




Project: Ploughing Up Our Past
 Respondent: Robert Meikle Stevenson
 Year of Birth: 1956
 Age:
 Connection to project: long line of Ayrshire farmers
 Date of Interview: 6 April 2021
 Interviewer: Kay McMeekin
 Recording Agreement: Yes/ No
 Information & Content: Yes/ No
 Photographic Images: Yes digital
 Length of Interview: 44 minutes
 Location of Interview: Zoom video call
 Recording Equipment:



Time (from: mins/secs)	Summary transcript	Transcribed Extract (from- to: mins/secs)
00.00	Introduction	
01:06	All of his ancestors were farmers and daughters of farmers for hundreds of years. In Changue for 151 years until 29 March 2019. First Stevenson was John Stevenson 28 Nov (1867) lease access to fields not till the following May did they have access to the steading. Previous tenants were Wardropes .	
2:46	Day's ploughing with 70 neighbours coming to help in January 1868.	
3:00	John Stevenson was from Ladyyard in Tarbolton and married neighbour Mary Strawhorn of Mossbog in April 1849 in a hurry, needed a job. Should have inherited the lease but became farm servant to Boswell of Garrallan. Then by 1861 he's farm overseer and factor of Sorn Castle and lived at home farm for Sorn Castle, Hillhead but he also had the tenancy of Garrallan Home farm. Then leased Changue in 1868 although he didn't seem to move in till	

	after 1872 (birth of daughter June 1872 at Hillhead.) Talks about John Stevenson's family.	
6:10	Changue was always a dairy farm. Ayrshire herd from 1906 with cattle descended from the Garrallan Home Farm, it is thought.	
7:10	He describes a bowing agreement between the Boswells in the 1860s, and a Mr Thomson to keep cows at Garrallan cottage, to receive fodder and to provide cheese etc. to the mansion house.	
7:45	Talks about his childhood at Changue. Haytime was a worry for his father. Takes 5 days for hay to dry in the sun. His father John Stevenson was in partnership at the beginning with his two younger brothers James and Willie. He describes their roles and how his father was entrepreneurial. They had a bakery, a hotel (1955) as well as the dairy operation. Pre-war did outside catering and during war prepared packed lunches for miners. Willie went to Auchinflower, James went to Cooperhill. No summer holidays once the brothers left.	
12:00	Father died (in 1975) and Robert took over. He describes the steps to modernise the operation. Change from feeding hay and turnips to silage and move from byre to loose housing in parlours, silage pits, slurry tankers instead of dung spreaders. 110 acres of hay in 12 days in 1976 – good weather. Silage cut end May and again in summer, can add fertiliser, higher energy feed. Capital intensive. Grants available from EU to modernise. Easier on labour.	
16:39	Talks about his mother and her involvement with the (Royal) hotel which they bought in 1956. Father was away a lot. He was happy to leave her in charge. And when father died she had to run things while Robert was at college (Auchincruive) and deal with trustees. 130 employees.	
20:00	When she arrived in 1952 there were 2 boys farm worker living in the bothy with ration books. 15 dairy girls who used the lavatory in the house. Staff canteen was built soon after. Robert and his mother were made partners fortunately before his father died. In John's will, his wife had life rent and she was a widow for 42 years. When she died then Robert had to sell to pay out his brothers.	
25:25	Young Farmers. John Stevenson was National Chairman. Setting up competitions and he was awarded the MBE in 1951. He was also involved in many committees. The Government was very much in control of milk post-war.	
28:15	Visitors came to the farm. Talks about father's stepmother. 1932 cows aborting due to brucellosis. Father went into	

	retailing then and they introduced tuberculin testing. Set up the Milk bar in the Square which was the first farmer owned milk bar. Relations the Sloans in Glasgow had a big dairy pre war. The Changue milk went there by train from Dumfries House Station. Milk Marketing Board was then the intermediary buyer. By 1939 he was having at home days. And good staff relations with social events.	
33:26	How his parents met.	
35:00	Accidents, suicides, farmers working alone in fields, farmers being elderly, working with livestock and implements on their own. Farmer's lung from working with mouldy hay. Vets got brucellosis, caused a fever and was incurable. Scotland wasn;t clear til about 1980. TB is still a problem down south.	
38:80	Checking up on the names, Stevensons' Dairy Farm, always an unlimited private company. Uncle Jacob was Jacob Murray . He was able to help out financially. Some of Jacob Murray' s cows went to America. ? walked to Ayr show and won the championship. First family to have a sewing machine in the area.	
41:13	Children farmed out to live with relatives: Jacob and his sister Annie as teenagers were sent to live with an unmarried uncle at Carston. And Christina sent aged 10 to a widowed aunt Margaret Clark . Christina eventually inherited a lot of money from her cousin James Clark.	
44:36	Thanks	
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