**LINDA GRIMOND 2024\_11\_05**

[**VOICE FILE NAME 2024\_11\_05\_LG001\_01\_and \_02 A\_edited\_combined]**

**Summary**

Born 1943, south London, moved to Thetford in 1967, lived there 13 years, moved to Brandon in 1987 and to the Maltings in 2017. Knew Thetford from visiting to fish with club and family as a child. Always loved fishing and rivers, all over the country, including fishing at Thetford, by the Cannery, Butten Island and other places. Walked into town from St Martin’s way along the river, took children down to the river to swim, panel, fish, go in a rubber boat including to Santon Downham, also went to Two Mile Bottom or Santon Downham by car with family. Traffic in the town before the ring road, remember Maltings in use and loading lorries, the old river swim baths in use. Learnt to swim in Charles Burrell pool late 20s. Brothers’ memories of Brandon fishing and the Bailey bridge in wartime. Other holidays on European rivers and the sea, but preferred rivers. River key to Linda throughout her life and that of her family.

Key:

**I = Interviewer = Imogen Radford**

R = Respondent = Linda Grimond

[00:00:00]

**I: I'll just start us off by saying my name's Imogen Radford and I'm here at the Maltings to talk to Linda. So, if you could start by telling me your name, please.**

R: Linda Grimond.

**I: Okay. I'm just gonna ask you a few little bits and pieces first, like well, either your date of birth or the year of birth, whichever you prefer.**

R: 1943.

**I: Okay. And what is, or was your occupation?**

R: I was a childminder for a number of years, and also I worked in a school looking after children in the playground for quite a number of years when my own children were very small. And then when they were teenagers, I went to college and became a nursery nurse. And I worked for a nursery in Thetford that was a charity, and eventually Norfolk County Council gave us a grant, but they decided to stop the grant, but they told us that the National Children's Home were looking for properties in this area and nurseries. So, we went over to, to that for a number of years and became a family centre. I worked all over Norfolk and Suffolk with families, some of them with very difficult situations and also young babies that had disabilities, young carers that were looking after parents or older siblings or whatever, and I ran groups for some of those as well. I was the deputy there for 20 years. Nearly 20 years.

**I: And that was based in Thetford and then you...**

R: It was in Thetford, yeah.

**I: ...travelled out and about?**

R: Yeah.

**I: I think you told me before you moved out of London into Thetford.**

R: Yes, I did.

**I: Tell me a bit about that.**

R: Well, we lived in a small council flat in London. When we first originally got married, we had a small flat in a house, in that very old house. But the council decided to pull them down, so we were offered a small flat. Top of a four story brick-built with no stairs, no lift, no nothing. Well, stairs. It was concrete stairs, eight flights of concrete stairs to go up to the flat. And, of course, by that time I had one child and another one on the way. And it was not easy. And we'd always said that we'd like to move out of London anyway, so that's what we did eventually, and we came up with the London overspill. We had three choices. Sudbury, Haverhill, or Thetford. And we liked Thetford 'cause we knew Thetford very well.

**I: How did you know it?**

R: Because we used to come up here with my...this is how my husband and I met, through a fishing club that my father belonged to. My younger brother didn't like dad going out, so mum and I came with him to look after him while dad was fishing. And one of the places we came quite often was Thetford to fish the river. We fished loads of different rivers around the country, but Thetford was one we liked. We used to come down here and mum and I used to take Alan off for a walk sometimes, so we saw a little bit of the town as well and the region. And also, my sister by that time had moved from Lincoln with her husband and family to Stowmarket. And when we was in Stowmarket for a long weekend or a week, whatever, we'd come over to Thetford to Santon Downham, and picnic and paddle in the river and into in the forest. So, it was somewhere we knew quite well and always loved it. So, we thought, "This is the place for us." And that's how we ended up in Thetford.

[00:04:17]

**I: How old were you when you used to come as a child?**

R: I was about 11 or 12, but I stopped coming when I was 13 'cause he'd settled down. But it was right. Mum fell asleep on the bank every time.

**I: Did she?**

R: Yes.

**I: She worked hard in her job?**

R: Yes. Yeah.

**I: What was her job again?**

R: She was a coat presser for a big factory that made woollen coats, but she made wool coats in the summer and it was very hot work. So, to have a weekend off, you know, weekend in the country was ideal for her because it gave her a good time to rest. But as a child, I had aunts and grandmothers looking after us while mum worked 'cause she always worked. Because my father couldn't work in the winter because of the trade he was in and also 'cause of his bronchitis. So, she was the main money spinner, and he became a house husband in the winter. So, for him to have a day off and go fishing, which is what he loved, that's how we did it. But eventually my younger brother got better, and I didn't need to go any more. Mum still went, she and dad did, but I didn't go anymore. But as I say, that's how later on...I knew my husband from the coach, 'cause him and his friend went with my husband's brothers who were a lot older. And that's how we met officially. But when I had Alan in tow, they used to say, "Oh, take him away. He's a pest." But later on, when I wasn't going, I went to one of the socials every year, 'cause they always had a prize giving social, and that's how we met again and of course we got married.

