George Angus plus one short section with Julie Angus

**Short summary of subjects covered**

Born 1941, Thetford. Swimming in the river, Bridge Tavern, Barnham, river baths, polio scare and new pool. Two Mile Bottom swim. Belly tanks boats. Fishing with jam jars at iron bridges. Well Street. Julie paddling in the hot water from the Cannery factory, colours of the water. While mayors officer, finding and installing the Prince of Wales Bridge for his visit to celebrate 800 years of mayoralty in Thetford.

Interview 3 May 2022, interviewer Imogen Radford

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**Key:**

**Interviewer – Imogen Radford - IR**

Respondent – George Angus - GA

[00:00:00]

**IR: My name is Imogen. Imogen Radford, and I’m here with George, so would you tell me your name again?**

GA: George Angus.

**IR: Okay, thanks for coming. So, I’ll just ask you a couple of things. Could you tell me the year of your birth?**

GA: 1941.

**IR: Okay, and your occupation when you were working?**

GA: Carpenter, basically.

**IR: And you worked for Thetford Council?**

GA: In the finish, yes. My last job, yes. I finished up as Maintenance Supervisor, Cemetery Superintendent and Mayor’s Officer.

**IR: Okay. So, we’re mainly talking about memories of the river. So, would you like to tell me a little bit about some of your memories, perhaps starting with some of the earliest ones? Just before that, did you live in Thetford?**

GA: Yes, I did. Yes. Yeah. I was born in Castle Street, just around the corner, and my first memories are in the Bridge Tavern, because we lived in Castle Street that was just up the road. My father was away during the war and my mother used to take me and my sister swimming…or paddling in the Bridge Tavern. That’s my earliest memories.

**IR: And where is that?**

GA: That’s just past the Castle Hill. Are you familiar with the Castle Hill?

**IR: I know where the Castle Hill is.**

GA: Straight past the Castle Hill and it’s on the big… there’s a big roundabout there now, where the 1066 goes off. Close by there.

**IR: And then there’s that little paddling area, isn’t there? It’s quite shallow, by the bridge, by the old bridge?**

GA: That is Bridge Tavern, yes.

**IR: And you call that Bridge Tavern?**

GA: Yes.

**IR: Ah, I didn’t know its name. Okay. And what sort of age were you then?**

GA: Well, I left Castle Street when I was about four and a half, so I must have been three or four then, but I do definitely remember being in there.

**IR: And did you enjoy that?**

GA: Oh, I loved it, yes. I always loved the water, yeah.

**IR: And what did you do, just paddle about?**

GA: Paddle about, and I can remember my mother…further down where the bypass is now, there was a railway bridge that went from Thetford to Bury, and just past that the river was much deeper. And I can remember being down there and her trying to teach me to swim. That’s my earliest recall. And then, after that we moved up to Bury Road and used the Barnham river.

**IR: Oh right, on the common?**

GA: On the common, yes. It was very deep in those days. You could actually dive off the bank and swim. Now, it’s about six inches deep.

**IR: And that’s the same place that now it’s much shallower?**

GA: Shallower, yes. Yes.

**IR: So, did everyone go there?**

GA: Everybody, yes. Yeah. During the school holidays that’s where everybody went. The whole families took their picnics and spent the whole day up there. Yes, yeah.

**IR: Lovely. So, people would dive in?**

GA: Yes.

**IR: Did you do that?**

GA: I did in the finish, yes. Yeah.

**IR: When you were little bit older maybe, a bit more confident. Could you swim by then?**

GA: Yes, I could. I can’t remember when I couldn’t swim. I just can’t. Even down the bathing sheds, when we used to go down there, I can’t remember not being able to swim.

**IR: But you remember your mum teaching you down by the, what did you call the place, sorry?**

GA: Bridge Tavern. Just downstream, towards Kilverstone at the Bridge Tavern, yes. Yeah.

