

TRANSCRIPT OF BROAD TOWN WHITE HORSE RESTORATION GROUP INTERVIEW WITH RUPERT BASTIN

SUBJECT RUPERT BASTIN

PLACE BROAD TOWN

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INTERVIEWER Andrew Law, Broad Town White Horse Restoration Group, 07841381301, andrewlaw456@gmail.com

00:00:02,960 --> 00:00:35,460 [Andrew Law]

I'm Andrew Law and I'm interviewing Rupert Bastin in Broad Town on the evening of the 8th of October 2025. My reference is Broad Town White Horse Restoration Group interview five. My contact details are andrewlaw456gmail.com and my mobile number 07841381301. So, Rupert, tell me a bit about your background.

00:00:35,460 --> 00:01:02,000 [Rupert Bastin]

Okay, so my name's Rupert Bastin. I'm 55 and I've lived in Broad Town most of my life. So I've lived here with my family. We came here, Mum and Dad came here in the early '60s. I was born in 1969 and, yeah, fortunate enough to live in the place I love. Yeah.

00:01:02,000 --> 00:01:04,879 [Andrew Law]

And you live in what was the old chapel?

00:01:04,879 --> 00:01:13,960 [Rupert Bastin]

Yes, so the old chapel at the bottom of Chapel Lane is where Mum and Dad moved into and basically, we're on the site of that now.

00:01:13,960 --> 00:01:16,990 [Andrew Law]

And if you look out your back window, what do you see?

00:01:16,990 --> 00:01:26,759 [Rupert Bastin]

The White Horse. Every single day, every dog walk, every, you know, when the moon comes up and sun goes down, it's always there. Yeah. Fantastic.

00:01:26,760 --> 00:01:30,180 [Andrew Law]

So what are your early memories of the White Horse?

00:01:30,180 --> 00:02:00,860 [Rupert Bastin]

Well, I know my father and my mum used to take me and my brother up there with the dogs ever since I can remember. So, I would say mid '70s. Unfortunately, I can't really remember what state the horse was in but it was obviously there because we used to go up and sit on it, you know? Have a picnic, you know, go up with my grandparents. Yeah. Good, great memories. Yeah.

00:02:00,860 --> 00:02:05,660 [Andrew Law]

And when do you think you had your first involvement with the horse with regard to looking after it.

00:02:05,660 --> 00:02:39,780 [Rupert Bastin]

Okay. So, with maintenance, it would have been around, I guess, 2009, 2010; that sort of time. You know? We hadn't long moved back to the village after leaving it briefly and the children were growing up so it was a good opportunity for me to become a little bit more involved in the community. And the White Horse, you know, it was something that I'd always fancied having a go at really.

00:02:39,780 --> 00:02:49,480 [Andrew Law]

Now, presumably, a lot of local people were involved in the maintenance of the White Horse. Is there any sort of the people that stand out in your memory?

00:02:49,480 --> 00:03:31,840 [Rupert Bastin]

My first memory would really be Bob Clark sort of taking the reins and organizing, you know, just organizing everything really. I sort of marveled at how seamlessly it was done. Obviously, yourself Andrew, you know, from around that time. There's been a few other people coming and going. Sorry if I've forgotten anyone, but the reason why they there's not so many individuals is just for the whole reason that we all seemed to work as a team and it didn't matter who was in it. It was a real team effort.

00:03:31,840 --> 00:03:54,180 [Andrew Law]

Looking back there's records of a girl called Alison Shapland who was in the village school, I think, at the same time as yourself, writing to the parish council asking if they could restore the White Horse and so therefore she is an important figure in continued existence of the White Horse. Do you remember Alison?

00:03:54,180 --> 00:04:15,980 [Rupert Bastin]

I do. Alison was a couple of years, maybe one or two years younger than myself but we both spent time obviously at Broad Town School with her living just down the road. So yes I saw her on a quite a regular basis. Fond memories of the school.

00:04:15,980 --> 00:04:18,040 [Andrew Law]

So when did you leave school then?

00:04:18,040 --> 00:04:33,220 [Rupert Bastin]

So I would have left in 1981. I think I left to go to Bassett Comprehensive, yeah. So, Allie would have, still been at school at that time.