**I: So, you met as children, or you were a child anyway?**

R: Yeah. Well, he was only four years older than me, so there wasn't a lot of difference between us, but they objected to my younger brother. "Oh, he shouts too much. He is a nuisance."

**I: Probably not very good with the fishing, with the shouting and stuff?**

R: No.

[00:06:38]

**I: So, you had to take him off for a walk and...**

R: I used to take him off for walks and that, but I got used to everybody in the club and they all knew me. And as I say, we went to the final social. Well, it wasn't the final social 'cause we still went fishing. And even when we were courting, we were going fishing. And especially with the club, so everybody knew we was getting married and one thing or another. And when it came to a choice, Thetford was the place. And we've continued fishing most of our life.

**I: In Thetford mainly or other places?**

R: No, lots of different places. Lots of places. We used to go camping as a family, and we'd always take the fishing rods with us wherever we went. Later in life we had caravans. We took the fishing gear. If it was the tents, we took the fishing gear. And we always ended at some point in our holiday near a river.

**I: You loved the rivers or the fishing?**

R: Yeah. The fishing. I love rivers. Not so keen on lakes. I liked running water. But yes. And my family all know about Thetford, because when they used to come up to stay, they used to bring their fishing rods. So yeah. We lived in Thetford for 13 years, but then moved into one of the country villages, but we still had fishing around, and fishing was always part of our life.

**I: Whereabouts did you move into Thetford?**

R: St Martin's Way.

**I: Oh yes.**

R: Lovely house. Three bedroom house with central heating, and it was like a palace. We had garden back in front, nice estate at that time, and majority of people had come from London or other towns, so yes. We had a good life there. But we decided when the boys was older, we wanted to move out. But we had to wait for them to get their own transport because they wouldn't be able to get backwards and forwards to school. The grammar school used to pick them up from all the villages, but the Charles Burrell School, they didn't. So, we had to wait 'til they were mobile so they'd be able to get to work. But fishing, as I say, has always been part. And obviously they both got married and they took their wives to fish, and we actually took their children to fish.

**I: It's a real family tradition then, isn't it?**

R: Yeah. Yeah. Because we used to take them and have them during school holidays when they were old enough. When they were little, we taught them to swim 'cause I could never swim. I didn't swim until I was in my late 20s, but we said we'd take them to swim, learn to swim, 'cause it was important. Too many rivers around, you know? And just for general things, but yeah. And then when we were on holiday with them in our caravan, they wanted to learn to fish 'cause granddad was fishing by the river and we was in the caravan. Well, they were playing, and of course they got interested in and they said, "Can we do it, Nanny?" So, Nanny had to teach them how to fish.

[00:10:20]

**I: And they took to it?**

R: They took to it. In fact, my eldest granddaughter, she loves it. The other one does, but she's got other interests as well. But, yes. Her family, 'cause I've got two granddaughters. Each son has got a daughter. That's how it works out. The oldest one, she goes off with her parents in the caravan and they go fishing for relaxation, you know? So, she keeps it up all the time. In fact, it was only last week they were fishing again. And again, they go fishing in all sorts of places. But with the original club that we belonged to, it took us all over Britain. Different parts of Britain. The Thames, the Avon, we used to travel a long way. And when we first moved to Thetford, or when we was in the process of moving to Thetford, we had to come and collect the keys for the house on the Friday, but we couldn't move in until the Saturday. So, we came down on a motorbike and side car. The two boys in the side car and me on the back of the motorbike to collect the keys. And it was cold. It was winter. We should have moved in September, but it got delayed and we came and picked the keys up.

And then we went straight from here, from Thetford, to my sister's for the rest of the weekend 'cause my husband had a long weekend off. But we worked it out, it was over 100 miles. Because we lived in South London. Over 100 miles, and of course in those days, there was no motorways. We came all the way through Epping Forest and all the little towns and villages all the way up, so, yeah.

**I: What year was that?**

R: 1967. So, I had a one-and-a-half-year old and a baby.

**I: And they were in the sidecar?**

R: Yeah.

**I: Sleeping, hopefully.**

R: Yeah. Yeah.

**I: Well wrapped up?**

R: Well wrapped up, and my husband had built a seat for my eldest son to sit in, because he was in metalwork and he built him a seat that he was strapped into. And more often than not, I used to spend so much time in the front seat with my youngest in my lap with straps on.

**I: What? In the sidecar?**

R: In the sidecar.

**I: Oh really?**

R: Yeah.

**I: So, there's like two seats in a sidecar?**

R: Yeah. It was in our side car anyway. And I used to say to Jim, "Can I get on the back?" And he'd say, "Just for a little while." And then course I'd get on the back and we'd have Joe in his seat from his pram, with his straps on. And we'd sit there and I'd sit on the back for a little while. "Right. You've had your stretch. Back you go in the sidecar 'cause it's not safe." So, I had to sit with him in the sidecar. But once he was old enough to be sat in a proper seat, he had a proper seat belt. 'Cause he did that. But just before we moved up to Thetford, Jim decided the motorbike and sidecar weren't going to do it anymore, it's time we changed to a car. So, he bought a van, and he made seats for them at the back of the van.

