

World Oral Literature Project

voices of vanishing worlds

Accession Form for Individual Recordings:

Collection / Collector Name	Mr Neil Lanham
Tape No. / Track / Item No.	The Disappearance of the Squire's Ham
Length of track	1 h
Related tracks (include description/relationship if appropriate)	Village Life Gunner on the Atlantic Convoys Gamekeeping Tales Lord Sainsbury's Gardener
Title of track	The Disappearance of the Squire's Ham and Other Village Stories from The Life and Times of Dick Ruggles
Translation of title	/
Description (to be used in archive entry)	<p>Dick and Dolly Ruggles live in a thatched cottage in the centre of the Essex village of Toppesfield. The cottage belonged to Dick's grandfather and it was here that Dick's mother was born and it was here that she died 72 years later. Dick was born on 2 February 1923 and started work at the age of 14 as an apprentice carpenter at Whitlocks, just down the road at Gt. Yeldham. At the age of 17, in the early years of the war, he went to help install Searchlight Sites on farms in East Suffolk where Whitlocks held the contract. On becoming eligible for war service at 18 he joined up as a Naval Gunner on DEMS - Defensively Equipped Merchant Ships to go on the Atlantic Convoys. In civi-street once more, Carlton Whitlock said "poacher's make good gamekeepers so I've got a job for you", and gamekeeping then became the lifestyle that Dick revelled in for many years until the death of his governor. He then went to work as gardener for the 'wiley' Lord Sainsbury.</p> <p>Dick has always been at the heart of village life. He was Parish Councillor, Treasurer of the Village Hall and Church Warden for many years. He played for and then helped run the village football team. As a stalwart member of the choir, on becoming landlord of The Chestnuts Public House he combined his duties by seeing that the choir practices were held in the bar instead of the unheated church. 'A sensible thing to do' says Dick. It is hardly surprising therefore with such a deep rooted background that Dick continues the traditions of the past as a natural part of life.</p> <p>Storytelling is a gift and Dick has the gift to see the jest in the 'thousand opportunities that occur every day for humour and simile', to quote Adrian Bell. I find his natural ability to turn the smallest</p>

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<p><i>Level of public access</i> (fully closed, fully open)</p>	<p>Fully Open</p>
<p><i>Notes and context</i> (include reference to any related documentation, such as photographs)</p>	<p>Dick Ruggles is a natural storyteller with a dialect typical of the North Essex/West Suffolk Border. Walter Benjamin (The Storyteller-Illuminations) described the typical Storyteller as the artisan/farmer who stays at home or the traveller who returned with stories. Dick Ruggles is both. He is a keeper and custodian of the inherited tradition of his area (called Seanachie in Ireland). His stories are as passed on (some from his mother etc and some are folk tales) or from his experience of life – nothing whatsoever taken from Literacy or outside interests.</p> <p>He has a typical local technique of</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Framing his stories at first from afar (e.g. 'I was sitting having me sandwiches at the time when old so and so....') 2. Using formula: local sayings, proverbs. 3. Strong use of dialogue to bring forward the players in this play of life. 4. Playing pranks for the sake of relaying it in story <p>He was recorded close to his face to show every possible gesticulation. (See The Anthropology of Gest. Marcel Jousse). Fourteen hours recorded in total.</p>