

Malcolm Baker's interview of 18th April 2012: summary

Born in Roydon, moved to Garboldisham or Garbisham as he prefers to call it (former is how posh people call the village) to the Ling for his father's job as a horseman then Head Horseman for the Laurie's.

Billy Baker was a local family on the Ling he was pig man on one of Laurie's farms.

He was at Garb school until 14, then went straight to work as a tractor driver/general farmworker on the Laurie's farm, Ling Farm.

He left to spend 2 years in Royal Air Force. Came back and was relief cowman for Laurie's. By then he was married and they lived at number 20 (the Ling).

Mother cooked lots of rabbit pies.

Once married they had a garden and grew all their vegetables.

Open fires using wood they were allowed to collect on Laurie's farms and coal.

Played football on meadow on the Ling, then played for several teams Carlton Football Club, and villages like Kenninghall.

He said Garboldisham has improved when they changed the direction of main road (A1066) cutting the village in half. Lost 2 pubs and shops and garage.

In school holidays in WW2 he watched planes taking off from Knettishall Heath. Lots of forces people about here then.

No memory of Garb Heath being ploughed. After the war it was ploughed. Royal Observer Corps post and shooting range and people used to go up and watch.

Fields made bigger, ponds filled in were main changes.

Celebrations harvest festivals held and may have gone to some.

Crops grown mostly cereals and sugar beet recently more rape and potatoes and just about everything else.

Farm animals: cows, pigs, not many sheep locally. Big cattle places. Most farms had cattle then. Theirs was last farm to get rid of horses in the area. Had 11 Pershore horses then dropped to 8 and 6, finally tractors took over. Dairy cattle mostly, some beef. Milk collected and taken to near Harford Bridge, Norwich for processing.

At harvest he helped with getting corn (cereals) in.

Changes in farming: tractors got bigger and workers decreased from 26 when he started to 6 when he left. Farmworkers houses let or sold.

Not noticed wildflowers, interested in wildlife plenty of wildlife on the farm. Plenty of rabbits, pigeon occasionally hares and crows (crow pies). Go shooting on 10th May every year and shoot the young crows and cut off the breast and make lovely pie.

Collected cobnuts in the woods, blackberries too and taken them to Lopham to a woman who bought them (and they may have gone off for jam making).

He always had a bicycle.

Woodland in valley: some on the Ling in the Park between the manor house and Ling Farm but that was all cut down and became agricultural land. Woods in valley not altered. Not remember any being cut down.

There was a pigeon day once a year and everybody spread out around the place to shoot them. Allowed to keep what you shot.

Never seen an otter or badger in the wild.

Little Ouse river he swam in pools towards Gasthorpe. Went fishing, lots of fish and put them all back. Where the cattle used to drink there were deep pools for swimming. Straightened the river later on but didn't go down once finished schooling.

Floods not connected with Ouse (word he says I couldn't catch possibly begins with an "s")

Fen he collected nothing. No peat digging or wood collected that he knew of. Only went down to fen when he was still at school.

Old Fen let out as allotments. Shooting rights came up at Parish Council, PC took tenders for that. Once set fire to fen but not sure if accidental or on purpose. Couldn't remember any cutting reed or sedge, nor drainage or ploughing of wet areas.

Birds: not seen snipe only seen duck, geese and pair of swans