



## **ELECTRONIC PRESS KIT**

**December 2019**

### **Down on the Farm**

**Six short films about farmers and farming in north Devon**

### **RUNNING TIME**

6 x 5 minutes

### **PROJECT SUMMARY**

**Down on the Farm is a collection of six short documentary films about farmers and farming in north Devon. These intimate studies of farming life reveal passion in their personal stories, enlightening local communities and consumers and connecting us with our farming neighbours.**

In 2018, following a public consultation process and rigorous selection procedure, community film making organisation North Devon Moving Image CIC commissioned six new and emerging film makers to produce one film each for Down on the Farm.

The project is supporting our farmers to share stories of their working lives with the wider world, enlightening local communities and consumers and preserving north Devon farming heritage in moving image. The commission has also given an opportunity to the film makers to develop their craft, express their creativity, reach new audiences and benefit from professional mentoring, practical production support and a £1,000 budget.

Website: <http://www.northdevonmovingimage.org.uk/down-on-the-farm.html>

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## THE FILMS

### 1. Get Bigger, Get Different or Get Out – 150 years on Twitchen Farm

#### Synopsis:

'Get Bigger, Get Different or Get Out' (2019) is an expository documentary, employing animated still image to tell the story of one farmer's family. Wayne Copp is an ethical and sustainable beef farmer, working in the North Devon Biosphere. The documentary explores the family's farming history, who have lived and worked on the farm for over 150 years.

#### Film Maker Bio:

James Cox is a videographer, musician and motion graphics artist with nearly a decade in creative practice. Working mainly in commercial based media and the television industry, James developed a love for documentary film and creative storytelling at university.

#### Transcript:

Wayne Copp: It's hard to work with cattle, particularly over time and not form a bond. The depth of their character and their society is quite hard to explain without sounding whimsical. But they're characters in their own right. They have their own right, they have their own social groups, they have their own little disputes, they sulk, they mourn.

They never cease to surprise me, even after 25 years.

No, I love my cattle – I really do.

I'd find it hard to imagine what life without cattle would be like. That wouldn't have been the case at 25 but at this point in my life, I wonder what I'd be if I wasn't farming.

There's farming roots on both sides of the family. We're on my wife's family farm here at Twitchen

My children are the 5th generation to be born here.

So we're talking, kind of 150, knocking on 180 years of history.

Day to day life back then, everything was done by hand so it would have been hand sieves mowing meadows, forks bedding and feed for animals in the winter.

Anything moved around like milk would have been in buckets.

They probably were almost entirely self-sufficient with the produce of the farm they lived on and sold surplus for income.

These guys would have worked hard. It would be long days, low wages. Life would have waxed and waned for these guys on the money they received and the lives they led.

Because of the drive to 'Dig For Victory' and the whole dynamic around increasing food production

My father's, and my farther-in-law's generation were pushed hard to become more efficient and produce more.

Intensive farming methods produced oversupply, which is the point at which I came in, in the 80's

I was determined not to be a farmer, from what I'd seen of farming. Long hours, hard work, financial hardship.

I guess the culture that I took on, was one of produce hard, push things, get bigger, get more efficient.

I describe myself now as an ethical and sustainable farmer, but I think I arrived here based on farming outcomes, which needed to be less inputs, less work and to try and making a living from the land that we have here and the situation we have.

Get bigger, get different or get out was a term coined by Don Curry in his report after Foot and Mouth nearly 20 years ago.

That metric for running a ruler over farming businesses is still very valid today, in the light of the threat to UK agriculture from Brexit.

Farmers as a breed are some of the most resilient in any walk of life, agriculture will survive. But it is very much a case of – what form that takes.

The worry that I have is that those that buy our goods – they'll just follow normal economic practice and look for the cheapest commodity. And if they want commodity produced cheaply to lesser standards, those are available from other countries.

In certain countries, hormones are permitted beef feed lots, anti-biotic is fed in-feed, carcasses are washed in chlorine.

There are feed lots in the States that can be seen from space.

That's got to have an effect on cattle welfare.

