts were the incinerators?

BD: The incinerators, that's interesting, because the two incinerators, one was in the south side of Millwall dock on the Isle of Dogs, and if you go down there now today, the chimney of that incinerator is standing

in the gardens. If you look at the Isle of Dogs, and, at the beginning of *EastEnders*, which I see now and again, and they show the Millwall docks, which are basically L shaped like that, the incinerator is about there on the south side on the Isle of Dogs. And that chimney is still there, and I've been trying to get a blue plaque on it to say what it was. The rest of the incinerator had gone. The other incinerator was down in the Royal Albert basin near the entrance from the river into the Royal Albert docks and the King George V docks and Victoria docks, and that was right at the beginning of what is now known as the runway for the City Airport. And I knew the runway as the Central Road between the Royal Albert and King George V docks. It had offices on, warehouses where cargo would be loaded onto the ships or vice versa, and there were times when you couldn't walk down that, or cycle, there was so much activity of loading and unloading, and cranes and everything. You know, to see it now so open and the planes taking off, it's a bit sad. When I go down to the docks now and see it as it is, digressing, I'm not sure that all the development down there has helped the local people. But that's another story...

LF: Were the incinerators there before Deards? I mean did...

BD: No, we built them. My father built them.

LF: Right. And when did you father build them?

BD: I think they were built in the 1930s, certainly before the war, the Second World War.

LF: And so they'd always been used for London-based waste material from the docks?

BD: Yes, just from the docks. My father had written into the contract with the PLA that our vehicles could come into those incinerators with waste from outside the docks and that gave us a big commercial advantage because we had a very close disposal point whereas other contractors in the City of London had to take their waste to either North London, South London or out to Essex, whereas we had a place in the centre of London. So that did give us a tremendous advantage.

LF: Tell me a little more about the strange incinerations you had to do.

BD: Some of the imports were lighters, cigarettes, where again for some reason, whether they were contraband, or whatever, and we didn't always know why we had to do it, we just would get a call from Customs and Excise to say, 'We have a container load of cigarettes' which could be contraband or could have some other problem, it could be an import duty again. We would have to dispose of them. Tobacco was quite a regular one, and some lighters which were dangerous. I gather they were condemned because when you tried to flick them on, those little see-through things, you couldn't, there was a mini explosion so they said, 'Right, the lot have got to be destroyed.' They were fun because it was a bit like burning fireworks. What else did we have? We tipped up one load one day from one of our container vehicles, and four or five very tiny kittens came out of the load. Some sadly, you know, they were tipped out and we saw them and they just ran straight into the fire. One we saved and lived to a good, ripe old age, a beautiful cat that we saved - it would have drowned in a glass of water it was that small. I mean they were days' old, someone had obviously thrown a batch of kittens away, which was very sad.

What other ones? There were so many, sometimes we got involved if people had got caught, or thought they had got caught, smuggling drugs, where they swallowed the drugs and then you know waited for them to pass through the body. And when that happened, it was rather crude, but we would take one of our enclosed containers, and the culprit was put inside with a WC pan and we just had to sit there. Then it would be inspected and they found the drugs, and that happened now and again. We had to clean all the toilets in the docks so you had Asian toilets, and English toilets for the ships that came in from that part of the world, because you know they use toilets in a totally different way than we do.

LF: Well, let's be quite explicit. Tell me the difference between the two.

BD: Well the toilet we understand is a WC pan. Asian toilets don't have that, they have a square pan, a bit like a shower tray with two footprints, and that's it, and there's a small hole in the bottom of the shower tray. I mean, even if you go to those countries today, and indeed when you went to the Continent - I can remember my mother going into a ladies toilet when we were travelling on holiday in France and Spain, and coming out and saying, 'No, that's a toilet for men, not women', and they said, 'No, that's a ladies toilet,' and she said, 'It's just a shower tray with two footprints,' and that's what it was. They were the Asian toilets.

We had to sweep the crane lines, so the cranes were on railway tracks but they were sunk into the ground, and we had to sweep those so there was no wood or stones that would foul up the cranes moving up and down the docks, and we had driftwood in the docks, which was our responsibility to clear. The way we did that in those days, we had a crane mounted on a lorry chassis, the registration number was 17JMU, I can remember that quite clearly, and on the end of the crane was a basket and the chap stood in the basket with waders on. And he was lowered into the river, into the dock, with a giant rake, and he would rake all the driftwood into the basket. We would then lift him out into a tipper, which would follow the crane. He would put the wood into the tipper and then go back into the dock and rake everything in which was floating on the water. That was how we cleared all the flotsam floating in the dock. Health and safety would never allow us to do it that way now. They would have a boat going along or something picking it all up, but the guys were happy to do it.

LF: How often was that done?

BD: Not on a daily basis, it was done if you saw that there was a lot of things floating in the docks. It was done on a, I can't remember, six monthly, it wasn't a daily job but it was done when it needed to be done. And Meyer's had a big timber yard there, and I can't remember the name of the other one... Hollis, they were in the Royal Docks. Meyer's yard was in the Millwall dock, they had a big timber yard there where the ships came in from Russia with the timber. They didn't come in in the winter months because it was all frozen so they only came in eight months of the year because they couldn't use those Russian ports.