00:04:33,220 --> 00:04:36,000 [Andrew Law]

So she'd have been leaving 1982, 1983.

00:04:36,000 --> 00:04:37,540 [Rupert Bastin]

Yes.

00:04:37,540 --> 00:04:50,700 [Andrew Law]

Okay. Right. I know you're a regular limmer because I've seen you up there many times. In fact, you're one of the hardcore limers who's always there, which is great. What's it like? Tell me about what it's like when you go up to lime the White Horse.

00:04:50,700 --> 00:05:24,640 [Rupert Bastin]

Okay, so it's quite deceptive because it looks very pretty and quite serene but when you get up close, it's not really for the faint-hearted. You know it is quite a steep incline. Depending on weather conditions, you know, it can be slippery in places and there are obviously, when there's a few of you up there working, there are quite a lot of potential hazards. So, it does need good management and good organization for sure. Yes.

00:05:24,640 --> 00:05:26,460 [Andrew Law]

And describe what you actually do.

00:05:26,460 --> 00:06:43,892 [Rupert Bastin]

What I do? Okay, so I'm one of the ones who takes the bags of lime, which are about 25 kilos, and a few of us pass them along the line and then we basically, have a certain allocated area. It might be a leg, a tail, or the head and so a few of us split the bags and then we have to rake over the surface. And it does get very, very slippery if you're standing on fresh lime before it's had a chance to crust over. And the most important advice I can give is do not work directly below someone handling a bag of lime. We've seen a couple of times where it's just disappeared down a hill just a puff of dust at the bottom, so it all looks, you know, it's quite pretty when it all puffs up but you wouldn't want to be below it 'cause you'd end up at the bottom as well, for sure. Yeah.

00:06:43,892 --> 00:06:48,112 [Andrew Law]

Okay. When you get back from liming, what does your mother, Betty say?

00:06:48,112 --> 00:07:35,132 [Rupert Bastin]

Well, she always asks, you know, if I had a good time because that's what mums do, isn't it? Yes, and I would say, "Yes, I had a good time." But she always remarks how wonderful it looks and to be honest we've already seen that bit because part of it as well is walking away from the White Horse and back down the lane from Little Town. You resist the urge to turn round until you get in a good position where you can all then turn round and take in the work you've done. And especially on a sunny day, it's quite an impressive sight. So, you know, we all go home feeling good and that we've contributed to a good cause really. Yeah.

00:07:35,132 --> 00:07:46,532 [Andrew Law]

Well, last year in 2024, we were very privileged and had a visit from BBC Radio 4. Tell me about your experience with that one.

00:07:46,532 --> 00:08:32,931 [Rupert Bastin]

Well, that was interesting because I hadn't really planned personally to take part in this interview. My son Tom, he was up for it and did a good job. And then they just turned round to me and said, "And what about your father?" So I had to, you know, I quite enjoyed it, to be honest. It was just to let other people know, you know, what we get out of doing it. You know, it's, um... I don't what else to say. I did enjoy the interview but it was rather unexpected.

00:08:32,932 --> 00:08:53,452 [Andrew Law]

This was a recording by Helen Mark from a programme called Open Country which was broadcast nationally. So for the next few months Rupert was a media star in the country, across Britain. You mentioned Tom, do you think he'll get involved in the White Horse?

00:08:53,452 --> 00:09:40,572 [Rupert Bastin]

I think so. Yes. I mean, he's very much like me. He's in so many ways, he's very, very traditional in his ways. He loves Broad Town, absolutely loves it. Loves history and everything about it and also I've taken him, I would say, a handful of times now to do it, and you know, I see such a change in him. He just loves it. You know it almost feels like, I'm not giving up yet, but it feels like you're in the process of handing the baton over to the next generation. So, yes, it's a good feeling. Yes.

00:09:40,572 --> 00:09:57,452 [Andrew Law]

It was unfortunate that we experienced that slip below the White Horse which then stimulated us to start the survey project. I know you were involved in doing some of the auguring. Tell us about your experiences doing auguring.