[00:03:23]

**IR: Lovely. So, tell me a bit more about the bathing sheds and what was it like there?**

GA: It was lovely. It was very deep in those days. There was a shallow end and there was, I think it was about 50 yards long, I’m not certain of the length though. And going upstream towards Bury St. Edmund’s it got deeper, and deeper, and deeper. And at the far end was a three-stage diving board, and a springboard. But the bottom was very, very muddy and if you were the first one in that day, the water was lovely and clear. But if you have to follow that, there was mud everywhere. But we just accepted that, and the changing rooms were a row of wooden huts. First was the superintendent’s shed where you paid your threepence to get in and then, there was a row of single cubicles for the ladies. Then, a communal one, a long one, then past that there was a communal one for the gents, and then single ones. And the funny thing is at the very, very far end of the river going towards Bury St. Edmund’s was the gent’s toilet. And behind the gent’s toilet was a little stream where people would use the toilet, it would go into the stream, and the stream would then run past.

**IR: They kept things basic in those days, didn’t they? And where was the ladies’ toilets? Perhaps you didn’t need to know that.**

GA: I can’t remember.

**IR: Did they have one?**

GA: I can’t honestly remember, can you? Never used them, you see. But on the other side of the river was very, very sandy. It was rather like the beach and it’s where a lot of families in those days, you could get down there, and a lot of families would picnic in that area, and then slip across through the sand and go into the bathing sheds for nothing. It was always lovely and sandy there. In one of those photographs, you can see us running, and that was pure sand.

**IR: We haven’t got them to hand because someone is going to copy them for us, so I was going to go through them after, but we’ll have to do that separately. But yes, so your photo that you kindly let us take a copy of shows some children, including you, playing and that’s on the sandy side isn’t it?**

GA: On the sandy side, yes.

**IR: And you were telling me that that was a photographer set up?**

GA: Yes, it was. Yes.

**IR: To pose people really.**

GA: That’s how we enjoyed ourselves.

**IR: It was a natural thing, but posed for the photo, but it’s what you would normally be doing. And you haven’t got the photo to hand, can you remember who is in it?**

GA: Yes. The boy in the front is a boy I went to school with, Jeffery McDonald. And then, there’s myself. The other smaller children I’m not certain about, but the girl there standing is Margaret Scoff, and the boy standing on the banks is a boy called Peter Swinger, and see, he’s got a water pistol in his hand.

**IR: Was that something you all did have, water pistols?**

GA: Yeah.

**IR: That must have been fun.**

GA: Yeah. All toys were mechanical.

**IR: Very simple, yeah. so, that’s what you did, you would play on the sandy side, and you would go on the other side. And would you dive? Would you dive as well?**

GA: I would try and dive, but I think they call it belly flops. I love swimming, I love swimming underwater, and surface swimming, but I wasn’t very good at diving. But I used to jump off the boards more than anything.

**IR: Was that very popular?**

GA: Very popular, yes. Yeah. As you would jump in, you’d hold your knees up.

**IR: Make a big splash.**

GA: Certainly, yeah. I think they call it bombing nowadays.

**IR: Yes, on those posters, no bombing. In the swimming pools, in the indoor swimming pools. And was that…there was a superintendent, so was that person keeping an eye on what you were all up to?**

GA: On everyone, yes. He would take the temperature in the morning and write it on a big blackboard, the temperature of the water. And he was there just to oversee things, yes.

**IR: And what was the temperature, do you remember? What sort of temperature was it?**

GA: I do remember going in at 42 degrees. That’s the only one I can really remember, and it was cold.

**IR: You definitely remember it being cold?**

GA: Cold, yes.

**IR: And did the superintendent make sure you behaved yourselves and that you were safe?**

GA: Yes. It was in the days when Thetford was very small, a population of about 5000, four and a half to 5000, and everybody knew everybody. And I know your dad, so you did behave. Yeah. I’m trying to think of the man’s name. The little man, he lived in a small cottage on Bury Road. He was the first one. But the last one I really remember was Mr Lockwood, Percy Lockwood.

**IR: And you mentioned with the other photo, which I don’t know if you remember everyone who’s on that, but you mentioned some children called Lockwood on there.**

GA: Yes, there was. A different family.

**IR: Different family?**

GA: Yes.

**IR: Okay. And you were telling me earlier about when you were at school and you would go to the pool, and you were saying you had an option between doing lessons or going to the pool.**

GA: I can’t remember saying that.