Meyer was a very big timber importer and Hollis was another. And, of course, the other people whom we did a lot of work for were Spillers, the flower people, and Tate & Lyle, the sugar people. Tate & Lyle had a massive factory in the Royal Docks. Spillers was in the Royal Docks. Spillers is a factory, Tate & Lyle is still there empty. You can look at it opposite from Excel, the new exhibition centre. If you look across south there's the old Spiller's where, we had 10 / 20 containers clearing the waste.

LF: You've hinted at, and you will have seen, numerous changes and I do want to come on to those. But just to go back to the cleaning via the man being in the crane's basket... how long did that continue? When did that stop?

BD: Well, when the docks closed. Margaret Thatcher's Government of the, would it have been the mid-80s, yes, when the docks started to close. There was a major issue with the unions down there, was it Jack Dash, I think, who was in charge of the dockers' union, when you had to have had three or four people looking after a forklift when probably only one was necessary. And a job in the docks in those days was a job for life. Eventually, without wanting to be political in any way but they priced themselves out of the market and in my personal view, the dockers never saw this, that eventually the money would run out. The Thatcher Government during the 1970s started to close the docks down. Well the Surrey docks were closed long before that and filled in. The Surrey docks were probably closed in the 1960s, yes, in the 1960s.

LF: And the Thatcher Government came in in 1979, didn't it?

BD: Yes, 1979. Then the Millwall docks closed next and then the Royal Docks closed later in the mid-1980s. So our contract sort of slowly ceased and diminished when the docks closed and it was taken over by the,

what was it called, the London Docklands Development Corporation, who then developed Docklands as it is today.

LF: So the health and safety practices continued right until the end of the docks?

BD: Yes. I think, in fairness, they had started more mechanical ways of clearing some of the floating debris in the river. We never went into the river, we were only involved in the docks. But I think towards the late 1970s and 1980s they had started to get some mechanical means of clearing it. But, certainly, when I was down there, and I left the docks in the mid-1980s, 1988/89, and that's when we weren't doing it by then.

LF: So your term there began, or changed, really as the docks wound down?

BD: Yes. The docks wound down, so that contract ended our skip business. And then the three families involved in the Deards group decided that we would demerge the company, so each of those three families took away certain parts of the business and we split it up. My brother and I took away the builders' merchants business which he had been running for a number of years, and some of the waste management contracts, for example the contracts with Lords cricket ground and the Oval cricket ground. We cleared all the waste from there for many, many years. It's an interesting story as to how we did that. Some other waste management contracts I kept, and then one of the other families took away property and the rest was all split up. We're still in touch with one of the other founders because obviously we've known each other all our lives.

LF: And did you retain the name Deards?

BD: No, Deards is still there but only one of the companies has retained that name and that was one company, and then our own company traded under, the builders' merchants, traded under the name of Gus Davies Ltd.

LF: And the waste management contract?

BD: Yes, we did it all under Gus Davies Ltd which was a builders' merchants but I continued doing the waste management to work under that banner. And then in 1992 I had a call from Richard Biffa who I'd known all my life, we'd all grown up together, asking me if I would join the Trade Association, which is now called the Environmental Services Association (ESA) - it was called the National Association of Waste Disposal Contractors back then - to come and work there, he said there was a job that needed to be done for a year or two, and I've been here at the ESA for 21 years. So I spent 30 years in the family business and then the last 21 years here at the trade body.

LF: I just want to take you back to the period between the docks closing and you coming here. Tell me a bit about what you did when you worked for what became Gus Davies.

BD: Well, my brother was the expert in builders' merchants, selling sand, cement, and plumbing units. We had a bathroom showroom in Abbey Road, St. John's Wood, and that's where our offices were. And we also had quite a bit of, you know, freehold in central London: Camden Town, St. John's Wood, and Kentish Town. My wife worked in the property business so I had a lot of contacts in the property business and it became very apparent that property was worth more than selling sand and cement from a piece of prime real estate in Camden Town. So I went away and spent some time exploring the development of those freehold properties we had, which I did, and got planning consent and then we sold them. My brother kept all the properties at St. John's Wood, running the builders' merchants. He then closed the builders' merchants down because I was asked to come here.

LF: You mentioned earlier dealing with Lord's and the Oval.

