**DEFRA**

**(Department for Environment, Food And Rural Affairs)**

**HM Government**

**Regions Exploratory Report**

**Number 1925**

**Desg. 15a**

**Location:** Farrowdoor Farm, Great Edstone, Pickering, North Yorkshire

**Subject:** Mr. Kevin Button

**Occupation:** Mutton And Beef Farmer

**Religion:** Not Relevant[[1]](#footnote-0)

**Interview Transcript 1.1**

Conducted by Department Clerk Mary Ungle between 17.01pm and 18.22pm on the 28/09/04, on location at Mr. Button’s farm.

**Mary Ungle[[2]](#footnote-1)**

Just sit there, Mr. Button, there’s no [section unintelligible] underneath.

**Kevin Button[[3]](#footnote-2)**

[A single snort, almost a snore]. Nay, there’s five pound a’ spidders ‘neath it.

**MU**

Do you dislike spiders?

**KB**

While they may run so fast, aye.

**MU**

Do you want to stand there, then?

**KB**

[section unintelligible]

**MU**

I’ll just have to bring the microphone closer, is that alright? Can you speak clearly into it, so we get everything?

**KB**

DIN’T STAND IT THERE.

**MU**

Oh, I’m sorry.

**KB**

Yer make fun o’ me, fer being flayed er spidders, ‘n ye half brek me scremblock[[4]](#footnote-3) [laughter].

**MU**

What’s... a “scremblock”?

**KB**

Where ter hoglets screm.

**MU**

Oh my... is that blood?

**KB**

Ol’ bled, weren’t mess yer none. [A snort with unintelligble vocalisation]

**MU**

Is... are you the only one around here wit’ a scremblock.

**KB**

[Pause] Fifeen year ‘go, alls ther wekers round ‘ere, they mek their own scremblocks.. bet no more. [Cough] Em, hrrrm. Nows they get the feer o’ govmint in ‘em.

**MU**

Well, Mr. Button [cough] I am from the government, and I’ve never heard of no “scremblock” before.

**KB**

Ask any ol’ feller in yer departmint, e’ll know ‘em. They was outlawed, tin yeer ‘go.

**MU**

And you are not worried that I’ll report you?

**KB**

[silence]

**MU**

Mr. Button?

**KB**

Why weren’t yer interview me in t’house?

**MU**

Why won’t I interview you inside?

**KB**

[Simulatenously] No.

**MU**

Because there is not enough space. And the sounds here are better.

**KB**

Well, thert beam there is close ter breaking, and I can ‘ear the termites in et witout no microphern, I tell thee.

**MU**

It’s-

**KB**

It sernds better fer the audience, let’s em kner yer own the edge ‘er nowhere. [ A cough, snort and squeal]

**MU**

This is part of a government report, Mr. Button. It doesn’t have an audience.

**KB**

Where did yet say yer were from?

**MU**

The department of Environment, Food And Rural Affairs.

**KB**

Ah [a clap, of hands together]. You was the ones who burnt me herd in ‘97.

**MU**

I’ve only been with the department for a year, Mr. Button. I wouldn’t know anything about that.

**KB**

Isser blert[?] that ‘un.

**MU**

Blert?

**KB**

Aye, Blert, yer boss.

**MU**

Blert... Blair? Tony Blair is no longer the Prime Minister, Mr. Button.

**KB[[5]](#footnote-4)**

So she says! So she say.

**MU**

Well, he isn’t, and I have to say we need to take this seriously.

**KB**

[Laughter] Are yer roofled, luv?

**MU**

I’m not your love - I’m cold - can we just get to the questions.

[The sound of a squeaking gate]

**MU**

What was that?

**KB**

Ter farrer gate. Gets a voice in a wind like this, so does.

**MU**

I’m...[deep breath] I’m not trying to be rude, Mr. Button, but I don’t understand your accent very well.

**KB**

**[Laughter]**

We’re t’same nation!

**MU**

Well, this is the furthest north I have ever been.

**KB**

Alrart, luv. And I meant nowt by that but yer a jug fer love, aye? Cos yer young and that.

**MU**

Mr. Bacon...

**KB**

Din’t fret none. What word in particular?

**MU**

Well, what’s a ferrer gate?