**I: Jim sounds like a very skilled metalworker.**

R: He was a very skilled metalworker. And they always had safety straps on from their prams.

**I: Was that unusual in those days?**

R: Yeah. I mean, obviously we had reins for them when they were walking, and we always used the reins. They're out of fashion now, and I do get a bit worried about some of the youngsters 'cause they run off so far from their parents. But there you go. But that's how we came to come to Thetford anyway.

[00:14:46]

**I: And St Martin's Way, it's not very far from the river there, is it?**

R: No.

**I: Did you go down to the river from there?**

R: Yeah. Always did. We used to walk down the hill to the river. In the summer months, we walked along the river. We used to go out St John's Way and walk along the river to the town because in the summer months, that was chock-a-block 'cause all the traffic went through Thetford.

**I: Chock-a-block with traffic?**

R: Traffic going to the North coast and East coast from everywhere. And you couldn't, I mean, we had a car and couldn't get it out, could we? There was so much traffic, it was backed up all the way through. Because the road wasn't where it is now, it used to go through the town by the Bell Hotel and round, and out by where the little roundabout near the Market Square.

**I: Yes.**

R: Yeah. It used to take the next right out and go up to the top, and then over the railway bridge to go onto the Mundford Road.

**I: It must have been a complete nightmare in in the town really, wasn't it?**

R: It was. It was so busy. And of course, Bell Hotel often got its corner knocked off. And so did the other one. The other one was a shop, but traffic was chock-a-block. You just couldn't get through. So, if we was going into the town on a Saturday, we used to go along the river from St John's Way.

**I: I mean, you had to cross the road first.**

R: Yeah.

**I: Was that easy enough?**

R: It was, because the traffic was still. So, you had to cross the road to go across. But if we...

**I: Once you got across.**

R: Once you got across you was fine 'cause you just walked down through the town. And obviously where the traffic was piled up, wherever you wanted to go, we used to take shortcuts around the back so that we could get into the town without all that traffic. But yes. The traffic went right along the centre of all the shops.

**I: Do you remember that changing and the new road being built?**

R: The Ring Road, you mean?

**I: Ring Road?**

R: We call it a ring road because we actually campaigned when we was in St Martin's way Charles Burrell School opened and the children had to cross that busy road to go to school. And one day one child was knocked down and killed. And of course it got all around, and the people on the estate got together and decided to block the road on a Saturday to highlight the fact that we needed an underpass. And we walked back and forth across the road in the traffic, at first with our children in prams, and then the police advised us not to do that with the children, to have the children looked after, so we continued to walk back and forth because we wanted an underpass. Because for safety of our children and everybody else crossing the road because it was a busy road anyway. During the week it was busy enough without all the holiday traffic. And we never got the underpass. They brought a bridge up instead. And of course, what happened? People didn't use it, did they? It's gone now. Got traffic lights out there now.

**I: Is this the newer road? The relief road that you wanted to get the underpass on? Or is it the old...**

R: It was the old A11, what they called the old A11, yeah. But that was their answer to have the underpass, but it still came down the same A11 anyway.

**I: So, then the next thing that happened was the A...they've got different names for it. So, you called it the Ring Road.**

R: We call it the Ring Road.

**I: The Ring Road. Was that in 70s, 80s, something like that?**

R: Yeah. Somewhere about that time.

**I: So, that was built, and that has an underpass, I think? But I don't know if it's adequate.**

R: It doesn't have an underpass…

**I: Not where your estate was?**

R: Not that end. St John's, and they put an underpass there across the Brandon Road...

**I: Right.**

R: ...but they didn't...I'd say they put the bridge, it got knocked down one day by a lorry. He had his thing up and it went right through it. But they rebuilt it a bit higher, but of course people wouldn't use it. It was easy enough to go climb up the bridge, and the steps were wide enough to push a pram up one at a time, and you could get a full-sized pram on it, but a lot of people didn't bother to use it. But the view from the top was beautiful. I used to love walking up there. But the other people didn't like it. They'd rather try and take it in. Especially the school children, they thought they were clever. But yeah. This is what attracted us to Thetford. And we even remember them having the swimming pool in the river.

**I: Oh yes. Do you remember that?**

R: Yeah. I remember that. And all the maltings that they used to have, where the shops are now. So, we remember a lot about Thetford.

[00:20:15]

**I: So, tell me...well, I'll tell you what. Why don't we start at the beginning of the river where you were, that end. Do you remember that bit? And then we'll go up.**

R: Yeah.

**I: So, do you remember the bit where the first staunch is? That bit there?**

R: Yeah.

**I: So, that would've been the nearest bit to you, wouldn't it?**

R: Yes.

