

DERSINGHAM 2000 HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW 17

Date interview conducted: 15th September 1998

Name: Malcolm Nurse

When did you first come to Dersingham?

January 1938. Most of my life I have been here.

Where do you live now?

Glebe Close

Do other members of your family live in Dersingham?

My daughter still lives in the village. I have an aunt live in the village.

What are your earliest memories of the village?

We used to live in Glebe Road. My earliest memory is having to walk to school in the morning. I was five. The teachers were Miss Hudson; we used to call Polly, used to live at Heacham. She used to cycle down here. She was very manly in her ways. Always wore a shirt and neck tie. Miss Robertson was in the next class. Miss Cook she was later. Mrs. Boyce, then Mrs. Barker. Mr. Mason Jones was the headmaster. I stayed there until I was 11. Took the scholarship; I passed the scholarship but I failed the interview for King Edward's so my mother got me into Gaywood Park.

I was very happy at school. I can remember getting a clip round the ear many a time from Mr. Mason Jones. Miss Hudson, even in the primary class I've had a slap around the ear. I don't agree with slapping around the head. I had the cane many a time at Gaywood Park; it did not do any harm. We use to play different masters up. We knew which masters to play up.

We use to wander all over the village, up the common, up the sand pit, we used to go bird nesting. We use to take food up the sand pits and we light a little fire and cook an egg in a Mansion Polish tin. The sand pits were where the roundabout is now.

The Floods, I was in the R.A.F. at the time and I was home for the weekend. There was a terrific gale blowing on that Saturday and we went to Hunstanton to the pictures and we caught the half past ten bus home. The conductor on the bus said that the Fleet in Lynn, which was the bus station was under water. That was the first we knew about it. The next morning I can remember, my stepfather brought me and my sister a cup of tea in bed. He looked out of the

window straight across the marsh and said, “*Whatever’s all that water.*” The phone rang and he was a special constable at the time and they asked him to go on duty down at the station as people were pilfering stuff that was being washed up from the bungalows on Snettisham Beach. I knew some of the people. There were people living down there permanently in those days. I had a friend down there was drowned. He got a medal for bravery because he went back to get people out. He was drowned. I went back that Sunday night to my camp at North Pickenham and on the Monday morning we were sent down to Canvey Island to relieve the floods there. But they didn’t need us so we spent the next fortnight on Tilbury Docks filling up sand bags.

We used to use the railway a lot. My wife’s mother lived at Hunstanton and we used to put the pram on the train every week. The closure affected the village quite dramatically. The holiday makers used the village. If people went on holiday they did not have the cars in those days so everybody used the train. You could get a direct train Hunstanton to London. I think this line could be tourist attraction. The line has been built over at Heacham.

Have you belonged to any clubs or organisations in the village?

I belonged to the scouts. I went to Sunday School at the Methodist Church. When we first joined the scouts Mr. Fisher was Scout Master. He used to have the fish and chip shop on the main road. He ran it during the war while his son was in the forces, then his son took over after the war. George Franklin was assistant master. When they went away Cliff Riches, the postman, he took over. My first recollection of camp was we went to Sedgeford for camp by the church. We had to push a car trailer loaded with stuff all the way to Sedgeford. It poured with rain all the way home. We were happier and more contented than the young today; we went out and done our own thing, we made our own entertainment, we wandered all over. Our parents did not think anything wrong. Today you dare not let your children go up on the common.

I went to the church in Chapel Road. My daughter was christened there. There were the two chapels. They had the same preachers going to the chapels. We had big Sunday Schools. It was the done thing. Today people don’t seem to bother. People have to work these days. Every one wants more. Things have gone up in price. Life for my mother was very hard. My mother had to get up on a Monday, it was wash day, light the copper to heat the water. It was a day’s work to do the washing in those days. They had the big mangle. Everything had to be hung out.

Very few people had a car.

What was the most important day you have ever spent in the village?