It's my sincere hope that we're not fully exposed to the economic pressure of world markets and commoditization of UK farming.

I thought long and hard about whether to get out at the point when the referendum went against staying in but I don't think I'm a man stubborn enough to die in trace or die in harness as my father-in-law would have put it.

As long as I can stagger out to a Land Rover and go and see my stock and that I'm not a nuisance to either my family or the community in general, I'll keep farming and then at that point, I'll hang up my spurs.

## **2. Portrait of a Grazier – a life of keeping sheep on Northam Burrows**

### **Synopsis:**

Portrait of a Grazier focuses on Ronald Griffey, who has grazed sheep on the common land of Northam Burrows for over 40 years. The film explores Ronald's connection to the landscape and some of the challenges and issues he faces as a grazier, like lambing and dogs chasing his sheep.

### **Film Maker Bio:**

Joanna Ryan is a Devon-based independent filmmaker who started making films around three years ago. She is passionate about creating documentaries with a social or environmental purpose, whether that's about heritage, inspiring enterprises, or special places or people, and believes in the power of film to help bring about positive change.

### **Transcript:**

Ronald Griffey: Try to get out there every other day at least, check the fences, try to see as many sheep as I can.

I like it out there, it is a lovely place to go for a walk. I'm not a, what's it called, a birdwatcher or twitcher but I like to see the birds, I know some of them.

Wife says 'Not the Burrows again,' but she's never been away. I went to Australia for eight year in 1976. I enjoyed it but it was nice to come home.

The first winter I was home from Australia I bought a set of waterproofs and I spent hours walking round the Burrows and I thought, this is lovely, face all cold, I had had nothing like it for eight year. Nice to be cold and fresh, ears feeling like they're going to snap.

We've got Welsh Mountain and Welsh Beulah Speckled Face. Keep the Welsh sheep because they like the rough grass, they do better on it than most others in the winter.

They go to ram in October, tup. They lamb end of February, it's all day, every day. But it all comes together don't it, you can't pick and choose, tis a package. Bit much sometimes but you got to take the rough with the smooth.

Dogs chasing the sheep is a big issue. The regular walkers, they that go out there every day, them alright. You get the odd one, they go out for a walk, and the dog goes for a walk and they don't know what he's doing. They think if he ain't biting them he ain't doing no damage but it isn't true.

If a sheep with two lambs, they get separated, it's liable to just find one and go off with him and forget the other. And then you've got an orphan lamb but you can't pick 'em out until it's too late to do anything about it.

There's a lot of things that I can't do on me own. Without Robert and James I wouldn't have nothing like as many 'cause I wouldn't be able to do it. I'm their gopher now. I look after it day to day and there's the three of us weekends and some nighttimes when there's more to

do, like lambing, shearing.

Wonder how much longer the Burrows is going to be there. Pebble ridge is eroding, eventually it'll be floodplains. There used to be a rubbish tip, well the rubbish is still there, and I think if hadn't been for the rubbish tip it would be floodplains now, 'cause they've got to protect that one and the Burrows goes with it.

I don't suppose I'll see it but I reckon Robert and James will. Be gone.

### **3. Lifelong Farmers - ...it's a way of life!**

#### **Synopsis:**

Rose and Freddy Manning have been living on a farm all their lives and have seen many changes in farming. They both have a real love for their way of life; the film is a very intimate portrayal of a small scale British Farm shown through routines of keeping livestock.

#### **Film Maker Bio:**

Linda Mason began filming in 2007; she obtained her MA Documentary Practice in 2014. Her films have played at various festivals. She's interested primarily in people, she loves documentary partly because you have to be led by the people and events you encounter. She's co-founder of Egg and Spoon Films.

#### **Transcript:**

Rose:

I used to go along with my dad all over the farm, wherever he went I went and so that's why I've got an interest in the farming.

I remember coming home from school, I used to cycle to Braunton and back again and I was always first home. And you could have whatever you could bit of yeast cake, orange, mum would probably be picking up the eggs or upstairs cleaning or whatever.

The first thing I thought, well I go and get the cows for dad so that when he comes in he can do the cows and we all get in.

