

Interview with Norman Orves on 23rd August 2011 some notes from our conversation

Norman, officially named Ronald Norman Orves, was born at Bridge House, The Green, Redgrave on 16th Sept 1931. The house was situated on the edge of the green. He lived here until Easter 1977 when the house was sold. Later he bought it and moved back with his family. Since then he built a house near his pigs and chickens on land at Rectory Green.

Norman had to work hard every day as a child with gardening duties (they had an acre of garden) and selling surplus vegetables and fruit in Rickingham/ Botesdale from a pony and trap. There was no time for games. After church on Sundays, the family collected their loaf of bread and went home to work. His mother baked 27 loaves a week for the family (9 loaves a time, together with rolls and other baked food). He went to the village school and left in summer 1943. When he left school he started as cowman at Holiday Farm Hinderclay for 15 years. There were about 28 cows and they had to be milked by hand twice a day so he walked to Hinderclay at 5am to do the early milking and back again for the afternoon shift seven days a week.

He recalls the Little Ouse being sparkling clear with water at its source and watercress all along the river to Hinderclay Fen and maybe further though he didn't pick it further downstream. The banks on each side were clear of trees and undergrowth by at least 8 feet so no overhanging branches and dark shadowy areas. The river was dug and kept clear by 5 or 6 men regularly digging it out and moving the soil away from the banks. This work stopped in the 2WW. Everyone collected sedge, reed and wood if they needed it for thatching or firewood. Norman's family was lucky that one of his brothers has a job on the Redgrave estate and they were allowed dead wood which they collected by cart. Never paid for firewood. This meant the fens and Little Ouse looked so different from today as there was no wilderness and overgrown areas.

Sarah Day

30th August 2011