

2<sup>nd</sup> interview with Eric Davey

Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2013 at his home The Old Inn, Fen Road, Blo Norton.

## HABITAT

Little Ouse river was maintained using a drag line which cleared vegetation and some silt.

Fishing when he was young-caught Perch, Dace, Roach and occasionally Pike. Could sell Pike for couple of pounds.

Swimming during summer. Dam up river with reeds and mud to deepen but always left alleyway to stop water level too high.

Wildlife: Kingfisher, Water Rail, Moorhen and occasionally Otter.

River flowed well from source on Frith to blo’Norton.

Blo’Norton end changed now not maintained-too shallow. BN eastern end was 1/4 -1/2 meadow grass. Local farmer made Hay and had 4-5 cows grazing (owned by George Mison) alongside road. Now overgrown with shrubs and Osiers.

Had auction at the pub every Easter Monday selling cattle feed grown on Fen. Auction run by trustees. Also sold shooting rights-Pheasant. Some of the money raised was given to local coal merchant to pay for some fuel in winter for poor and old in village.

(children on Fen knew how and where to walk on Fen avoiding boggy areas)  
Locals would cut wood from fallen trees to burn and cut alder and hazel sticks.

Thinks holding back water on river has destroyed habitat-remembers nesting birds-Kingfisher, duck, Water rail and Coot. Also Water Vole. Remembers Bats, Woodcock and Snipe and occasional Otter-no mink. Old Saying “When Snipe Begin to Hum then Money begin to Coime” At the time when Snipe are drumming (early spring) it was then getting paid for peace work digging beet and cutting hay.

Never saw Deer until about 21 years ago when saw Roe and now many Muntjack. Says no longer hears or sees Song Thrush now but remembers them in his youth.

Bird nesting/egg collecting when young. Only took 1 egg and only collected 1 specimen per species. Always covered tracks to nests if near path. Eggs collected were Pigeon, Rook, Crow, Jackdaw and Magpie. All these species were shot and nests destroyed but any birds that did no harm were respected. (Asked about songbird eggs and said he did collect but couldn't seem to recall species) Said now no Estate/Game Keepers too many corvids and songbird nests predated.

### TRANSPORT/VEHICLES

BN village had only 4-5 cars. 1 small lorry owned by Cyril Crow a wood merchant (nickname Rooky-only had 1 eye-took kids swimming to Knettishall in van during summer-covered in 1<sup>st</sup> interview). Local dairyman Ted Andrews with Jersey Cows owned Austin 16 Saloon and his wife would load it up with milk to deliver to local villages.

Feels cars destroys villages as when walk/cycle stop and talk to others but they were very isolated.

Buses: every Friday 10.30 Hopton to Diss for market day; Saturday to thetford and buses to Norwich from Garboldisham pub-Fox. Otherwise walk and bike and have to carry what bought.

### SCHOOL/CHILDHOOD

BN school closed approx. 1950. Norfolk CC arranged bus for local children to get to North Lopham school. School had to have canteen built as too far to get home for lunch.

Village Hall built in 1950's Dances and Whist Drives held but nothing for children.

Valentines night local children would play pranks ie knocking on doors and tapping on windows using cotton and buttons. Only did it to houses where inhabitants fit enough to chase them-not the elderly.

Guyfawks night didn't buy fireworks. Used a treacle tin with hole in bottom made by banging in nail and putting in Calcium Carbide (used for cycle lamps) adding water(spit usually) and putting on lid and then lighting through hole and the lid would blow off down the road.

#### LOCAL BUISINESSES/HORSES

Village relied on horses for transport and agriculture. First tractor (Standard Ford) was around 1955.

Father ran the pub and had 4 +1/2 acres. He used to borrow tools, equipment and horses to work on his land from local farmer George Misen from Fen farm and would work on George's farm when required. On Michaelmas Day they would sit (with bottle of Scotch) and sum up costs of loan of stuff against payment for work to see if money was owed to whom.

Building business owned by Dick Smith and 4 sons. Had pony and cart to haul bricks, sand and cement for building work about 6-8 mile radius.

Carrier Harry Bryant with 4 wheel cart and pony would take peoples stuff such as chickens to auction.

Nunn family were Gypsies and had pony and trap. Lurcher dog would run under cart going off to chase and kill Hare. They made a living trading scrap metal and rags.

Mr Cross came to the pub in pony and trap and pony would take him home after while he was asleep, knowing its own way home.

Not everyone had a horse/pony-only those who had somewhere to graze it.

There was a Wheelwrights locally and a Blacksmith, Stanley Frances in Garboldisham.

About 4 people kept pigs and the pigs would be slaughtered at different times and meat shared out. Bacon made by mother-soak in treacle and saltpetre and smoke using oak sawdust in tin bath in chicken shed. Sawdust changed every day-very smoky job. Only boiled when meat near bone going green.

#### REED CUTTING/BURNING

Said Reeds cut late spring/early summer but later corrected that to late summer.

Remembers BN Fen along with Hinderclay, Thelneatham and Little Fen being burned. Done in early February by 2-3 men who made decision when to burn based on weather and wind etc. and before birds nesting. This destroyed small shrubs and stubble. He remembers thatchers from Harling called Reeves (thinks) who bought the reeds for thatching-not large amount but good quality. Burning practice stopped about 20 years ago.

Asked about his memories about areas of heathland but only memories of the fenland. Used to be Alder trees and meadow grass for grazing- believes now too many Osiers and Shrubs.