Text display panel 4

Tales from the River

Thetford Spa town, lido, mills, fishing, & other pools

Thetford Spa, Spring Walk, from Ancient House Museum

Spring Walk and the Spa

“Spring Walk once led to the Chalybeate Waters which made Thetford a fashionable spa in the

eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. …men are sailing, punting and towing. The river

is crystal clear, the banks are indented with picturesque little creeks, no longer there, the flint

cottages and houses clustered behind the bridge among groves of elm and willow are all

roofed with thatch or red tiles and sweeping to the water’s edge is the bosky garden of New

Place…

"The spring bubbled up in a meadow near the Paper Mills, now a manufactory of patent steel

pulp ware, one of only two in Europe. When taken freshly from the basin, the water was quite

transparent …Dr Accum, author of a Guide to the Chalybeate Spring of Thetford, 1819,

recommended that it should always be taken at the fountain head and only during the

summer months, from May to September.”

Olive Cook, Breckland, 1956

Swimming in Thetford

People swam in the river pool –

including pupils from Thetford

Grammar School – and when that

closed – on hot days in the river.

Thetford lido or river swimming baths, Frank Meeres

Thetford Swimming Pool

“For many years there had been in Thetford an open air swimming pool in the Little Ouse River

near the Nun's Bridges but with rising standards and increased pollution problems in the river

this pool was closed in the late 1950s. …

In March 1961 a public meeting was held and a swimming pool appeal fund was set up.

Rotarian Tom Warner who was the secretary of the Rotary club joined the swimming pool fund

committee and took a leading part in organising its activities. A weekly draw for funds was held

and over the next few years some £20,000 was raised. …In 1961 the Rotary club as a whole

organised the procession of decorated vehicles in a carnival which took place to raise funds and

the club also made a donation of £100 towards the swimming pool fund.

[After negotiations to find a site]…it was decided that it would be more sensible to build an

Indoor swimming pool which could be used throughout the year rather than an open air one

which due to the vagaries of the English summer might be used for only a few weeks in the

year.”

http://www.thetfordrotary.org.uk/NEW%20ARCHIVE/NEW\_Ellis\_Clarke/NEW\_ARCH\_ellis\_clarke\_

memoirs.htm, Retrieved 12 December 2017 [not currently available]

Thetford river swimming, 1970s

Swimming memories?

Do you remember swimming in the lido or

the river? Generations have swum or

paddled or splashed in the water. We’d love

to hear your memories in the project.

Thetford Mill, 1919 painting by S. H. Baldrey,

http://www.norfolkmills.co.uk/Watermills/thetford.html

Some memories...

"Our fishing expeditions in the river were

unmitigated failures equipped with a bent

pin, dough and string."

Maurice Jay 27.08.19,

http://www.norfolkmills.co.uk/Watermills/

northwold.html.

Thetford Mill,

http://www.norfolkmills.co.uk/Watermills/thetford.html

Thetford Mills, OS Map 1882, Corn mill (north) and pulp mill (south), NLS map images,

http://www.norfolkmills.co.uk/Watermills/thetford.html

Fishing at the Mill

"A sturgeon, measuring 7 ft. 8 in. in length,

and 3 ft. 2 in. in circumference, and

weighing 192 lbs., was killed in the Mill

Pool, April 7th 1715."

http://www.norfolkmills.co.uk/Watermills

/thetford.html

Atlantic Sturgeon, artwork by US Fish and Wildlife Service,

scanned in 1970s, from Wikipedia

Other pools and waters in the Brecks

The project is interested in the history of public and private swim and

recreation places, including lakes, moats, pools, rivers, even duck decoys.

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/). For more see also

https://tinyurl.com/OSBprojTR

Private pool, possibly built in 1920s, at Didlington Manor

"...a Neoclassical swimming pool in the style of a temple house”

Norfolk Heritage Explorer Register NHER No. 4821

[1942] March 24th. There are two fellows swimming in the pool. I’m watching the brilliance of

their wakes in the water. They are tough and one can see how hard and muscular they are— it’s

the Commando training that does it, no doubt. They complain of the cold nevertheless and

once out on the grass run about with yelps and shake themselves like puppies. No wonder, the

pool has been free of ice for less than a fortnight. . . .

Leslie Paul, Heron Lake, pp36-7