**KB**

Not feera. Ferrer. Tis a scintist’s word, fer givin’ birth.

**MU**

A scientist’s? Not a local word?

**KB**

Nay, nay. Ne whit confuses more than locals spoutin’ rubbish. Need good solid words ter talk hog.

**MU**

So this... is where the pigs give birth.

**KB**

Aye, you’re standing in the fluid.

**MU**

It’s not wet here.

**KB**

Oh aye, we let it dry, ter give them that come after a flat surface.

**MU**

You’ll not upset me, Mr. Bacon. I lived on a farm for two years after university.

**KB**

Aye, aye? Hogs, wassit?[[6]](#footnote-5) [More snorts, each louder than the last].

**MU**

No, just sheep for shearing and wheat.

**KB**

Queer farm, fer my taste.

**MU**

How does this differ, then?

**KB**

Less space, mostly; I’m pushed oop ‘gainst moor like pint on a boy’s loong. Ten mile up past Baughton’s[[7]](#footnote-6) t’wind come [snort] down wit’ such... wroth, by time it reaches me, ter fields are all fresh-shaven. Come here.

**MU**

The microphon-

**KB**

[Sound of rising, clattering, Mr. Bacon moving away from the microphone. His voice becomes indistinct]. See them? I own ‘em, all ten, and none of them can plant nothing. Soil is but hat fer rock, and the wind drags salt from sea and bullies ‘em. I only breed hogs ‘cos necessity. I din’t like the things.

**MU**

[Sound of Ms. Ungle returning to the microphone, out of breath] What did you say, then?

**KB**

Ne whit. Field’s is worse than useless, just. Hogs din’t need much space. Just a toilet in a small hog-cote, er, and, [unintelligible] hrrm, wallow, and veg fer mekkin’ o’ meat n’ shortening.

**MU**

What? Pigs need a toilet?

**KB**

Aye, hogs are fair snobbish ‘bout shiteing, Ms. Ungle. Won’t do it but they’s scratch a circle where they want’t, when cooming to a new hog-cote, and we dig it, else they bite each oother.

**MU**

The pigs decide where they want it?

**KB**

Aye.

**MU**

And they live in here, or over-

**KB**

They is born ‘ere, and then have the yard and garden, and coome ‘ere ter die, also.

**MU**

Does the smell of blood not bother them?

**KB**

Not as I’ve noted. It’s[Snort] warmer ‘ere, and sheltered by t’hous-

**MU**Oh!

**KB**

Aye?

**MU**

When you said “ferrer”, “ferrer gate”, you meant “farrow”, as in giving birth?

**KB**

Aye, ferrer.

**MU**Excellent... and how do you butcher them?

**KB**

Is scremblock for young’un, me astride it like an ‘orse o’ donker, sticking it, or nailgoon ‘fer backfatter.

**MU**

Nailgun?

**KB**

Aye.

**MU**

And what are these for?

**KB**

Scaring t’gippos.

**MU**And what do you do with the meat?

**KB**

Mek owt that all else do. Crappings go in broth, saim fer brekker, and “the blether fer working off the belly”, as me grandda used ter spek.

**MU**

And you told my colleague that you’ve had outbreaks of disease, in the last few years.

**KB**

[Grinding teeth and snorting] Din’t know much bout that.

**MU**

You do, Mr. Button.

**KB**

Ne whit, ar’ never talked ter no colleague o’yorn.

**MU**

A Mr. Torn?

**KB**

Norwegian, is ‘e?

**MU**

I don’t know him personal-

**KB**

[Agitated, half-shouting] You’s ask owt round ‘ere, I’s brings out hogs like coopbords full o’ meat? They’s med jokes bout me[cough] father, and now I, that you ‘jest add to open drawers in ‘em as to get the pluck, they’s so obliging-

**MU**

Mr. Button, I’m sorry if I insulted you. I have looked at your records, and your pigs are reported by all your neighbours and clients[snort] as excellent. I am not suggesting you have any outbreaks currently, nor am I here to investigate them. I am only here because I am interested in the disease’s eff[cough]. Are you sure that we cannot go inside? I’m catching my death.

[silence for 23 seconds]

**MU**

Can we talk about the disease now?

[silence for 15 seconds]

**MU**

You already mentioned the burning.