00:09:57,452 --> 00:10:58,872 [Rupert Bastin]

Well, that seemed like quite an easy task but I was quite looking forward to it. It's a small group of us going up there and I thought, "Okay, we're going to just bore a few little holes here and... anyway, I think it was about four hours later we'd done three holes. I think it was three holes. But you know that was really, really hard work. You know, having to go down to the bedrock and it was almost like a tag team, you know? When one of us was tired, the other one would take over. But for me, you know what I wanted to do, the reason why I wanted to do it was to get an insight into the history of the Horse and the construction and how it's possibly changed over time. So another example of me coming away from that being very satisfied with the day's work. Yeah. Really enjoyed it.

00:10:58,872 --> 00:11:07,992 [Andrew Law]

It's interesting when you take out the augur sample, lay it on its side, and spread it out, how deep the Horse is.

00:11:07,992 --> 00:11:45,352 [Rupert Bastin]

Yeah. I mean we went down to, I think the maximum we could get down to was I think it was just over 90 centimeters but when you're trying to bore down by hand with an augur through stone. I mean, this augur was cutting through stone and you could hear it crack below your feet. And when you got down to the bedrock and moved the augur, you could feel the bedrock under your feet. So, you knew you were under something solid, but that was quite deep.

00:11:45,352 --> 00:11:48,352 [Andrew Law]

Yes. It's made more difficult by standing on a very steep slope.

00:11:48,352 --> 00:11:53,212 [Rupert Bastin]

At an angle. Yes. That that was interesting. Yeah.

00:11:53,212 --> 00:11:55,872 [Andrew Law]

So Rupert, what does the White Horse mean to you?

00:11:55,872 --> 00:13:57,922 [Rupert Bastin]

Well, where do I start really? It's, you know, it's the one thing, the one constant in my life really. Living in the village after seeing so many things disappear, for example, you know, the pub, the shop, a few other things, but this has always been there. And I just want it to always be there. I mean it gives me a sense of belonging, belonging to the community, a lot of peace and happiness when I see it, obviously. You know, I live in sight of it so it brings back a lot of happy memories for me as well. I mean, you know, it is for me, well, it's not just for me but it gives the village its main identity, I would say, the school identifies with it. There are a few groups, The Made in Broad Town group use the white horse as its logo. I mean, the church yard faces it, it's almost like it was directly put in front of the church yard for a reason and also, you know, we've also had... I'm trying to think of the coach company, White Horse Coaches used to be, well, where you were, Andrew, at the bottom of Pye Lane, you know, it sort of inspired that. And even down at the garage where I work, if you look on the website, you know, the garage is located under the gaze of the chalk horse of Broad Town. So you know, it is Broad Town's identity and it'd be very, very sad if it was to go, you know, through lack of maintenance or, you know, a landslide of sorts, you know. Yeah, it'd be very sad.

00:13:57,922 --> 00:14:01,822 [Andrew Law]

Yes. So, I think we've all got a big responsibility, haven't we, there?

00:14:01,822 --> 00:14:04,442 [Rupert Bastin]

Oh, yeah. Yeah, I think so. I think so.

00:14:04,442 --> 00:14:06,601 [Andrew Law]

Rupert, have we missed anything at all?

00:14:06,602 --> 00:14:47,082 [Rupert Bastin]

No, not really, Andrew. That's pretty much it. You know, the reason, the main reason why I did this, I know it's not just about the horse, but for me it was about the whole reason I moved here was not just to take what Broad Town had to offer but to give a bit back and try and become a bit more part of a community which cares about its village. So I feel we're doing that, quite a few other people are doing it, so hopefully, you know, it'll carry on.

00:14:47,082 --> 00:14:59,641 [Andrew Law]

That's brilliant. That's a really nice insight into living adjacent to the horse, living, growing up with it, and also then being involved in the maintenance over a number of years. So thank you very much for your contribution.

00:14:59,641 --> 00:15:01,462 [Rupert Bastin]

No, you're welcome. Thanks for asking me, Andrew.

00:15:01,462 --> 00:15:03,602 [Andrew Law]

Okay. Cheers, Rupert.