BD: We had contracts there to clear all the waste from Lords cricket ground and the Oval. My brother and I both played cricket at Lord's and the Oval many times. We were serious Marylebone Cricket Club cricketers and club cricketers, and we got involved at Lords, both supplying all their maintenance stuff and doing the cleaning. In those days, cleaning the ground after a major match when you had 26,000 people in there, they would hire in winos on a regular basis to come in and give them a broom, paid them cash in hand. They obviously had it all cleared with Inland Revenue, there's no issues there, and our responsibility, once they had swept the ground, we then collected it and put it in containers and took it away. I would be there on major match days, at a test match or a one-day final or something. I would be there at five o'clock in the morning and sometimes I stayed to watch a bit of cricket, I must admit, but, you know, then when the game had finished and we would be clearing the ground until nine, 10 or 11 o'clock at night. We would make sure that we had facilities to take the loaded containers away because you couldn't empty them, you had no disposal points in the middle of the night, though you could do it now. It's a 24/7 job now, but in those days it wasn't. Then there were empty containers ready for the start of the game the next day because obviously rubbish was being cleared during the day but in a small way, because obviously with the crowds in the ground you couldn't sweep and clear up but you could empty certain bins. So that was great fun, I mean, test matches and five-day games like that were, basically you were at it for five days, 24-hours a day. We did more or less the same at the Oval, supplying all the equipment, clearing all the waste and the bins and put a new system into the Oval of compactors, which we eventually did at Lord's as well.

LF: Where did you take the waste?

BD: The waste in those days used to go from Lord's out to landfill in Hertfordshire. All the waste then would go there. Rarely did we send it down to the docks because to get from St. John's Wood to East London, it was quicker to take them out to Hertfordshire - we very often had the waste stored at our depot in North London to take it north to the pits in south Hertfordshire was where all the waste went.

LF: And your depot was where exactly?

BD: We had our head office at Finchley, in Colney Hatch Lane, and that's where we started off. Then we had a big depot at South Mimms, and we all our waste officers and vehicles were parked at South Mimms, apart from the ones involved at the docks of course. Technology started to change. I think if you're talking about where we disposed of it, the industry was very much landfill-based, it was cheap and it was efficient. As I've always said, when God made the UK, he had his landfill hat on with the geology of the clays and underlying clays, which are ideal for landfill, whereas when he built the Netherlands and the Benelux countries he was thinking of other things. But in the UK we have, our geology is well suited to landfill and the methods of landfill changed over the years because we had what we called a disperse-and-dilute system, so the waste was put in the holes and, gently, leachate would disperse and you had methods of collecting that. Then, eventually, it probably started in the 1960s, maybe before, landfill would have an artificial lining put in it, and gas collection to collect the methane gas.

You have to remember that, in those early days, the waste that was being disposed of was of a different nature to the waste we have today. It's like household waste. Years ago, household waste was basically coal clinkers. There was very little food waste because on a Monday most families in the UK had mince, because that was what was left over from the joint you had on a Sunday. That was probably the only time you had a joint, on a Sunday, you know, in those days. It was minced up and you had mince. So there was very little food waste in the waste collected from houses, or whatever, and industrial waste again was not made up of the same materials as it is today. I mean, now it's far more complex and that's why technologies have had to change within our industry to deal with it. But in those early days, certainly when I started in the early 1960s, nearly everything went to a landfill. Recycling was going on but not in the same way as it is today. Recycling, as I've said many times, is the second oldest profession in the world. It's been going on but it was never recognized. We had drivers who were recycling and saving copper wire and taking it to the scrap man, and obviously *Steptoe and Son* were recyclers but we never saw them as recyclers, you saw them as the rag and bone men. But they were recyclers. So it's nothing new. What has

happened is that now recycling has risen up our agenda, and the 'waste hierarchy' as it's known, and that is right at the very top just below prevention.

As waste started to change, or the composition of the waste from factories, households, everything, that's when the industry started to put its thinking cap on in how to deal with that waste. That's when all these different technologies started to build what we call material recycling facilities, a MRF, where the waste is put in and the plastics and the aluminium and the metals are all taken out by various means, highly sophisticated pieces of machinery. And the glass, and that's when it all started to get separated, to be separated in these MRFs so that it could be recycled. The key to the industry nowadays is extracting the value, and a lot of people will say that we're not a waste management industry anymore, we're a resource management industry. The problem is the media and the public don't understand resource management, they understand waste management, so the name still lingers on. But hopefully that will change. It's a bit like landfill, we didn't call them landfills when I started in the early 1960s; they were called tips and chutes - the chute. That's where you took the waste. And then the word 'landfill' came in and I have a view that landfill will go and they'll have 'land reclamation site' because all these sites are being reclaimed for sports fields, farmland, whatever. Certainly all the landfills that I used, and my grandfathers and my father used, you know, those landfills are perfectly safe now. They're near housing estates, they're farmland, they're playing fields, whatever - rarely built on, I have to say, rarely built on.

LF: Do you think it's because people fear unnecessarily?

BD: No, nowadays, the very old ones, because the waste streams were basic, there's no, but the landfills of the 1950s/1960s would not have... the gas, although it's collected, they wouldn't. We had a landfill at my old boys' sports field in Totteridge where we built four football pitches with inert waste, which are still there, and they're playing on them now. But it was inert waste, so clays. We didn't put household waste in there, it was all clays and waste from major building constructions in London when they were digging the foundations, so it was what we called muck away. The material wasn't a danger to anybody.