**I: Did you go down there? Apart from walking to town, did you go down there just for the sake of going down there?**

R: Just for the sake of going down there? Yes, and eventually we got a rubber boat. We used to take our rubber boat and put it down the other end of the staunch and come up towards Santon Downham in the boat.

**I: Right. Right. Yeah.**

R: Eventually we had two, 'cause the boys said, "Well, it's not fair. I want to have one." So we had two smaller ones. We still kept the big one. Yeah. We used to paddle up to Santon Downham.

**I: So, had they built the sort of steps when you were going down there, or was that a bit later?**

R: Yeah.

**I: So, you'd just go into the river from your side or the other side?**

R: From our side.

**I: From your side,**

R: Yeah.

**I: And then you would just go paddle to Santon Downham and then back?**

R: Yeah. Yeah. Sometimes a little bit further, just depending on how we felt. Used to take a picnic with us as well. So, we used to spend a lot of time on the river.

**I: So, you'd have been going downstream and then you'd have to come back up. Was that easy enough?**

R: Yeah. Well, my husband was strong.

**I: He could always tow the other one if necessary.**

R: Yeah. That’s it. I mean, obviously over the years the boys got strong enough to row it anyway, so we used to have some fun in those boats. And of course, when family came they loved it being able to go on the river as well. So, we've been associated with that river for a good number of years, one way or another.

**I: And so, you had the rubber dinghies. Did you swim as well and paddle?**

R: We used to...

**I: You said you couldn't swim yourself?**

R: I couldn't swim, no. Not from a long time. At Charles Burrell School, they had a pool. So, my husband started taking the two boys to go swimming. He went evening classes to take them swimming, and he had to work away for a few weeks, and he said to me, "You'll have to take them," He said, "Because there's only so many weeks left before Christmas," He said, "You'll have to." I said, "But I can't swim." He said, "No. But you can get in the pool. You can get in and walk and paddle." And he said, "And you can go so far out of your depth." Because as a child, I was actually held under the water by a couple of boys when I was very young. Where we lived in London, there was a lido that only opened in the summer, and I was doing my usual thing hanging onto the bars and splashing my legs. And they got me by the legs and pulled me under, and they kept me under for a few minutes. But they did let me go, and of course that frightened me. I would never go under. Still won't. Still won't. I learned to swim on my back. No way I was going underneath.

**I: That must have been awful. Which one was that? Which pool was that?**

R: That was the Peckham Lido in London. Yeah. 'Cause I was only small. And my sister was very upset because she'd taken me and my younger brother to go paddling and swimming. And course, when she found out she was gonna kill the two boys, but they'd run off, you know, as they usually do. But, yeah. I was never very happy going under. But when I was taking the two lads to go swimming, the instructor said to me one day, he said, "You don't swim yourself, Mrs Grimond, do you?" I said, “No." He said, "Why?" And I told him. And he said, "Why don't you come to our ladies' group evening classes?" He said, "I'll teach you to swim." And he did.

**I: That's nice.**

R: Yeah. My brother-in-law had actually taught me just to float on one of our school holidays that we'd done, because the boys were always tormenting me and trying to duck me, so he took over. It's my husband's eldest brother. And he said, "You don't do that to people are frightened of the water." But he said to me, "Can you float?" I said, "Don't know how anyway." He taught me to float, so I was happy to be floating around on my back. So, when it came to actually learning to swim, I did do the breaststroke but I didn't like it. My face was too close to the water. I wouldn't do the crawl, 'cause I knew I'd have to put my head right under, but I said, "I don't mind going on my back." So, I learned to swim on my back. And I used to do quite a lot of lengths when I did learn to swim.

**I: Good for you.**

R: It was good for me. Yeah.

**I: And I think you said you were in your twenties then, roughly?**

R: Late twenties. About 28, something like that. Because the boys were young and we thought it was important they learn to swim.

**I: Being near the river, yes.**

R: Yeah.

**I: And going on the river as well.**

R: Yeah.

[00:25:32]

**I: And so, when you went down to the river in your dinghies or maybe swimming, some of you might have been swimming or paddling some of time?**

R: Yeah. In actual fact, we used to go to Two Mile Bottom quite a lot as well as Santon Downham. My friend, she could drive, and my husband and her husband worked together. So sometimes Jim would drive to work and leave, but more often than not Ray used to leave his car at home so that his wife had use of it if she wanted to do shopping or go anywhere. So, sometimes in the summer months, we used to pack a picnic and say, "We're going to the river." You know, Two Mile Bottom. We found out how to get across the railway and everything, went to Two Mile Bottom and we went in the water there and paddled in there. So, yeah. But we used to phone them and say, "We're down at Two Mile Bottom." We used to get in touch with them and ask the factory to leave a message, 'cause we had no mobile phones in those days. "Leave a message for Jim and Ray. Tell him we were down Two Mile Bottom. We're going picnicking." And they'd come and join us straight from work and they'd swim. So, yes. The river was very important as far as we were concerned.