But the twins you see were completely different they didn't like that and as much as mum and dad would shout at them never changed

Linda: It's just different interests isn't it?

Rose: yeah

Linda: always loved it

Rose: loved it, yeah

Yeah I used to, I learnt how to milk the cows with the machine about nine year old before that it was always done by hand which my dad did I didn't.

I do love cows, my first love but I've got too old for that so hence the calves ....  
You do less every year and you think well how much will I be able to do next year

Linda: they're getting big aren't they?

Freddy: they're growing

Some things in life are worth doing for their own sake and we're all born different and it's whatever gives you pleasure. One or two of them are suffering from the wet.

For us we will have them young is because these bullocks, can't drive them they're follow you because you gotta have some kind of bond. I had my hip broke by a bullock. With the

best will in the world you don't recover so well as the decades go on.

It's a bit of dry good food to supplement the washy grass. The joy of being a contractor is that you've got the kit to make your own how you want when you want whereas if you're on the end of a long queue in a difficult year, you know what can I say one day and a lot of rain can make the difference between making good stuff and rubbish you put it in and they sniff at it is this all he's giving me but if that's all you've got. Well it's the time of year it's made earlier the better in May cause the grass is more nutritious. If possible you can mow it late morning mid noon the sugars are all up and it's just well some people like it wetter some people like it drier, I like it drier because you can feed it to young stock. Because the sooner you can get them on silage the less rearing nuts you gotta buy you know last years prices was two eighty a ton well you put a ton of grub in front of thirty of forty animals it don't last long.

After the first and second world war there seemed to be more appreciation of food security our forbearers were long minded and everybody now is short term make the books look good this year because I'll be going somewhere else next year that's all very well but can you do that in terms of feeding animals or people. People see it as a safe haven for capital to be invested they ain't interested in what comes off of it or farming it they just want to sit on it till better times but the economics of it to buy it for what to me it's core function is to produce food for the nation and provide income for families at the moment the maths don't stack.

Rose:

I don't know anything different I mean I don't know how to enjoy myself I'd be lost without it. I've got no other interests at all I mean apart from the normal things in cooking and dress making and things like that.

It's see I've gotta keep going cause Freddy says, which is right, when I cant do it he cant do it cause me work as a team.

Freddy:

And despite all the negative things I've said about cattle farming it will come right because it has to because there's been bad times before. They're going to try and bribe older people to leave their farms by paying them all their single farm payments up to 2027 but what they forget is to a lot of them it's their home. If you look around most of the farms that have changed hands have been destroyed because they've sold them off piecemeal so you can get more out of it. Now there's question marks over 75 percent of them.

Rose: It's a way of life, definitely, it's a way of life

Freddy: Well its gotta be a way of life because

Rose: You wouldn't do it

Freddy: You wouldn't do it just as a business because the returns on the capital you've got to commit to it are dire compared to others.

Rose:

He likes to talk to people I'm alright one to one but in a group I feel lost I feel lonely and that's why I don't do it. You know walking with the dog, out in the countryside aye ooh nothing better. Nothing better I love it.

Freddy:

You know I think we've got a privileged life I really do but you would like to think that there's not only a future in it for us but for the ones that come behind.

#### **4. The Women of Reed Farm – *lambing season for the Balsdon family***

##### **Synopsis:**

This lambing season on Reed Farm we take a look at the level of work that each generation of the Balsdon women put in. We follow Mel, Amanda, Stacey and 3-year-old Lola as we get to see what it's like for these women during this demanding time on the farm.

##### **Film Maker Bio:**

For the past 19 years I've grown up on my family's farm. However, farming was a career I didn't want to pursue in life. Instead I have a deep passion and appreciation for filmmaking and I really enjoy experimenting with different genres and take pride in producing high-quality media projects.

##### **Transcript:**

Mel Interview: so we've brought the sheep in and were giving them their annual booster vaccinations for the lambs to be protected. I'm giving them a mineral drench just to get their minerals all up to date and then I'm docking them off so that we can when the ewe is lambing

Title: March

Narration: March had finally come and all hands were on deck. The ewes and lambs needed to be constantly cared for. It was during one of Mel's many night shifts that I recorded one of my favourite interviews with her.