**KB**

Aye, Mr. Torn [Snort] cem ‘ere, and that report’s done. I tell ‘im what I tell you - it was feed frem Newcastle that did it, it were weevil’s as [snort] mek em ill wit’ t’rocks. [Snort]

**MU**

And what are the rocks?

**KB**

Well... um... hrrmmm... it er’ coom down ter mouth. Hog’s mouth thirty and three inches all told, which is same as man’s, except ‘e ain’t got nowt talking ter do, so is narrow, and straight for t’fodder. I ‘as give ‘em little space on account of ‘em little mouths.

**MU**

What do you mean?

**KB**

A hog ‘as an same mouth as hoomans, but eats six times as much. I ‘ope to breed it out of ‘em wit’ ‘is lil pen.

**MU**

Why?

**KB**

Costs.

**MU**

So, the rocks. A disease of the mouth?

**KB**

No, but it ‘gin there. You git a cobblestern, here [muffled voice] and here, n’ a darkening o’ the loin skin, like a saddle’s bin put ‘ere.

**MU**

What is a cobblestone?

**KB**

You’ll have to ask Mr. Torn that.

**MU**

And what would you do, if one of your animals had this disease?

**KB**

I would stay three foot off the beast, or more, and draw the others off too, and beat ‘er back into the field to die alone.

**MU**

And... what would she die of?

**KB**

Exposure.

**MU**

Not the disease?

**KB**

No, the disease gets ‘er slow, but she gets cold, and rubs up against the others, and it spreads and spreads.

**MU**

Are the corpses burnt.

**KB**

Some are, aye, and others tekken off.

**MU**

By who?

**KB**

Gov’mint, mebbe. Or dokkers what want study.

**MU**

You don’t ask.

**KB**

I do, but I don’t recall. [Snort] Papers are in ‘ouse. Me grandaughter [cough, for several seconds, followed by a sexist expletive] scans ‘em ferrme.

**MU**

Could you go and get them.

**KB**

No.

**MU**

Why... why not, Mr. Button?

**KB**

It’s nice out here.

[A sigh from Ms. Ungle]

**MU**

And, I suppose that you check the others, as well?

**KB**

Very thorough, like. Me hogs are me best. I took trip down south once, with Olga, to visit a friend a ‘ers, and they was panning, like what [Snort] only kings did, once.

**MU**

What is-

**KB**

Is when yer let ‘ogs et acorns from t’ground in a forest. They jest roam free. Now, I en’t got none oak trees ‘ere, but even er I did, I wouldnae let no hogs at ‘em!

**MU**

Why not?

**KB**

Disease control, and I tell this to Mr. Torn, is best ter keep hogs locked oop tight.

**MU**

Do you think that’s cruel?

**KB**

Do you?

**MU**

I told you, Mr. Button, it doesn’t matter what I think. I don’t have an opinion.

**KB**

Yer lying. But look on this.

[Sound of footsteps, dragging, grunts, clangs of hanging metal, swearing, Ms. Ungles murmurs with offers of aid]

**KB**

This ere’s a quarren.

**MU**

Can you spell that for me?

[He does so, but spells it as Q-W-A-R-E-N]

**MU**

And what is this for?

**KB**

Them’s hogs that cetches the needles. I don’t kill not all of ‘em.

**MU**

Do you cure them?

**KB**

Nae, but as long as they is kept alone, and warm, they can live ter ‘ave a litter.

**MU**

And you... they...

**KB**

Aye?

**MU**

They live in there?

**KB**

Living it en’t, Ms. Ungle, but it’s better than death.

**MU**

Some would disagree! [Exclamation mark added for emphasis]

**KB**

I thort as yer had nowt opinion?

**MU**

No professional opinion, but a personal one.

**KB**

And?

[Ten second pause]

**KB**

Well, hogs en’t intelligent. Don’t listen ter [Snort] nae tellybox chef. But they look as an old man, same loongs, same ‘art, same pinkness, [Snort]same ‘air. If I was ter ask ‘em, and they cud answer, they’d ‘av begged to be kept in the box, rather than in that wind.

**MU**

We may be similar, but we are not the same. An innocent animal is not the same as a-

**KB**

What?

**MU**

Mr. Button, I will have to erase this from the record. It is unprofessional, and I apologise.