As the waste streams change so the technologies had to change and the way we dealt with it, and that's when we started, people started to build with incineration, with electricity, with the energy-from-waste plants, and the first one I think was built in Ellesmere Port up in Manchester, and Fawley in Southampton Portsmouth way, down on the coast here. They were high temperature incinerators with energy recovery, eventually to deal with hazardous wastes. Then various other technologies came in, as I say, and recycling started to bite.

LF: To what extent do you think the changes were driven by the technological advances and the change in materials, and to what extent by pressure groups that were developing?

BD: The big change came I think in the early 1990s when Landfill Tax came in. Landfill Tax came in, in all fairness, and I have it on good authority and I still deal with someone from HMRC (Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs) who worked with us on the Landfill Tax when we brought it in in the early 1990s. Landfill Tax didn't come in as an environmental tax, it came in as a fiscal tax. The Treasury needed money and this was a way of collecting it. It's turned into a very good environmental tax and it started off at £7 a ton, and for what we call basic waste material, and then inert waste materials, so clay and bricks, were £2 a ton. Very small differential so no great problem. But the £7 is now £80 and the £2 is now £2.50 so a big differential, so the gate fee of disposing waste to landfill is expensive, which enabled different technologies to come in at a cheaper price.

LF: So there was a fiscal initiative there, there was a financial incentive, but there were pressure groups developing.

BD: There were pressure groups.

LF: How did they impact?

BD: Well, I don't know whether they did, I mean planning is very difficult in our sector. To build a new facility, be it a waste-to-energy facility, or a recycling plant, or whatever, is difficult. If somebody, if a company wants to extend a landfill the locals will probably object to it. I think one of the problems there is the public don't realize, the majority of the public, and I may be doing some people a disservice here, but they just seem to think that it's not their waste, that it's our waste that we're dealing with, but it's the public's waste. They seem to think they just put it out on whatever day it is and it disappears. The fairies come and it goes. After that it's not their responsibility. What some people fail to understand is, it has to be dealt with. Something has to happen to it. The facilities nowadays that are being built are highly technical, even the landfills are highly technical. Millions of pounds are spent on a new landfill, or extending a landfill before even a crisp packet goes in it. I mean with the linings, the gas collection, the gas is then put in turbines to drive the turbines to produce electricity which is pumped into the grid, which they use. They never seem to join all this up. That's probably some of the industry's fault for not doing our PR. But we're getting better at it and we're much better at it now than we were 20 years ago.

The pressure groups, yes, you still get pressure groups about incineration and the dioxins but I think the tests have proven that the air coming out of a modern incinerator, waste-to-energy incinerator, is a lot cleaner than you or I would inhale if we stood on Piccadilly Circus for a day with the emissions from the cars, *etc.* It's a highly emotive issue, to be honest, but the pressure groups, as the technologies changed, the only main pressure was on incineration, I think. You will still get people moaning if you want to put a materials recycling facility in an area but on industrial estates they shouldn't have any problem. This is one of the issues where we have a problem getting planning permission. Planning's a big issue for our industry and I think with waste-to-energy plants, it's not just waste-to-energy plants for electricity, these new plants are going to have to supply heat, and that's something that is, the technologies are there and it's happening. I know of a development in the Leicestershire area where they're building a number of new homes, a few hundred homes, and within that development they're putting in a facility to take the waste from the homes which will not only supply them with electricity but heat, to heat the homes and all the power. Now that must be the way forward because why would we export waste materials, RDF, Refuse Derived Fuel as we call it, to Germany and northern Europe where they put it through their waste-to-energy plants and then we buy the energy back. That, to me and many of us in the industry, is ludicrous.

LF: I want to ask you two other questions before we come onto that phone call that asked you to come and work here, and that's 20 years ago. The first question is about when you were working for Deards and then Gus Davies [and their] relationships with the public sector.

BD: Yes, we had a number of contracts back in those days in Deards with local authorities. They were called dusting contracts back in those days where we would come and, you know our vehicles and men would clear waste from and pick up your dustbins. And we did that for local authorities. We called them dusting contracts and we worked for London boroughs like the borough of St. Pancras, and that's our vehicle, our men, that's Joe Chandler tipping the waste in our depot at Camden Town into a barge and that barge was then hauled under this contract here, up to the Brickfields in the London Brickfields up in Buckinghamshire, where it went to landfill. Our horses pulled those barges up the canal systems to the landfills. We were doing that back in the 1920s and 1930s for local authorities, so we were working for the public sector as well as the private sector, you know, for clearing industrial waste and things like that.

LF: And were there any difficulties or tensions in the relationship or was it just a clear contractual relationship?