Michael Night time Interview: (Michael) So would you say have you ever - Did you ever aspired to have another job or was this sort of what you always wanted to do?

Mel Night time Interview: I suppose it's what I've always done but I did quite like the thought of being a vet and then I did work experience and I realised that I didn't want to be vet. I quite liked cooking so I quite liked the fact of being a food tech teacher but that kind of yeah I don't.. I just suppose because this was here and I was the only one who was interested it was just easy and I liked it so I didn't have to ... I don't have to answer to anybody I just do my own thing. Being a mum I get to like have days off with Lola when I wouldn't be able to if I had a 9-5 job. And it's only certain times of the year like harvest and lambing and calving where the late nights are really late nights if you know what I mean. I do have a life otherwise so no. I suppose you always aspire to be other things but I'm quite happy. Quite happy.

Michael Interview: So I've never really had an interest in farming it's not a career that I've wanted to do necessarily so it's sort of good that Mel has taken it up just because that way it stays in the family which is something I believe is very important to my dad. It was very important that one of us did take it over and I am glad that it's Mel cause she definitely is the most qualified and she's such a good person for the job.

Title: April

Narration: In April my sister Stacey travelled from Colchester to Devon to help out the Balsdon family during lambing season. I got her take on why she chooses to help out.  
Stacey Interview: I think as a child I probably wasn't as interested in the farm. But as I've got older I think it's made me really appreciate how hard mum, dad, Mel work on the farm. So it's my way of just helping out a little bit at a time that's even crazier than normal.

Title: June and July

Narration: The busy period on Reed Farm is over. The sheds that were once full of sheep are now empty. They have been loaded up and put into the surrounding fields. The tame lambs that remain on the farm are being looked after by mum and even sometimes, Lola gives a helping hand. 2019 saw a fairly successful lambing season for the Balsdon family and it also showed me the high level of work that the women in my family put in to ensure that the farm runs smoothly and the animals are well looked after. I especially admire Mel's commitment this year as she took the time to spend time with Lola and teach her the basics of farming. I got Mel's opinion on why women make such good farmers.

Mel Interview: I think us women are pretty good at caring for the animals. I think our care and attention to detail is what makes us good farmers and yeah up the women really.

Narration: With lambing season in 2020 not that far away the women of Reed farm must prepare themselves for an increased workload and another year of hard work.

## 5. West Ilkerton Farm – *sustainable meat production at the edge of Exmoor*

### Synopsis:

This film follows the Eveleigh family's decision to produce and sell their own meat using their local abattoir, and selling meat boxes online. It explores the importance of local, small-scale farming for the animals' welfare and the difficulty faced by farmers of caring for livestock raised for meat.

### Film Maker Bio:

Florence Browne has a background in ethnographic film, with an MA from UCL, and is based in West Cornwall where she has worked as a freelance documentary filmmaker and sound designer for the past two years. She is keen on exploring rural stories through film, and is a BBC New Creative 2019.

### Transcript:

(V = Victoria, C = Chris, S = Sarah)

V: What is it with you, eh? You have a little bit and then you panic.

It's a very odd thing being a farmer because you've got to really care about the animals that you have all the way through their lives, and then you've somehow got to rationalise it in your head.

Definitely getting better. He sort of sucks and panics himself and goes into a bit of a fit, but he's definitely getting there.

C: He likes that

S: He does. Problem is you end up wasting hours down here just brushing him. He gets really upset when you leave.

C: He really enjoys it doesn't he?

S: Yeah.

V: We're a very small farm by today's standards. We're competing against lots of large farms that have a huge throughput of cattle. So we thought, rather than sell them for not very much money in the market, we'd capitalise on what we have got which is, you know, high welfare, grass-fed, native breed, and local slaughterhouse. In a way we started doing the meat boxes just by accident. We had this bull that we were going to sell as a registered bull, and rather than selling it in the market for not very much we thought why not put it through the local abattoir that had just started up again.

V: I think it depends on the chop you see.