**I: So, you were down at Two Mile Bottom and the husbands came and joined you and the families after work.**

R: After work, yeah. Because the first things they said as soon as they arrived, "Did you bring our trunks?" "Yes." And we'd stay there 'til sort of late 'til everybody was getting tired, and it was lovely. And wouldn't go in it now. The river is polluted too much now. So, unfortunately.

**I: Where exactly at Two Mile Bottom was that? Can you describe it? For me?**

R: Yeah. It was just, you know where the power station is there? It was before that was built. So, we used to just go in, and it said, 'Two Mile Bottom', and we just stopped partway in. I had to open the gates to the railway and went across. But, of course, since the power station's been there, it's not so easy to go there anymore. But that's whereabouts it is. And once they got fed up with swimming, we'd go for a walk along the river or feed the ducks or whatever. But Two Mile Bottom and Santon Downham was always our picnic places.

**I: And do you remember, at either of those places, were there any structures in the river? Like wooden structures or bridges or anything?**

R: Santon Downham, there was. There was a wooden bridge across, which is still there. And obviously the village was built up there, so you could go down the side of the river and from here, we crossed the railway bridge and down the side of the river. But, yeah. So, that was a good place. And all the family loved to go there when they came to visit. And as I say, my two brothers, they used to come quite often to fish. Always brought friends with them. So, they fished, and both of them remember this part of the river from coming here with the fishing club all those years ago. Jim and I used to fish a lot near the factory, the food factory.

**I: The cannery?**

R: The cannery.

**I: The canning factory?**

R: Yeah.

**I: Was that good fishing there?**

R: That was good fishing there because what they let go in the water, and everybody liked that. That was a popular spot. People in the fishing club used to rush to get to that spot and further down. And I'd say we went and fished on other rivers in the region as well. So, one way or another, we spent a lot of time fishing in East Anglia.

**I: And do you remember all those different discharges from the canning factory?**

R: Yeah.

**I: Was it all sorts of different things coming out?**

R: Yeah. All sorts of vegetables and stuff. Can't remember all of them, but there was all sorts coming out there. And the river was funny colours. Don't know quite what was coming out.

**I: But the fish liked it.**

R: Yeah. The fish liked it. *[Laughter]*.

**I: Was it you that was telling me that there were fishing matches along there as well?**

R: Yeah. Yes. There were big fishing matches. And that was Mark who was actually telling that.

**I: It was Mark, right?**

R: But yeah, I remember the fishing matches 'cause we always used to go down to watch.

**I: You weren't part of them necessarily?**

R: No. This is when we lived here more. But there was always the real superb fishermen going down there on these big matches. They were big matches.

**I: Serious business.**

R: Serious business.

**I: Don't want anybody interrupting them.**

R: But luckily, the pathway was wide enough. You could walk down and stand and watch. And obviously with the children, they would love to see the men fishing and they just enjoyed it and still do so. The other thing that was there in Thetford, was the pulp mill.

**I: Yes. Do you remember that?**

[00:31:17]

R: Yeah, I do. In actual fact, I bought trays from there that were made from pulp. And I was amazed to see the baths. They made baby baths. Of course I didn't need one, 'cause I brought one with me. *[Laughter]*.

**I: Was it the same type?**

R: No, it wasn't. But I thought, that's wonderful. And also the crash helmets, of course. And oddly enough, my youngest son now works for Centurion. Has been for quite a number of years now. But they don't just make crash helmets anymore. In fact, they hardly make crash helmets. They make all industrial helmets for all different industrial stuff. Firemen, anybody who needs a helmet, safety helmets in their factories, they make them. And during the pandemic they were making things for the hospital as well.

**I: And so they took over from the pulp mill, didn't they?**

R: Yeah.

**I: Was that on the same site, do you remember?**

R: No. A different one. This one is in Mundford Road, new estate.

**I: In new estate.**

R: New estate. They moved up there. But yes, I had friends that lived in, well they were friends from bowls 'cause we used to play bowls as well, from the bowls club. And his wife had lived, had worked in the pulp mill over the years. And she gave me my first tray from there. And they lived just behind it. So they were very close and very good friends of ours.

**I: Did they tell you much about what it was like there, working there?**

R: Yeah, she did. I can't remember now, but she used to tell us about it. And he used to work in the forest when he first came here. And he was a Geordie, but he was one of those that walked down from Jarrow, on the Jarrow march. And he came down to Thetford that way. Of course, like a lot of the East Anglians, he went into a Japanese prisoner of war camp because that was how it happened during the war. And he was in the prisoner of war camp for years. Very badly treated. But he was a lovely man. But when he first came down after Jarrow, they marched down. They were starting to do the forest, and they had huts in the forest, and they put them up in the forest. And he helped plant the forest. So he was a very interesting man to talk to as well. But he wasn't a fisherman, but he was a bowler *[laughter]*. He taught us to bowl *[laughter]*. He was one of the few because we're, obviously, when we first moved to here, people didn't like Londoners. And they blamed us for lots of things. But we got to know by joining different clubs that we got to know a lot of them. And they said not everybody's tarred with the same brush.