**IR: Oh, sorry. Was that your colleague? We’ll take that bit out. That was my memory.**

GA: I can’t remember the option, but we would go down for so-called swimming lessons, and we would get certificates. If you could swim 10 yards, 25 yards, and that. And it’s so funny, it’s only a little while ago I burnt all mine, you know when you have a clear out and think somebody’s got to clear these up one day. And I went through all the papers, and I threw them all away. I threw all my swimming certificates away.

**IR: That’s a shame. But you have to, yeah. You have to. But you remember it well?**

GA: Oh, I do remember it very, very well. Yes.

**IR: And you were obviously quite a good swimmer because you could always swim by the sounds of things you loved it. So, you always got all your certificates?**

GA: Yeah.

**IR: And what was it like going down from the school? Did everybody, sort of, troop down?**

GA: We’d troop down, yes, in crocodile fashion, yes, no buses or nothing.

**IR: And did people enjoy it on the whole?**

GA: I mean, generally yes, yeah, because that was the days where there weren’t too many facilities in the town, and to go swimming was a treat.

**IR: And it was threepence to go in you said, threepence to go in?**

GA: Threepence, yes.

**IR: Was that regarded as quite a lot at the time or how did that weigh up against?**

GA: I suppose it was, yes. Yes. It was threepence to go to the cinema and threepence to go swimming.

**IR: But some people went in on the other side without paying. But then of course, they didn’t get to use the changing rooms or the diving board?**

GA: You could use the diving board and everything, but you couldn’t use the changing facilities.

**IR: Right. And the superintendent would probably see people doing that? Did he tell them off?**

GA: I couldn’t honestly tell you; I can’t remember.

[00:10:31]

**IR: Yeah, so anything else you can remember about the swimming baths?**

GA: No. In later life, when I became a little bit older, I can remember going down there after a night in the pub and climbing over the fence and going skinny dipping in there with a crowd of us. But after that I didn’t. I stopped using it then, and it’s gradually silted up, and silted up, and it’s not swimmable nowadays.

**IR: No, it’s definitely muddy now, isn’t it? Yeah.**

GA: Yeah. And then, of course, that would be about 1960 they started trying to build an indoor swimming pool in Thetford, and I was one of the first collectors for the money. We used to have a shilling a week, and then there would be a draw, and the person would get, say, £25 or something like that. And I was one of the first collectors for the indoor swimming pool.

**IR: Right, who organised that?**

GA: I think I was 19 then or something.

**IR: Who organised that?**

GA: Can you remember his name? Tom Smith. A man called Tom Smith, yes.

**IR: And how did that come about?**

GA: And a man called Phillip Gunton was another one. Yes.

**IR: Okay. How did that come about, this idea to set up an indoor pool? Do you remember?**

GA: Because the facilities of the old swimming pool weren’t good at all. It was the time of when polio was about, and people were very concerned about that, and that was very. It took an awful long, long time to materialise, but it did in the finish and Thetford has got a wonderful swimming pool now. But there’s nothing like swimming in the river.

**IR: Yeah, no that’s right. So, that’s an interesting transition from you really enjoying being in there when you were young, getting over the fence when you were a bit older, and then things declined with the river baths. And then, you were involved in trying to get the new pool up, which took quite a long time. I’m interested to hear a bit more about this fear about the polio at the time. When was that?**

GA: That would be late 50s, yes.

**IR: I’m aware that that was a problem, yeah.**

GA: I think it’s always been a problem, but the cleanliness of the water was not good at all, and I think what brought it a lot to a head with the younger group. One of the famous footballers caught polio in the 50s and I think that pushed everybody to be much more aware of this, which probably wouldn’t have bothered, but somebody in the limelight caught polio.

**IR: Was it a local or a national person? A national figure that everybody knew?**

GA: Yes.

**IR: Yeah. I see, that’s interesting. I didn’t know that. So, have you yourself swum in the pool? The heated pool?**

GA: Oh yes, yes. I don’t swim very much these days, but when the grandchildren come, that’s the first thing. I have to take them to Thetford swimming pool. And I’m saying this for Thetford, they live just outside Bolton, and they’ve got all the facilities there, but there’s nothing like Thetford swimming pool. They love it. And they both swim like little fishes. I’m afraid, I’d get in with them but these days I haven’t got the puff. I love swimming in the sea, but I don’t do very much of that of course these days.