BD: Yes, I mean we had, it was interesting, we did local authorities from Bushey in Hertfordshire, Finchley, Camden Town, Islington, Finsbury right down to the river, and most of those were done for Labour-controlled councils. It was one of the arguments my father had with Margaret Thatcher, who was also our local MP at Finchley, so we had a good working relationship, and recently they were doing a programme on the television about Margaret Thatcher and they showed a film clip of my father showing her round our depot, only a week or two ago. And my father, I was with him when he was having a moan to

Margaret Thatcher that as some of those councils became Tory-controlled councils, they took the work contracts in-house, which is interesting. It ought to have been the other way around. And slowly the local authorities started to bring those contracts in-house although now they, not all of them, but some of them, put them out to tender. So some of the major players in our industry now, the SITAs, the Biffas, the Veolias, are tendering for those contracts.

LF: You talked about the industry really needing to do more to promote responsibility, people's responsibility. Obviously you're in a good position here to ensure that but, briefly, what might the industry do to make the public more aware of its waste?

BD: We do a lot, there's a lot more education, I mean, with recycling, children are being educated at school now about recycling and I think the younger generation in some ways are better off, you hear stories, 'My son/my daughter told me off because I didn't put that into the recycling bin,' and those sort of things. So the children now are getting educated in school and the education about waste and recycling is really enormous. Well, there wasn't any certainly when I, either as a child being involved, or seeing the work that my father was involved in, or even my early days in the industry, nothing was ever done. We just went in and cleared the waste and people let us get on with it. And we gave a good service.

LF: You're quite right. People, there was a tendency to think you leave it at the front door.

BD: And then the fairies come and that was the end of it. It's a big issue. As I say, we're better now. I'm not sure the *Daily Mail* helps all the time with some of the articles that they run on the sector, but people are more aware of it now I think.

LF: So let's go on to that phone call. You were phoned in 1992 and you were invited to work here.

BD: To come and look after the Trade Association because I'd been involved with the trade body and had done work for it for many years. There was another small trade body that I was Chairman of and I chaired the Container Committee, called SABAHTA, the Sand and Ballast and Allied Hauliers Trade Alliance, which was a small trade association formed back in the 1920s. I've still got all the old documents at home with that. The big issue there came with, when skips started in the 1960s, skips were put everywhere. You could, someone rang up and said, 'We need a skip,' and we'd put a skip there. Eventually we realized, and the industry realized as well that you couldn't put them on the corner of Oxford Street, if you like, it was dangerous. There were some fatalities where cars and bicycles ran, you know, they weren't lamped, and we realized that legislation needed to come in. I was heavily involved in writing that legislation, which is still in the Highways Act covering skips in the highway and getting a permit from the local authority to put one in. There was a major issue when some local authorities, and it spread like wildfire, started to charge the contractors for those permits, which was illegal. I ran a personal campaign against the local authorities all over the southern part of England, some in the Midlands but not right in the north, taking councils to court who were charging for permits. We won that battle and I've still got a number of press cuttings from the trade press here. So I was involved with the trade body that worked closely with NAWDC, the National Association of Waste Disposal Contractors, formed in 1968, now called ESA, Environmental Services Association. So during that time I was involved with it through the family business, and then in 1992 was asked to come and work here, and I started to work here in May 1993. I've been here ever since.

LF: What was your job when you came here?

BD: When I first came here my job title was Executive Director, and so I was in charge, and then a few years later when the Chairman came to work here as an Executive Chairman and became the Chief Executive, I became the Commercial Director and then, latterly, when the Chief Executive, when there had been two of those, eventually left, I became in charge again as Director General.

LF: How large is the ESA, the organization in terms of the number of staff it employs and its membership?

BD: Let's deal with the staff first. We now have a team of 10. We punch very much above our weight, you know, we represent the industry in Brussels, and to central Government. I was at Defra (Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs) yesterday at a meeting with senior civil servants. We have meetings with Ministers, Secretaries of State, at that level. We're speaking on behalf of the industry. Back, certainly in the mid-1990s we probably had 20 people here. But that was when IT wasn't as good, so people had secretaries and administrators typing and now it's very different with the IT and technologies, and you don't need all those people anymore. So we're now a team of, as I say, 10 / nine. We have one administrator, and then we have a finance person who generally looks after the finances, and all the other staff are dealing with policy and legislation issues on behalf of the industry. We have one person based in Scotland who looks after all the issues in Scotland because they have slightly different legislation up there but he also looks after two portfolios on planning, and health and safety for the whole organization.

Membership wise is, you have to answer that question in two ways, and it's something that is always asked when you go to visit a Minister or civil servant, or senior Secretary of State. 'How many members have you got?' Well, the answer to that now is just over 100. Well you say, 'That's not very many.' When I started here we probably had 280 to 300 members but there has been so much consolidation in the industry and in the sector, the key figure is who we represent. If the industry's worth £11 billion, our members equate for 80 to 85 percent of that. So you can see it represents a very great part of the industry because, and I did an exercise some years ago, when I say years, probably five years ago, and it could be done again: I put the top six companies across the top of a sheet of paper, and just went through our membership files and put underneath companies they had taken over or merged with. And I got to over 60 in a very short time. That's why the number of members has diminished but our share of the market is far greater.

LF: Are there significant companies who aren't members and do you have a competitor organization?