**I: So you started off knowing Londoners in your estate mostly, but then you got to know the original Thetfordians as well.**

R: Yeah. And my daughter-in-law, is an original Thetfordian, for years back. Her parents were Thetfordians. But it was funny attitude at the time. *[Laughter]*. But yeah, so we got to know and work. In Thetford, you get to know a lot of people.

**I: Especially in your line of work, I suppose you see right into people's lives, don't you?**

R: Yeah.

[00:35:03]

**I: Tell me a little bit more about your memories of the old swimming pool. Do you remember that operating? Did you go there?**

R: No, we never went there. But we used to see people in there 'cause obviously we used to go for a walk and see people in there. It was amazing to see all the huts, the changing rooms that they'd got round and that the river actually got divided so that it was for swimming. But my daughter-in-law does remember swimming in there. 'Cause I spoke to her about it the other week and she said yes, I used to swim in there. So, I mean obviously once the pool came up at Charles Burrell, they didn't need to swim in there. And of course they've now got the big one at the pool.

**I: Do you remember that, I mean I know you were only observing rather than going to swim, but do you remember that change between people going to the pool, I mean the outdoor pool and then going to the indoor pool?**

R: Not that much because obviously it was...at that time I didn't swim. And at that time when it was changed, my sons weren't old enough to go swimming, so I didn't remember that one. But remember seeing it and walking past it.

**I: And was the little bridge across the river there? So there's Nuns' Bridge, and then another bridge next to it. Is that there?**

R: Yeah.

**I: Do you remember what that looked like at all?**

R: Not really. No.

**I: Could you walk across that or was that part of the swimming pool? Was it like public?**

R: You could walk across it 'cause there was a pathway you could walk up into the woods, up that way. But we didn't do it very often. But later, yes, did. Nuns' Bridges, we often, that was another place we used to like to fish, Nuns' Bridges.

**I: Yes. It was a good place to fish, was it?**

R: Yeah. The only thing is certain parts of it, it was very sandy bottom and very deep. Very deep holes there sometimes. But depending on the time of year. But that was another place we used to like to fish. And once the swimming pool was no longer there, we could walk, go further up that way as well. So there towards the common.

**I: So you said also you remember the maltings being there still?**

R: Yeah. It was strange. When I say strange, it wasn't strange. It was just very old buildings. And obviously there were boats beside it as well. And we thought it was a shame if they came down. But as it happened with Thetford, they pulled a lot of the good houses down. But yes, they pulled them down because of the precinct. They wanted to build a proper precinct there. Yes, we remember them and it was...we used to watch them unloading stuff when the little ’uns were small. Not very often.

**I: They were still loading and unloading what, into the river or on lorries?**

R: On lorries.

**I: On lorries then.**

R: Yeah. But, same as the cannery. They were still loading onto lorries then not into barges 'cause the barges had finished by that time. So you didn't see the barges, but it was lovely. And we loved the view of the bridge in Thetford 'cause that was a beautiful bridge. Always has been.

**I: The Town Bridge.**

R: The Town Bridge, yeah.

**I: So in those days when there were the big old buildings, you could go to the Town Bridge, but I don't think you could walk along a bit like you can now 'cause there are buildings there. So you could just look from the bridge.**

R: Could look from the bridge, walk down past the Bell Hotel and that way into the town.

**I: And you could go into the town and then could you then go back towards the river to walk to Nuns' Bridges from there in those days?**

R: Don't remember doing that then.

**I: How did you get to Nuns' Bridges when you went there for the fishing?**

R: Possibly car. I can't remember. It's a long time ago.

**I: That's okay. But it's been interesting to notice...for me to see old pictures and hear from people how different it was 'cause now you could walk all the way beside the river more or less, can't you? And then it was quite a bit different, wasn't it?**

R: Yeah. And of course eventually they had built that three-way bridge and we could get onto Butten Island in those days by walking round onto Butten Island. But that was one of my husband's favourite fishing place is Butten Island. But there was all sorts of places you could get to the river in some way or other around the town. Remember the old railway buildings as well, up near the other part of the river?

**I: Melford Bridge?**

R: Yeah. The old railway buildings were still there.

**I: Were they?**

R: Yeah. And so of course that was near the river again. So we used to go on little walks round and see where we could find, when we first moved to Thetford. They had some lovely shops in Thetford and they used to deliver your groceries *[laughter]*. Lovely to go down with a pram with two children in and not have to bring it back up that hill.

**I: So you would basically go around all the shops that you needed to go to make your order, and then they'd come and bring it for you?**

R: Only one of the shops delivered. But the other shops didn't. But yes, they used to deliver. And by the time I'd walked back home, it was on the doorstep. So that was good.

[00:41:00]

**I: Yes. I suppose it's gone full circle now 'cause deliveries are back in fashion.**

R: Well, they are. And I still have it delivered.

**I: Delivered here.**

R: Well, anything heavy. But actually coming to the Maltings, that was only seven years ago. 'Cause when we came back from the country, we moved into Brandon. We lived the other end of Brandon.