**IR: And in your earlier days, obviously you swam in the river, but did you go anywhere else to swim? Did you?**

GA: I can remember going to Bury St. Edmund’s swimming pool and I was sick as a dog because of the chlorine in the water.

**IR: So, you’ve always enjoyed the river more?**

GA: The river, yes. Yes.

[00:14:41]

**IR: And have you been anywhere else in the rivers, in the outdoor places at all in the area, or anywhere else for that matter?**

GA: This is on record, isn’t it?

**IR: It can be taken out later.**

GA: I was working for a company called RG Carter’s in Norwich, they had a depot in Thetford, and I was down at Two Mile Bottom there’s a big picnic site, repairing a big bridge. One Saturday morning I was working down there and there wasn’t a soul about, and I looked around, I said sod it and I had a swim in the river. And that’s the last time.

**IR: Oh, is it really?**

GA: And how long would that be? 1980-ish. I was quite…old enough to know better, but that was my last swim in the river.

**IR: There was nobody about though.**

GA: Not a soul about, no.

**IR: Whereabouts is the bridge there, then? Is that the footbridge or?**

GA: It was a footbridge, yes.

**IR: Were you working on that?**

GA: Yes, I was repairing it. Yes, yes in my carpenter days.

**IR: How old is that bridge then? Is it the current one now, or is that an earlier one?**

GA: This one would be a later one because it’s all made of timber. There are one of two regional bridges, but this was a footbridge just connecting one side of the bank to the other, and over the years it had become rotten, so I was working on it. So, I had to jack it out of the water and repair it, and I must say one Saturday morning I said sod it.

**IR: And was it quite deep?**

GA: No.

**IR: Quite shallow there now, isn’t it? Yeah. And have you noticed, I don’t know if you noticed, there’s…you can see some really old foundations under the water, maybe when it’s very low. I don’t know if you noticed that when you were repairing it?**

GA: No, I didn’t. No.

**IR: You can see it…I don’t know which summer it was, one summer when it was very low, you could see these old square things that somebody told me was the old bridge. But you might not have seen that.**

GA: No, no, this was more near the picnic site area, the village.

**IR: Okay, yes. So, is that where Two Mile Bottom…where the scout place is now?**

GA: Just before that. From Thetford well before that.

**IR: Oh, before that?**

GA: Yes.

**IR: Because there’s a power station, isn’t there?**

GA: Right near the power station.

**IR: Near the power station? So, was there a grassy picnic area there?**

GA: Yes, yeah. Just fractionally before the power station, there is a crossing across the railway, and that was again, a huge picnic area. But I think in later years the motorcyclists have taken it over and, sort of, chewed it up a little bit. But I haven’t been down myself. I’ve just been told. But the bridge I was talking about was just past that.

**IR: Okay. Yes, I’ve heard people talking about Two Mile Bottom, but I wasn’t sure exactly where they used to go because it’s not very easy now, there’s a lot of nettles and things by the river.**

GA: I wouldn’t know.

**IR: You’ve not been recently?**

GA: No.

**IR: Anyway, sorry.**

GA: There was a family called the Ellis’ and they used to spend their whole summer holidays down there. I don’t know if you’ve heard of this. And they had an old wagon down there, and they would go down and live the whole summer down there and take it in turns to go into Thetford to get provisions. And I think the father used to go off to work, but they’d spend their whole summertime. They were called the Ellis’, there are still some about.

**IR: Oh, really? I’ll have to talk to them. I need to hear about that. So, people live there like the Ellis’, but did other people camp there and?**

GA: Yes, they did. Yes.

**IR: Did you know anyone who did that?**

GA: I’ve spent one night there with a friend, but that’s all.

**IR: What was that like?**

GA: Yeah, neither of us slept a wink all night. Neither of us got to sleep all night long. Very eerie.

**IR: Did you have a swim as well when you were there?**

GA: Oh yes, yes. And before they put the…there’s a big bore hole beside this heath, and before they put that in, there was all natural springs all the way along the riverbed, and people sunk tanks in. and the crystal-clear water come up, and that was used for drinking. But since they put the bore hole in, it’s stopped the natural springs. It’s taken all the water from the reservoirs. Yeah.