**KB**

Nae worry, pet. I’mma businessman, and a sick hog en’t a dead hog, not by a mile. Is a curious sort of life, in men [Snort] and hogs, bet it’s life none less. We get sick in same way, and I look after sick one’s better than most. More [Snort] food, hay, quiet, warm. What more is wanted for sickness? But the quarren is a must. It’s that or the field. Aye, sometimes yer get a boar who’s a meankiller, ‘oo tosses [Snort] that box around like a washing machine bet on the ‘ole it’s quiet, dark, and peaceful. A hog wit’ needles din’t need no walking. Nae travel in nae forest for that’un. This way, it gets a little longer in comfort, and I git me hoglets, and job’s a good ‘un.

**MU**

Y-y-y-

**KB**

[Laughing]

**MU**

H-H-hogletssss? You breed from these animals?

**KB**

Ask any vetinary, they’ll as tell you, Needles [Snort] don’t affect no hoglets, nor the milk. Is in the mouth and throat, and en’t no ma’s kisses waiting there.

**MU**

And how do they give birth in that? There looks to be an inch at either end.

[The sound of wood knocking]

**KB**

This ‘eres the issue-hole. [Snort] hoglets come out ‘ere, and - [the sound of smaller pieces of wood knocking together] tits coom out ‘ere.

**MU**

That’s-

**KB**

Store is blinded by Needles, cen’t see no little ones, and so din’t matter. She still feels proud, whatever thrips the dugs. [Snort]Michael in the scalding-house calls ‘em “a little orchard”. But it’s auld, before the bloody Roman’s [Snort] we’ve bin shutting oop pigs wit’ a quarren. They used ter do it fer forty days, but times ‘as changed, we’re half-vetinaries oursells now, and we keep in there until they go to sleep [Snort] emsells. Nowt we can do fer ‘em.

**MU**

Surely you could make the box see-through, at least? So she could feel the sun?

**KB**

You ain’t never seen a hog wit’ Needles, ‘ave you? The others would ‘ave the plassic ripped off in two minutes, to look at ‘er. She’s got this melting ‘ed, full of brawn that’s bubbling, really, cooking wit’ all the fluid ‘eated by the brain. Pork’s a ghost meat, best o’ times. Slides ‘wit so much fat.

**MU**

Jesus Christ.

**KB**

Even us oursells on the farm can barely look at ‘er. I made that mistek with a niece once - she’s ne’er come back. Nae, better for all if they’re shut up.

**MU**

That’s... an interesting philosophy, Mr. Button.

**KB**

In them days, before the needle, the real needle, not the sickness or nothing - how did they manage all being so ugly, wit’ boils and hanging skin and scars and scars? Yer ‘ave ter wonder, din’t yer. I tell Harry in t‘Knife, it’s gotta change ‘ow a people think. Nae beauty nowhere, jest these filthy bits and bobs pulled toge’er. Bet there were still poetry, win’t there? ‘Ow does a people get along, being so ugly?

**MU**

I don’t know Mr. Button. And I think we’re straying from the topic. You promised to show me some pigs. I notice that there are none in here? And I am fairly certain when the car pulled up I-

**KB**

There in’t none in t’garden, nae. [Snort]

**MU**

So where are they?

**KB**

Wit?

**MU**

Where are the pigs?

**KB**

They is aways.

**MU**

You mean you have none here?

**KB**

Aye. Well, nae.

**MU**

[Sigh] Well, which is it, Mr. Button?

**KB**

They ‘as ‘iding, is all.

**MU**

Well, can you go and get them?

**KB**

Nae, they’s scared of yer, I reckon. Weren’t coom if ar called.

**MU**

Where can [shuffled papers] eighty pigs be hiding on this farm?

**KB**

[Laughter] They is probably on the moors, on their hind legs, dancing.

**MU**

If you have let your pigs escape, Mr. Button, or allowed them off the farm without a health permit, I will be forced to report it.

**KB**

Aye, din’t fret none.

**MU**

Please stop telling me not to fret. I am not a guest for tea, I am a government official. You must take this seriously.

**KB**

[Snort]

**MU**

Mr. Button.

