Text display panel 2

Tales from the River

Collecting oral history memories & stories

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.

Images and quote, http://www.norfolkmills.co.uk/Watermills/lt-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

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/northwold.html

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

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.

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.

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

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

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

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

Lakenheath Mill Pond, 1947, (also called Claypits lake),

reproduced by permission of the Lakenheath Heritage Group,

http://lakenheath.onesuffolk.net/lakenheath-heritage/

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!

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!