**IR: Oh, I didn’t know that. Where’s the bore holes, do you know?**

GA: Yes. It’s just before the power station, as you go downhill, on your left-hand side there’s a level crossing, down there and it’s on your left-hand side.

**IR: Is that this side of the power station, the Thetford side of the power station?**

GA: Yes, yeah.

**IR: Okay, yeah. Did you have watercress?**

GA: I didn’t, but Julie…her father used to bring it home.

**IR: It must have been very clean the water, then. To have watercress. How lovely.**

GA: Has a lovely iron taste, doesn’t it?

**IR: Yeah. And because you went to the swimming baths in Thetford, did you go anywhere else, like to the Number One Weir, or anywhere else in Thetford?**

GA: I didn’t. No because that was on the other side of town to me. I believe, you’re not speaking, but Julia went down there, my wife did. She lived on that side of the town.

**IR: Yes, it’s more like some people went down one side, and some people went down the other depending on where you were. Yes, okay. That’s really interesting, thank you.**

[00:20:00]

 **Any other memories to do with swimming or other activities in the river? Did you do anything else like boating, or fishing, or anything else?**

GA: Yes, we did.

**IR: Did you?**

GA: Yes. We had what they called belly tanks. And they were the fuel tank off of the planes during the war, and once they were empty, they’d get us some and we got these, like a bomb to look at. You join two together, cut a square out to sit in, and use them as boats.

**IR: How big were they about?**

GA: Oh, blimey. They’d be nearly as long as this room. Huge things, yes.

**IR: Oh, right. About three metres or something?**

GA: Probably, I’d say two metres long. And cut a square out for us to get in, and join two together, so it’s parallel. Wonderful. Yes, yeah.

**IR: And did you do that by the bars or round that way?**

GA: No. That was more near the coffee mill, which is, where are we now? Yeah, just here. Yes.

**IR: Was that deeper maybe?**

GA: Yes, that was deeper, yeah.

**IR: More space to do that.**

GA: Yes. And there was a place, it’s all gone now, but there was a building that went out…it was built on stilts, and it went over the river, and we’d keep our boats underneath this.

**IR: That’s great, yes. Would a few of you do that?**

GA: It’s roughly where the little kiosk is with the tea, that was there. Just there.

**IR: Oh right, there was a building there, was there?**

GA: And in some of the photographs you’ll see this. And it was built on stilts out in the water, underneath was.

**IR: Right. So, you could just leave them there and then, come back and pick them up. You didn’t just leave them there.**

GA: No, no. You’d tie them up and yeah.

**IR: Oh, well that sounds great fun. And a few of you did that?**

GA: Yes, especially after the war. There was an abundance.

**IR: Anything else? Did you fish at all yourself or?**

GA: Not really, no. I think, no because once you start work and you, sort of, grow up a little bit, you drift away from things. I still loved swimming and to this day I still love swimming.

[00:22:04]

**IR: You showed me, well, we’re taking a copy of your other photo, a nice big photo that’s got you and some other children with the jam jars.**

GA: Oh, jam jars. That’s right.

**IR: Tell me a bit about that?**

GA: At the Iron Bridges it was always nice and shallow, but very clear water because it ran very fast. And there was hundreds of little tiddlers and we’d go down with our jam jars with a piece of string round it. We had a jam jar that has a neck on it, tie the string around there and you’d throw it. You had to be very careful because if you threw it in too hard, it would hit the bottom and break. And you got in the stream, and you’d wait for a tiddler to come and pull it out, take it home. The poor things never survived.

**IR: Did you put them in a bowl at home?**

GA: Yes, that’s right. They never survived at all.

**IR: But great fun. And did people sometimes break their jars?**

GA: Oh yes, they did. Yes. And then, of course, people would go in paddling and cut all their feet. That was a regular thing, cut feet, yes.

**IR: And I know you haven’t got the photo in front of you. Do you remember who is in that photo?**

GA: Some of them, yes. Yes.

**IR: Do you want to tell me, even though you haven’t got it in front of you.**

GA: I can’t remember the first two on the left. I’m there with my head bending down and the only way I can recognise myself, I’ve got a fair isle pullover on, tank top I think.

**IR: And you’ve also got long trousers, haven’t you?**

GA: Yes.