[The sound of Mr. Button getting up, and walking away]

**MU**

[Shouting] MR. [unintelligible]

[Scuffled feet, rapidly getting louder, accompanied by the clanging of metal, Mr. Button’s voice, very loud]

**KB**

Yer want to ‘ear a jerk?

**MU**

[Small scream, cough and snort] What?

**KB**

Jerk! I’ll tell yer a local jerk! Fer yer records! Yer’ll like this, that’s all any suit-wearer, e’er wanted. ‘Is farmer, e-e-e-e was mad, yer see, and e let ‘im pigs sit at table wit’ ‘is wayf ‘n bairns, ‘n ‘e dressed ‘em oop in ‘is mutha’s Sunday best, five year dead, she were, n they scremed filthy murther.

**MU**

Mr.[Knock against the microphone head]

**KB**

Filthy, ancient murther! ‘N the wife asked ‘im the once, “will you put those pigs in t’yard?”, and “‘e says, nae, the midden’s nae place fer ‘em.” ‘N ‘is bairns wittered, “will yer nae put ‘em out, Da? They be biting us in our sleep, look at our wrists!” and ‘e says “nae, the midden’s nae place fer ‘em”. And ‘is wife said, “Will yer not put them out, husband.” And ‘e say nae I weren’t, the midden’s nae place fer ‘em.”

**MU**

I need-

**KB**

When ‘e come back from t’field, there ain’t nae sign o’ the bairns, ‘n is wife is dreadful quiet by t’ stove, and when ‘e goes to ‘er ‘e sees bites all up ‘n down ‘er arms. They look like love-nicks, and ‘e goes at ‘er in a rage, kills ‘er with a potato masher, and when ‘e finishes, ‘e is so hungry, that ‘e plunges ‘is head into the broth. It’s sweet with pork fat, ‘e can smell it, and ‘e knows that she’s killed them piggies, but ‘e don’t care. But when e’ turns round, there’s them piggies, wearing ‘is bairn’s clothes, n ‘is wife’s bled at their lips. And t’ biggest opens ‘is mouth, coughs a little, and say “We repaid you fer yer kindness, sir, we brought the midden t’-[[8]](#footnote-7)

1. Apologies for not following protocol, but is this designation necessary, in the 21st century? Most of the men and women I met had not been to church in many years, and self-identified, if not as atheists, as needing no religion at all. [↑](#footnote-ref-0)
2. I must also apologise for my murmurs and coughs; one does not realise how loud and obvious these horrid little tics are until one hears them on record. I was ill with a cold that day. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
3. Mr. Button speaks English, but is given to a quasi-North Riding/Northumbrian dialect that is rather rare in Yorkshire these days. I have attempted to preserve his speech within the transcript, though please note that this may impede understanding in analysis, due to the multiple negation, preterite transformation, and general dropped vocabulary.. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
4. The “scremblock”, or “screamblock”, was a 4’x1.5’x2’ block of what appeared to be a deep green moss, tightly packed together into a rough rectangular shape and set on two a-frames to bring it up to chest height. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
5. Mr. Button turned away from the camera at this point to address someone behind him. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
6. I was beginning to deduce at this point that Mr. Button was severely ill; whatever he had, it sounded bronchial, which I put down to the time of year and the wind. However, when news reached me of his passing, I realised how much pain he must have been in, which could have explained his fatalistic, and often abrasive, attitude. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
7. Mr. John Baughton is a neighbour (but, reportedly, not a friend) of Mr. Bacon whose farm is considered the most remote in the area; he breeds sheep, and is noted for a now-defunct technique of stabling his sheep in silos dug under his fields. See DEFRA R.E.P. #1914 6b. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
8. At this point, Mr. Button flung his arm wide, and knocked over the microphone, the greasing stool upon which it was sat, and one of the saws that hung above it, nearly severing my leg. He was shaking and nearly crying, but would not respond to any questions about his pigs or their whereabouts. I packed up my equipment, and walked him to his house, but he still wouldn’t let me in. I am recommending that an NHS psychiatric nurse be despatched to Mr. Button’s farm immediately to speak to him, as well as his neighbours being contacted to ask about the whereabouts of his sheep. Whilst this may be a matter of theft and a matter for the police, more pressing is the matter of Mr. Button’s farm having previously being a BSE and SIV outbreak flashpoint, and the possible recontamination of his stock. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)