**I: Yes. So you moved into Brandon, a different part of Brandon first.**

R: Yeah. We moved into St Anthony's Way, just off Thetford Road. So we lived there 21 years. A nice bungalow there. But we decided to move. The bungalow was getting much hard work for both of us. So we decided to move here.

**I: Here you've got the advantage of not having to do so much of that sort of work.**

R: *[Laughter]*. Well, it was the gardens, but saying that, I still help do things in the garden.

**I: Do you? Well, that's nice.**

R: It was one of my hobbies, so I used to do...

**I: There are beautiful gardens here, aren't they?**

R: Yeah. In a lot of ways they've been neglected, but that's what happens over time. So, I've always been good, interested in doing gardening. That was part and parcel to do with my dad. He used to take me to his allotment every week on the back of his bike.

**I: Got to add a little potato patch out in the garden, have you somewhere *[laughter]*.**

R: But he taught me all I needed to know about gardening from that point of view. Flower gardening, I learned as I went along. But when we had the house out in the country, it was a huge garden. We grew everything. But there was no river there.

**I: *[Laughter]*. So now you are back looking over the river, aren't you?**

R: Yeah. And as I say, my two brothers remember the river from many years ago.

**I: Tell me about that.**

R: Well, my oldest brother said last week, when he was over from Australia, he was looking out the window. He said, "I remember fishing here along this river." I said, "Do you?" He said, "Yeah, with the Marlborough Arms Angling Club. I said, oh, 'cause they used to come, there was a lot on the coach and very often they'd walk a long way to do their fishing. Or we'd start at this end and go down the other way. He said, "When I last remember seeing it," he said, “there was a big old building opposite”. I said, yes. I said, apparently there was a lot of it. He'd have loved to have seen that photo 'cause he would've been able to sort of pick out a bit of it. But he said, yes. He said, “we used to have some good times here, didn't we?” He said, "You are lucky to be able to look over that river." So there you go. And my younger brother, he used to visit us a lot so he could come and fish along that river as well. And he's in New Zealand, and he was over a few years ago, he remembered the big old building opposite as well. Because it's something that really stuck in his mind. He was fishing on the opposite side of the river. And he said the building was here. He was fishing along there, he said, and it was all quiet. Nothing was happening on that side. He said, and Tony decided the fishing weren't very good. So he went over the bridge and over onto this side. And he said he was sitting there fishing away, catching a few fish, he said, but all of a sudden, he jumped in the river. And I said, why did he jump in the river? He said he'd sat on a red ants' nest and the only way he could get them off him, was go in the river *[laughter]*. He said we had to drag him out the river and try and get his clothes dried *[laughter]*. And that was once when Tony was visiting us. And so was Alan at the same time. And they'd gone off fishing and they'd come back and of course they were killing themselves laughing, when we saw them. *[Laughter]*. And Tony was our best man and he was the other one who was on the coach in the beginning. So I knew Tony very well *[laughter]*. But there you go. He sat there and said, "Oh, remember that?" He said, "What happened to that old building?" I said, well, they pulled it down eventually. I said, and this was put up.

[00:45:58]

**I: You were showing me this photo that Peter kindly got for us, which is from the newspaper, isn't it?**

R: Yes.

**I: EDP.**

R: EDP.

**I: Yes. It's a picture of the bridge being reconstructed. And I think, was it your, somebody pointed, yeah, he pointed out where your...**

R: He pointed out it was up here.

**I: So the maltings was where basically the new road and the new bridge is really, the old maltings I mean, and then the new one?**

R: Yeah. That's where the new one is as well. But it's really interesting from that point of view.

**I: So it was derelict in those days though, when they remember coming and fishing. So when would that have been then?**

R: I really don't know. Been in the early, probably early 90s. We moved here in '97 and they used to come up here all the time. So anytime from that time on.

**I: And when did they remember the building still being there?**

R: I think that was before that, when they used to come with the other club.

**I: And that would've been before...well, the picture obviously, they've gone now, haven't they? By the time they put the bridge in 1951, '53 and '54. So it must have been before that. And one of your brothers, remind me, was talking about the bridge in the war, the Bailey Bridge.**

R: That was my husband's brother.

**I: Your husband's brother. Tell me about that.**

R: He was working at...he was in, obviously joined up in the war, and he was a rifleman. And he was offered the chance to go and train as a tank driver. So they brought him back from abroad and he said before we moved here, he knew Thetford, and he told us why he knew Thetford, because he did his training in the forest to learn to drive a tank and obviously everything else to do with the tank. And he remembered going across the bridge and the tanks were too big. They were too big for the bridge, too wide for the bridge. So they had to build a Bailey Bridge across.

**I: Is that an extra?**

R: Yeah. It's what they call a bridge that the engineers put across from the army. Army engineers put it across so they could go backwards and forwards on their tanks.

**I: So that must have been quite a wide bridge then, to get tanks on it and wider than the original bridge.**

R: Wider.