**IR: Does that tell you how old you are?**

GA: I must be about 13. I think it was before that, but I probably went in long trousers at 13-ish. Next to me is a boy called Alfie Boast, he now lives in Hitchin. A great friend for life, really. And there’s one or two of those boys I went to school with, John Gates there, his mother and father kept theTrowel & Hammer pub. Colin Stevenson, some Lockwoods. Without seeing it now I can’t bring them all to mind. Obviously, Malcom Jermy is on there.

**IR: Oh yes, he’s the small boy, wasn’t he?**

GA: Yes, very small. That’s right, yeah.

**IR: And you and your friend know or knew him well?**

GA: Yes, yeah.

**IR: So, yeah. All sorts of things. It sounds to me like you did all sorts of different things. You did the fishing for tiddlers, you did the paddling, you did the swimming, you did the jumping, the boating, all sorts of things. And in different places as well, by the coffee mill, by the iron bridges, by the baths. And yeah, and Two Mile Bottom you mentioned as well.**

GA: Just a one-off that was.

**IR: Just a one-off. A one-off can be very memorable.**

GA: Yeah. I do honestly remember that as though it was yesterday.

**IR: And you enjoyed it?**

GA: I did. I loved every minute. I just went up the river and down it, and that was it. Blimey, I was married with children there. That would be about 1980, so I’d be 40-ish.

[00:25:05]

**IR: That’s alright, nobody will mind. And you were just, one other thing you were mentioning to me as we walked over about the well. Tell me about the well? I know this is not really to do with the river, but you were telling me about a well by Well Street?**

GA: Yes. Before our wonderful overspill when they wrecked the town, there was a row of flint cottages all down there, and the back was all fed…the water was all fed by this well. And when I finished up working for the council, one day they had gone right in, and they went to have a look and took the slabs away, and found it was the well. So, they filled it in as much as they could and put reinforcing across, put the slabs on, but I can see it’s sinking now. but there’s certainly a well there. Whether that’s where Well Street got its name from, I do not know.

**IR: So, there used to be…where it is now, it’s sort of, on a little island, isn’t it really? And the houses used to be there?**

GA: Yes. All the way from the Red Lion, the stables. The first house was the foreman’s house of the old borough council, a lovely big house. Julie’s grandfather lived there. And then, from there onwards it was right to the bottom, to outside the library was a row of cottages. And then, from that corner to the bottom of Cage Lane, all cottages. And then, there was a chapel. I’m trying to think of what they were called now. Quakers. Quakers chapel there as well, and that was before the Carnegie Room was built.

**IR: Right, very different. So, the well served all those houses?**

GA: It must have served all these, yeah. He was the foreman, wasn’t he? He was the foreman of the council, so he had a tap. Well, of course, I can’t ever remember anybody using a well in Thetford, but that was the days when they did. Yeah.

**IR: So, maybe when we go back to the library there’s some old maps. I don’t know how long ago that was, but we can have a look on those maps and see if the cottages are still there.**

GA: Oh, I should think so. Yes.

**IR: That would be interesting.**

GA: When the overspill came, late 50s, the Carnegie was…I’ve got a photograph of it opening. So, that would be mid to late 50s when they were.

**IR: Oh yes, that will probably show on those old maps.**

GA: And on the other side of the road, Julie likes art, and she’s done a pencil drawing of Well Street as it was. And that is really good. And down there was a wonderful little sweet shop, there was a dentist, various houses and right at the bottom was a hotel that was a temperance hotel called The Melbourne Hotel. But it was temperance, no alcohol. And then, round the corner from that heading towards Tanner Street where the testing station is for COVID, all flint cottages all the way down there. And they knocked them all down in the name of progress, and what do they put? Concrete boxes. You can’t change things, can you?

**IR: Things change. It’s true, yeah. Yeah.**

GA: You’re obviously not from this area, but I would love for you to have seen Thetford as it was before they knocked its guts out. Yeah.

**IR: Yeah, it would be nice to see your drawing, if we may? I’d love to see that and maybe there will be some other old photos we’ll see as well. Or they might be…**

GA: Yes. Are you here for a bit then? Are you here for?

**IR: We’re here today until one, and then we can also make an arrangement to meet again later if you like.**

GA: You can bring your drawing in.