BD: Not really, no. The Chartered Institute of Wastes Management is not a competitor. That is a professional body for individuals within the industry. I am a personal member, I'm a fellow, I'm a past president; I sit on their board now but not as a representative of ESA. I sit there as Barry Dennis working as a professional chartered waste manager in our sector. We work closely together with them, we have a lot of common ground. There are other smaller trade bodies dealing with anaerobic digestion, renewable energy, resource management, or the reprocessors who reprocess recyclate that we give them. So there are sectorial bodies, but there isn't another main trade body that looks after the waste recycling sector.

LF: And so the branches of the industry, are there branches of the industry that aren't members who you think should be?

BD: There are, yes. I mean the interesting thing, nobody really knows how many companies are in our sector and I'll explain that very quickly. If you get the local paper that you probably get, we all get in our houses, which is mostly advertising, and there are small sort of business card adverts all over it, and you'll see one that says 'rubbish clearance, skip for hire' and a telephone number. It could be a mobile. The one next to it could be multi-coloured with lots of numbers and guarantees given, all sorts of things written on that little square. And the chances are that the simple one is a bona fide company, one-man business, possibly two with a couple of trucks, perhaps only one truck. He's got his own lorry, he's got his own skips, he's got a contract or he knows where he's disposing of his waste. The other guy, or the other advert, could be one man and one lorry, or again two or three lorries, doesn't own his own skips, borrows everybody else's, and when you hire one from him he doesn't come and collect it. So he collects the cash and then you, the customer is left to deal with it, and probably get fined by the local authority because the skip hasn't got a permit or it is left there after the permit. And then there are heavy fines, the council will clear it away, someone will say, 'Well this is...', and the owner won't realize that because the skip has got a name on it - that's not the name that he's hired the lorry from or hired the skip from. So all these sorts of things. There is a rogue element, and the rogue element may not be insured, may not have the right permits and licences whereas the other one has. He is part of our industry, the other guy is not part of our industry. And

nobody knows the difference until you really, delve deeper and no one has really done that, or ever will I don't think.

LF: But it does sound like a piece of work...

BD: It is. We have just written a report on illegal activity in the waste industry, which we're now closely involved with the Government to solve that and indeed Government have just put in the last budget £5 million to be spent on dealing with illegal practices in our industry. We're working with them and the Treasury to make sure that the £5 million is spent correctly and wisely.

LF: Let me just take you on a bit to national Government issues, not party political issues but when you see a change in national Government, say over a five-year period, do you see any significant shifts in policy and strategy?

BD: It's interesting because the environment shouldn't be a political issue. Whatever Government is in power, the environment should be on an equal footing. I think when the Governments change, different Governments have a different view of how to do the same job. It's like anybody, if you get a painter in he'll want to start painting the room from that corner and you get another painter in who says, 'No, not that way, I want to start over here and I want to do the ceiling first.' So the job done but in a slightly different way and I think that's probably the best way to describe that. We've always argued it should not be a political issue, if that answers the question.

LF: So you've had an incredibly rich career for 50 years, as you say, and you've seen massive changes. Let me just ask you to reflect a little: what were the best and the worst times?

BD: Oh, the docks were great fun. You know it was getting to work and doing a deal if you like. The one thing I miss here with the trade body is you're not out there winning contracts, the deals you do here are different deals. But doing that; that I miss. Certainly my time in the docks and setting up the skip business. The drivers, all of them were of a character and you learnt very quickly how to deal with those. Some drivers you could say to quite basically, 'Get in that lorry and go and do as you're told,' and another driver you would have to say, 'I've got a bit of a problem, I don't know how to do this,' and you'd look at it and say, 'Well gov, what about if I do this or that?' I said, 'Oh, could you do that?' And he'd say, 'I think so.' I said, 'Well, go and try it, thank you. I didn't think of that.' And he would go and do it happily. Whereas if I said to him, 'Do this,' he'd say, 'That's impossible, can't do that.' So you had to learn to manage very quickly because they were all different and they were great guys. Obviously I mean some of them who were quite intelligent but decided they wanted to drive a lorry for a living. Others were, you know, had basic intelligence, and some of them, I had guys working for me in the docks who signed for their wages with a cross, even in the 1980s. Some of them couldn't read and write but you'd get their wages wrong, and they knew it was wrong for a penny. Don't ask me how but they knew, which we always found quite amusing.

LF: They sound like an incredible bunch.

BD: They were brilliant guys. I still see one or two. They were very loyal, or most of them were very loyal, not all of them, I have to say. They realized that if we had a good business and were making a good living, they would as well, and they did. But certainly, if I was pushed to say, those 10 years in Docklands were an experience, the things that you came across and saw were quite amazing.

LF: And the least enjoyable aspects?

BD: Least enjoyable. I think splitting up the family business. That wasn't fun. But it was something that, different people wanted to do different things or saw benefits elsewhere and the only way then was to say, 'Well, let's all go our separate ways.' That I think was probably the worst time.

LF: But it sounds as if Gus Davies thrived.