C: Yeah.

V: And you see the Mojas (sp?) wanted their breast minced

C: Minced

V: Minced rather than rolled. The Hanas (sp?) have their breast minced rolled...

V: I think I put it on Facebook early one morning that we were getting some meat back, and by lunchtime we'd sold most of it, and there was very little left for us.

C: The great thing is that they're going to spend the whole of their lives here, they're not going to be taken to market and sold. We can look after them, and we are responsible for them from the moment they're conceived till the moment we send them off. I find it quite difficult really. I find it easier now that we've been down to the abattoir and I've been round the back and seen what happens, and I'm quite happy with the whole process. Sometimes you go to drop cattle off and you don't know what's behind the door, you know, but we know now, and the people down there are really good and they're really conscientious, and that makes life easier for us. We do have a relationship with all these cattle. Reared them from calves, you know, and like last winter they were indoors. Just so used to seeing us.

V: He always says he doesn't sleep very well the night before, and I can...I can vouch for that. He never sleeps very well the night before we take something to the abattoir. You never ever get used to it, not totally. And I think if you did get used to it you should probably give up farming. You've always got to have that respect that it's a life that you're taking, and that you want to do it to the best of your ability.

C: That big? That big? That big?

V: No no just sort little slices

C: That big?

V: So that they don't get all the chewy bit at the end. Do you see what I mean? Alright the dogs can have the chewy bit at the end.

C: So about like that? At an angle or straight across?

S: Straight across dad, come on.

V: Up to you. You can go freestyle if you like.

S: Look at what you're doing, don't look at what mum's doing.

C: I don't have my glasses.

V: We sell it fresh on the day it comes back from the abattoir and then we sell frozen boxes from the freezer. Amazingly, touch wood, it's been really successful. I think this is the best way we can produce meat. I hope it is, anyway.

**6. One Acre – an intimate observation of how running a one acre farm in North Devon changed the life of a young woman**

**Synopsis:**

We follow a young new entrant farmer as she reflects on her experience of farming; from climate change, to community and the art of letting go of control. One Acre highlights the delicate balance involved in farming on a small scale, and the reality of living life by the land. (50 words)

**Film Maker Bio:**

Dee Butterly is a farmer and food activist who works for the Landworkers' Alliance. Jo Barker and Holly Black are a female led film company; Black Bark Films. Previous works include In Our Hands (2016) an award-winning feature length documentary made in association with the Landworkers' Alliance.

**Transcript:**

Liv James:

I think you can produce more on less land. Land is very much sought after and it's a value commodity and there is very little of it available to people like us, I think being able to grow more on less is always something we need to be working towards.

It's a one acre no dig organic market garden. We don't use conventional farming practices, tilling the soil, ploughing, rotavating, but rather we do everything by hand using hand tools. So, no machinery.

We are the tractors in our farm, and at the moment we are reasonably young, and strong and fit. So, a real challenge for us is in the future it will probably get more difficult the older we get, or the more tired we get.

On the farm is Henry and I, so it's our business that we run together. We would both class ourselves as new entrant farmers, and we are both first generation farmers.

"Hi, I made an order and they still haven't come and it was supposed to be delivered on Monday..."

I'm sort of, five years on into farming now and it's actually quite difficult to remember life before farming.

I think moving here, I gained way more than I thought it just took a much longer time to know what I've gained.

I have friends of all ages and of all sorts of jobs, whereas I think before my friendship group was quite narrow. You really like, learn to love the people around you and who's here and learn to love them for who they are rather than seeking out friends who are like you which is what I was doing before.

Starting a farm in a climate which is so unrecognisable from what it was a few years ago before, we just can't be prepared really, enough.

Our strength is in our diversity and the fact that we do have some protected growing space. We have strength in our size, and strength in all the different customers we have.

Year on year when things fail it's so heart-breaking. But then if you let that get to you, and let that panic you then you know, I wouldn't get out of bed in the morning.

Part of the joy of farming I think as well, you don't really know what's going to happen and there's only so much you can control.

I think trying to be zen. It's a good positive way to farm.