

Tales from

Collecting oral history

What is oral history?

Oral histories are recordings of people talking about their memories. Oral history helps to fill in the gaps often left by documents by capturing the experiences of ordinary people.

www.norfolkmills.co.uk/Watermills/little-cressingham.html



Wheelhouse April 1907



Pump house and wheelhouse March 2003

Some memories ...

"I was sent to Little Cressingham as an evacuee with my sister aged 3, I was 9. At Christmas one year the river froze over and the whole village turned out to skate and even sat on chairs to be pushed about it was so thick."
Doreen Viner (née Sansom) -
13th October 2018

Images and quote, <http://www.norfolkmills.co.uk/Watermills/little-cressingham.html>

Why recording your stories is so important

"Everyone, irrespective of their background, has a unique story to tell. Oral history allows people whose voices might not otherwise be heard to share their experiences. The act of retelling life events can help people understand their lives and often contribute to a sense of wellbeing and identity both for individuals and communities. At their most powerful, oral histories can explain, enrich understanding and encourage empathy with others."

<https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/funding/good-practice-guidance/oral-history-guidance>

the River

memories & stories

Some memories ...

"As a boy I lived at Methwold. I am certain Northwold Mill was intact 1944/45. It was certainly there July 1945 because I cut my foot swimming in the pool and Mr. Bateman took me by car to the doctor in Northwold. I used to go swimming and fishing and remember exploring inside. It was non operative then. When swimming in the pool we boys were joined sometimes by American airmen, I believe from Bodney."

Basil Kybird - 5th March 2007

Images and quote, <http://www.norfolk Mills.co.uk/Watermills/northwold.html>



How the project will collect and use oral histories

We will arrange for you to meet with trained volunteers who will ask you a few questions and record your memories. There are some forms to sign at the start and end, and you can decide what you want to talk about and what you agree can be recorded and used.

Oral history interviews begin with the interviewer stating their name, and the date and place that the interview is taking place. They will then ask you your name and age or the year you were born, so that listeners in the future will be able to put some context to the recording. Then it's a chance for you to tell us your memories, and we hope you enjoy taking part!

Recordings made for this project will become part of the collections at Suffolk Archives. We will also use extracts from them in exhibitions, videos, on our website and in social media during the project. We might share all or part of them with other projects or appropriate local history societies.



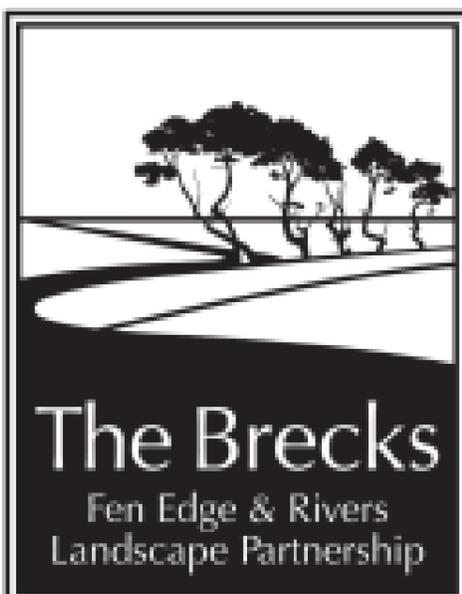
Oxborough Ferry, c1910, postcard

Some memories ...

"We didn't actually swim. We played. We played in the ferry river. We played in what we call the 'second bridges' which was down the Foulden road and we played in there because it was a sandy bank and it was clear and you could see the bottom and we paddled, we caught tiddlers and had lots and lots of fun. And lots of the children used to. There used to be a watermill there and where the watermill was, there was a (big) tree cut down and people used to actually jump off the tree trunk into this. It's a wonder they didn't break their necks. There was no health & safety by the riverside then.

"We used to fish in the moat for eels and my brothers and I used to do this on a regular basis ... Mum cooked the eels. She cooked everything. She cooked the trout, she cooked the roach. She had to have ... everything we caught – we had to have an attempted feast on, not always the best but that was what you did in those days." [in the 1950s]

Mary Saunders, interviewed by Helaine Wyatt January 2022



Project updates

As the project develops we will share photos, updates, extracts from interviews and videos, to show the fascinating information we gather. See websites, social media, and newsletters.



Some memories ...

"When my parents got married in June 1940, my father and his brothers were very keen fishermen and they spent a lot of time on the river, in a punt or a rowing boat. And as I say, I was born in 1944 and one of the first things I remember I did as a child was actually fall in the river and my father grabbed me by my ankles and that was my first introduction to the River Wissey. My parents, at that time, lived ...just down Church Lane in Whittington, and yeh, we've been interested in the river; we've fished and boated and swum for a long time.

[HW] "And your interest in boating on the river continues?"

"Yes, it does. We've got a rowing boat. People say you need an outboard motor on that rowing boat but I say that's just what I don't want, because if you row, you become part of the natural environment in which you find yourself. The kingfishers, the otters and all the wonderful life that's there, is there before you. But if you've got a noisy motor boat, you miss a lot of that."

Roger Warner, interviewed by Helaine Wyatt February 2022



Girls in the river, c 1960s, photo from Helaine Wyatt

Memories and photos?

We would love to have more photos like these and to identify and talk to the people pictured in them, or their relatives or others who remember them and the places they had fun in!

Memories?

Relatives of these three young Lakenheath women (in the photo below) have come forward on Facebook but we've not yet arranged to talk to them. The women are named on the website (0047 in the Places download), and apparently they were all great and memorable characters!



Lakenheath Mill Pond, 1947, (also called Claypits lake), reproduced by permission of the Lakenheath Heritage Group, <http://lakenheath.onesuffolk.net/lakenheath-heritage/>

Heritage project in the Brecks & Fen Edge

Tales from the River is part of The Brecks Fen Edge and Rivers Landscape Partnership Scheme (BFER, <https://brecks.org/bfer/>), supported by the National Lottery Heritage Fund (<https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/>). See BFER website, <https://tinyurl.com/BFERprojTR>, and project lead's website, <https://tinyurl.com/OSBprojTR>