BD: It did thrive.

LF: It's not still...

BD: It's not, no, no. The building industry went through many recessions so as a builders' merchant you were on the end of that. Again, we realized that the property we had was worth more than selling plumbing kit from, so we turned those shops and developed those properties and Gus Davies eventually became and still is a property management company, which my brother ran until he died very recently. I don't have any interest in that anymore. My brother and I came to an agreement but his son looks after it, it's basically collecting rents which isn't a full-time job.

LF: How do you see the ESA going forward? What about the next five years for the ESA?

BD: Well, at my age I'm not sure I should be here in five years' time, I shall be well past 70 by then, hopefully, God willing. I think the industry now works far more closely together. Two years ago I started a trade association group where the chief executives of the trade associations and professional institutions, CIWM [Chartered Institution of Wastes Management], meet here every three months and we go through the issues that are confronting us all. We talk about our differences, realize that there's a great deal of common ground, it's not all differences. We can focus on the common ground and go with one voice to Government and say, 'This is what the sector needs.' The Government will then listen, as I was told yesterday. What they don't want is everybody going there telling them to do different things. Because, as they say, 'Well, we're going to forget all that, we're going to do it our way', which may not be the best for the industry, the economy or the environment. So, by all talk, the industry is now much closer together and I see it getting closer going forward. We can still operate under our own banners but we can work very closely together because there is so much common ground. Because all the legislation comes from Europe we all have to be aware and make sure that what's coming from Europe can be worked, and is manageable, under UK law, which is a big argument, a political argument in the present day.

LF: Do you want to say anything about the role of Europe?

BD: Well, we're involved with Europe. I've got one of my colleagues who spends a great deal of time with a European Association called FEAD (European Federation of Waste Management and Environmental Services) – it's all the ESAs of Germany, which is known as BDE, FINADE in France, Spain, Belgium. All those trade bodies from those European countries have formed a European Federation. Our own chairman here is going to take on the presidency of that for two years and my colleagues in our policy unit here go to Brussels on a regular basis, so we're very much involved in what's at the very grass roots. Yes, a lot of time is spent in Brussels on behalf of the industry.

LF: Do you think those are effective relationships?

BD: Yes, we have a good relationship with the FEAD. It is led, I think, by the Germans, the French and ourselves. In fact, we founded it, we went to Germany; Colin Drinkwater went to Germany when FEAD started and said, 'Look we need to start talking together.' And the Germans agreed, the French agreed, and so we formed FEAD then and then the other countries came in later.

LF: And that was when, Barry?

BD: FEAD was formed in, just before I came here, so 25 years ago, something like that. 25 years. So yes, we're heavily influential there and we have to be as an industry.

LF: Thank you. It's been absolutely wonderful to talk to you and you just have such a rich history. Is there anything else you would like to say before we finish? Any other messages for posterity or for the industry?

BD: I don't think so. I've enjoyed every second, even the bad bits I've enjoyed. And, at nearly 69, the fact I'm still doing it and here at seven o'clock in the morning probably proves that point because if I didn't enjoy it, I wouldn't be here, and doing what I do. I understand the industry, I know the people, and I know how it works. You learn something new every day, you never know everything. It's a fascinating sector, and for young people who think the waste industry is carrying a bin on your back, the technologies and the jobs in our industry now are highly technical. Chemical engineers are required to deal with hazardous waste treatment, electrical engineers work in these massive waste to energy plants. You talk about our two incinerators in the London docks, we lit those in the morning with yesterday's *Racing Times* and a pack of Swan Vestas. Now they press a button and these massive plants are fired 24/7. Well ours went out overnight, or certainly burned cold and we had to find a way of getting them started every morning at five o'clock. So it's changed and the technology now and the expertise required within the sector is colossal from chemical engineers and chemical practitioners, right across the board. It's varied and there's, yes there are still people sweeping the streets, as you will see local street cleaners, or people pushing wheelie bins around to the back of a lorry and loading it up. Yes, there are still some jobs like that to be done. I think you could cater for anybody's needs in the sector.

LF: You were going to say something about the Smithfield Show.

BD: The Smithfield Show, the Royal Smithfield Show, was held at Earl's Court every year and it was the UK's big farming show, and farmers would bring their animals from Scotland, Wales, from all over the UK. You had the big tractors and all the equipment needed in the farming sector. They would be, I'm trying to think exactly but 100-odd, or more that 100-odd cattle on the ground floor at Earl's Court, and on the first floor you had pigs on one side in pens and the sheep on the other. And the animals were then all judged and at the end of the show you had a champion pig and a champion sheep and a champion cow, cattle, steer, I'm not sure what the name is. Anyway, so they would all arrive on the Saturday when the show opened on the Monday and we went in on the first day, on the Sunday before the show to muck out. It was a press day then, so there would be a lot of people milling around and we would have to muck out the animals, and the herdsmen were then mucking out into the aisles. We then had to clear the straw manure from the aisles onto the lorries and clear it out. Then we went back two o'clock that first Monday morning before the show started to do a big clear up before the public came in at whatever it was, 10 o'clock and we'd have to be out by eight o'clock in the morning. The herdsmen looking after these cattle before the judging, they would be shampooing them, drying them with hairdryers to make their coats look pristine, and the sheep particularly - the pigs not quite so much but they would be brushed and cleaned and washed so that they were in pristine condition.