I don't know. One of the best days in recent years was when we achieved the opening of the by-pass. The traffic in those days was horrendous coming through the village. It took you a quarter of an hour or twenty minutes to cross the road; weekends especially. I can remember the policeman who stood on the corner. My step father used to stand on the corner as a special. Mr Rix and Mr. Wells. The first policeman I remember was early part of the war, a Mr. Hall. He was a retired policeman but came back when others had been called up. I was going to Sunday School and my mother said to me, "*When you go up the road, you go as far as the corner and you wait for Mr. Hall to cross the road.*" Being a kid I thought I could get across all right so I dashed across and there was a car coming. It very nearly got me. Mr. Hall gave a clip on the ear. We are going back to the war years and there wasn't that much traffic apart from military traffic. The last 10 to 15 years before the by-pass the traffic was the worst. The by- pass, so I've been told, was first talked about in 1928.

What was the worst time you remember?

The floods; though they didn't affect Dersingham as such, the water came up as far as the station.

I haven't had a bad time. I've enjoyed my time in Dersingham.

Would you explain about your work on the Council

I've been on the Parish Council since 1966. The sports pavilion on The Pastures was quite a big project. I represented the council on the fund raising committee. We just had a wooden hut on the pastures at the time. It was for the cricket and football. We had fetes and various functions and the money rolled in. The village really wanted it. There were more people in the village who helped with village functions. Today, I feel, we are more of a commuter village for Lynn. Some people come in and are a good help to the village. Whatever committee you go to it is the same people all the time. We have a lot of retired people moving onto the village. On the Mountbatten Estate and Centre Vale Estate 75 percent are retired people. It's such a nice village to live in. It's handy for the sea-side, and handy for King's Lynn the shops and yet it's quiet. We have a certain amount of vandalism but not as much as some villages get. We get reports on the council of youths coming into the village from other places. We get regular complaints about footpaths and street lighting but we don't have anything really out of the way.

We can't give people planning permission that comes from King's Lynn. Certain plans go against us. We get all the plans if there is any building to be done in the village. We can recommend but sometimes they take no notice. We are over-ruled; for instance the flats opposite Bowdens. The Parish Council

fought to stop those being built. That was a lovely open meadow. They wanted to build on the whole field but in the end we fought that. But we had to compromise and allow them to build on one side. The builder made a good job. The field was a bit of a mess at times; it wasn't cut.

The new building opposite The Coach and Horses; when I first came here it was a butchers, a Mr. Lines had it. The house was built sideways on. The shop was in the front opposite the pub. He committed suicide during the war. He had problems with the Ministry of Food.

I left school in 1948 and Mr. Riches, Cliff Riches brother, he had a wet fish shop there. I went to work there as an errand boy. There was a dairy at the side that Sankey and Wright of Hunstanton had. Then Jimmy Riches of White Horse Drive and Mr. Gilbert of Bank Road took the dairy over. It was an antique shop. He died quite young. It became run down. The barn has been developed and two houses.

Next to the Old Hall the cottage was bought by a doctor. He's having the house demolished. A bungalow is being built there.

We fought against the building opposite the church. We did not want that there. A German named Jannoch used to live there. He was an expert in Lily of the Valley. The gardens at the back were beautiful. The troops were there during the war. The Canadians were there. I don't know who owned it at that time. There were one or two flats upstairs in the Hall. Jean and Eric Riches lived there when they first got married. Phyllis Jerry lived there. She always wore a cap and wellingtons. They owned it in the latter time. Phyllis was a Kirkland they owned the outfitters in Norfolk Street in Lynn, where Spoils is now. Her husband owned the Hall - Joe Jarretty(?). They had a club house at the back. We had a scout hut in the grounds there.

The Oaks in Chapel Road was a beautiful house owned by Mr. Lloyd Pratt. It is still a mystery what happened to that house. They were refused planning permission to build on that field. The son owned the house then. He wanted to build on the back but he was refused planning permission because there was no entry onto the field. Next thing we knew it went up in smoke. The day it went up in smoke he had been in the village. He had moved to South Africa. He was murdered in South Africa.

I opposed the supermarket. I did not think we needed it. I think it is an eyesore. The Dun Cow was a lovely building.

What are the biggest changes you have seen in the village?

The enormous growth.

The drop in the traffic with the by-pass.

What does the Millennium mean to you?

I have not thought that much about the Millennium. It's just another year. I don't see what all the fuss is about. I don't think the amount of money being spent in some of these places is worthwhile.

The village Hall; the main problem here is apathy. Some of the smaller villages have raised thousands of pounds and built village halls. I would like to see a modern hall. The position is difficult. The only place I can see is the Pastures.