**IR: We can arrange another day maybe when we can meet up. That would be good. Thank you so much for bringing things. So, before we finish then, is there any other memories that are of interest? So, any tales. Anything to do with river or any other waters that spring to mind?**

GA: Not really, not just off the cuff. But probably I shall get home and…no, as I said, my first memories were the Bridge Tavern, and then Barnham River. As a family we spent a lot of time on the river. Then swimming baths, and that’s truly it.

**IR: Thank you. It’s a life of swimming and love of the river.**

GA: I’m not the greatest of swimmers, but I just love it. The children enjoyed it and my grandchildren love it.

**IR: Yes, that’s wonderful to hear.**

GA: We go to Greece every year, and we go to Rhodes, and I just love that Mediterranean.

**IR: Oh, it’s warm there. Yeah.**

[00:30:02]

IR:Was it you that was telling us, Julie, about the hot spring, sorry no the hot thing from the factory?

JA: From the Canning factory

IR:Would you mind telling me that?

JA: There used to be this little culvert, and on a winters day when there was snow, and they used to let this stuff out, peas, bean, the smell would be strong, and we used to paddle in this culvert, and it was really hot so you warmed your feet up, but by the time you dressed again you were frozen.

IR: So you’d be there and you’d take your shoes and socks off and put them on the side, and…

JA: …foot of snow, paddle.

[00:30:43]

GA: It’s wonderful. And the colour of the water, would be all coloured depending on what they were canning that day. If it was beetroot, then it would be red. Peas, then it would be green. Well, not green, green-ish. Khaki. Yeah.

**IR: Carrots. What colour was it for carrots, orange?**

GA: Yeah.

**IR: And did that go into the river then?**

GA: Yes, yeah. But saying that, it couldn’t have been that polluted because the abundance of fish in that stretch of river from the Town Bridge towards the stanch was abundant with fish, and they would have big fishing contests, and I think they would call them pegs. Every so often, they would have a peg, and fishing contests, everything down there. So, the water couldn’t have been that bad.

**IR: Just an interesting colour and an interesting smell from the factory as well.**

GA: I did all of my skinny dipping in there.

**IR: That’s good. I liked that story, I liked it. Where are we?**

GA: I don’t think I’ve told many people that.

[00:31:51]

**IR: You have now. Tell me about the photographs you kindly agreed to let us copy, which is about the Prince of Wales bridge.**

GA: Yes. There was a scheme to link one side of the river to the other, and I went out with the deputy town clerk at the time to a place near Downham Market, and we found this big iron…it was a flyover bridge off a motorway. It was in a county council yard, which I would imagine was Norfolk County Council yard. And we measured it up, and it seemed to suit. Came back to Thetford, me and a work mate, we measured across the river and found it would fit. And then, we were involved with the process of putting all the foundations in for it, and the bridge was in a field we found it, it was stripped all the paintwork off over there and painted up.

 And the day they came to…they brought it by crane to lift it into position, I had to go out with the mayor. So, I gave my camera to the deputy town clerk, and he took the photographs for me. But there was a lovely feeling to be involved from seeing it in a field, all overgrown, to seeing it in position like it is. And that was put in there in 1999 for the visit of Prince Charles. He came to Thetford to celebrate 800 years of mayoralty in Thetford. We accept that we are the third oldest mayoral town in the country, but a lot of places think we are the oldest. London and Winchester are before us, but there are some thoughts that we are the oldest mayoralty in the country. Certainly, we had a mayor in 1199.

**IR: Wow. If not the oldest, certainly in the top three.**

GA: Yeah. And I had the privilege of being Mayor’s Officer for the years I worked for the council, and carried the sword in front of the mayor, and took him different places. Very, very interesting. Yeah.

**IR: And just one small thing about that, you told me earlier was about the way you measured the river at Thetford, how was that?**

GA: We got a piece of string with a brick on the end and threw it across, likened to Fred Dibner and his place at Bolton, when he’s shot a bow and arrow across to measure. A very similar thing. Yes. The person with me was a chap called Roger Stebbins. So we measured it. Yes.

**IR: If the methods work, use them.**

[00:34:41 ]

**[END OF TRANSCRIPT]**