It was not uncommon during those judging periods when we went in on, perhaps, the Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday morning to muck out, and the herdsmen was asleep with his animal, particularly the cattle. They were looking after them to such a degree because they had a chance of being best-in-show. And the best-in-show owner would get a heck of a lot of money sold to the butchers, and the butcher would buy that meat and he would have it up in his butcher shop: "Prize Animal". You would pay a lot more for a steak, or whatever, at the butcher's for the prize animal at the show.

We would clear that, and all sorts of things went on, it was a major job clearing the material. Then, eventually, the sheep and the pigs were taken off straw and put onto woodchips and we cleared those, and downstairs on the cattle. The cattle would be on boards, the boards would be about two inches off the ground, and under the boards would be peat which would soak up the urine. So, at the end of the show, we had to clear all the straw off the boards, and lift the boards, although there was a union issue there which was quite interesting. Our men weren't allowed to lift the boards because that was the union men of Earl's Court's job to lift the boards. Once the boards had been lifted we could then take the peat away, which we sold. It was a good commodity - so recycling, again, has been going on for years.

There was a few instances if we were seen moving the boards, so we used to move the boards when we first got in there before anybody else was around, and then we had to put them back. I mean, how ridiculous. You would think they would say, 'Thank you very much for doing our job.' Oh no, 'that's our job, don't you touch it.' So we would lift the boards, scrape the peat out, put the board back so that they could then come and clear them, *etc.* Those were the two different unions. My guys were members of the Transport and General Workers' Union. We were there for a week doing that, so the guys would start at two o'clock in the morning, do the Earl's Court job with me and I would be there all through. Then I would go back to the office, and do a day's work, probably go home about four, have something to eat, go to bed, and get up at one o'clock to go back, and the guys would do the same. They would work until about lunchtime on their ordinary work and then go home. Some, I don't think, went home. On the last day, when we finished on that Sunday, when we cleared the lot and we left Earl's Court looking pristine, there wasn't a straw you could find, we then used to take the lorries back to the yard and go to a pub up the road and celebrate another year done. But there are many stories that went on. One evening, a load of herdsmen and tractor people came back and started up one of the big John Deere tractors on the stand, which was on blocks. And the idiots drove it off the block. I mean nothing to do with us, these were not my men; these were guys that had been out, herdsmen drinking and thought they'd drive a tractor.

Sometimes we got there and a sheep had got out of its pen, or two or three cattle had come loose because they hadn't been tied up properly. Our blokes then used to have to collect them and find out which one they went to, which was always quite amusing. And we used to, I forget how we did it, but if we found one of the cattle out and we had to put it back, we would, I think we put some paper or something to say, 'Look, this one was out, so if you haven't got one...' they knew. You would see the prize bulls, which we never went in to those things, they did that, because they could be nasty. But it was another part of waste management. We would sell the manure to the Royal Parks, which they would store, they couldn't use it straightaway because it was too acidic so it had to be stored for a year to decompose and then they would use it as compost.

LF: Where would it be stored?

BD: At the Royal Parks. If you go into Green Park, Hyde Park, all those parks, if you really hunt around they've got big areas, work areas, and so they would store it there. Another job, you talking about it reminds me, we used to do which came under waste management was clearing the leaves from the Royal Parks. All the leaves in January/February had come down. The Parks' staff would clear them, put them in these compounds, and we had the contract to go and clear the leaves. I remember, my wife, when we first met she said to me, 'What are you doing tomorrow?' And I said, 'I'm measuring leaves in the Royal Parks.' You went along and measured the leaves because they were cleared by the cubic yard and you would have a pile perhaps stretching 100 yards, six feet high, so two yards high. You just worked out, you agreed the quantity and we would send men and lorries to clear all the leaves from the parks.

LF: What fascinating stories. Thank you very much.

BD: It's a pleasure.

LF: Thank you.

[END OF TRANSCRIPT]

Further related resources:

1. Finn L (intvr); Jones E M, Tansey E M (eds) (2016) *Coggins, Chris: transcript of an audio interview (23-Jun-2014)*. History of Modern Biomedicine Interviews (Digital Collection), item e2016106. London: Queen Mary University of London.

2. Finn L (intvr); Jones E M, Tansey E M (eds) (2016) *Cooper, Jeff: transcript of an audio interview (19-Jun-2014)*. History of Modern Biomedicine Interviews (Digital Collection), item e2016107. London: Queen Mary University of London.
3. Jones E M, Tansey E M (eds) (2015) *The Development of Waste Management in the UK c.1960-c.2000*. Wellcome Witnesses to Contemporary Medicine, vol. 56. London: Queen Mary University of London.