**I: See, I hadn't realised that.**

R: It would've been.

**I: So that was a whole separate bridge, basically next to the other one, which was a very old one, wasn't it?**

R: And it had to be strong enough to take the tanks as well. When you listen to things that happen in the war, you hear about them building Bailey Bridges. And there was a whole platoon of people building them in front of the troops ready to get them across.

**I: That would've been a big operation in itself, wouldn't it?**

R: It would've been. Yeah.

**I: I see, right. And we think that was...we don't really know, do we? I don't know.**

R: No.

**I: We think it was probably roughly where the current bridge is maybe.**

R: Of where the old bridge was.

**I: Next to the old, 'cause the old ones were still there. And it's in this picture, which is presumably about 1953 or something. The old bridge is still there. And then the new one's being built. Probably. Yeah. We don't really know about...**

R: Don't really know when about it was built.

**I: But in the war.**

R: During the war. That's why it says in there, about the war intervening.

**I: That's right. 'Cause they originally want...they'd been meaning to do it for ages 'cause the old bridge was I think from the 17th century or something.**

R: Possibly.

**I: It took 20 years having been interrupted by the war. Yes. That explains it. That's really interesting, isn't it? It's interesting he remembers it, isn't it?**

R: Yeah, it was. Because I mean, he obviously been up here and he said, it's a lovely place Thetford. He said, I think you enjoy being up there. And he did come up and visit us a few times but he said it was a long drive. *[Laughter]*.

**I: There is that.**

R: He only had a Reliant Robin 3-wheeler.

**I: It was definitely a long drive.**

R: Definitely a long drive. *[Laughter]*.

**I: Be better off with a motorbike with or without a sidecar.**

R: He'd had his motorbike and sidecar added to that. But his wife didn't like riding the sidecar. She wanted a car. But of course you could drive a Reliant 'cause it only had three wheels, you could drive it with a motorbike licence. And he was not going to go and take a driving test, 'cause he had his little car. He loved his little car *[laughter]*. But he did travel a long way with it. But he had one, or he had three of them in the end, I think.

**I: Was he another one for the fishing?**

R: Yes. He liked the fishing. It was him who joined the club in the first place with Jim. But it's just how it goes. And it's memories and things. But he said, we can't make that journey too often. But as it happened, we used to go down to London to visit family anyway. So we always went to see Fred. He's the oldest brother.

[00:51:32]

**I: Your relationship with the rivers has been really key all your life. Well, all your life really, from quite young when you came with the fishing. And then that led you to come to Thetford.**

R: Yes, that's right. The same.

**I: Loved it ever since.**

R: We loved Thetford and I'd like to...one time I wanted to go back to live in Thetford, but Jim said, my husband said, now he said, "We don't want to go back to Thetford," even though we both worked in Thetford. Now he said, "We'll go somewhere else." And one of the places he would like to have gone, we couldn't get a house at the time or a bungalow. So we moved into Brandon. And so we've been here 20, getting on 27 years now. This Christmas, I should have lived in the Malting in seven years.

**I: And did you have much to do with the river in Brandon at all when you were living in your time here?**

R: Yes. We was always fishing in Brandon or fishing somewhere. Jim did join one of the clubs because it was a lake. You know the lake down by the staunch, he joined that fishing club. But I never fished there 'cause I didn't like lake fishing. I prefer to fish in the river. And since we've moved here, Jim, one of the things Jim said, "I'll be out to fish off the river, you know, from the garden." I said, "Yes, you will." But in actual fact, he never did. He died before. He ended up with Alzheimer's and he died. He had an accident on the bridge one day when we was coming back from the town. And he broke on his shoulder and down his arm and he was never able to use it again. But he had Alzheimer's anyway, so. And he got pneumonia and died. So it was a sudden thing when it did happen. From a simple fall on the bridge, to dying, 'cause the traffic was still going past. And he laid there an hour and a half on the floor. So unfortunately, he died. But I've stayed here. I did at one time contemplate moving back to Thetford but I decided not to 'cause we actually bought our flat. And it's got a lovely view.

**I: That's a shame. So did he get to see the river?**

R: Yes.

**I: Could see it. But just not the fishing.**

R: And we used to go and sit down by the river. And we used to take a walk 'cause before we moved here, we had a little dog but she also died. We used to walk along the river all the time with her before we moved here. And we always crossed on the top of the bridge, even from coming up from the other end of town, we always crossed on the middle of the bridge *[laughter]*. So we always stood and looked at the river. And then we'd walk down the river, down to the staunch with the dog, and across the fields. And he played bowls in the bowls club. So the river was something that was always our walk, whichever way we were going. And if we walked one way, we used to walk down the avenue, and come back up round the staunch. And of course when we moved here, we did the same while he was able to. He used to love the river. He used to go and sit down by the river a lot while we were living here 'cause we had some beautiful weather, especially through the pandemic.

**I: Yes. It's a good place. You have to be somewhere. At least you've got your outdoor space, haven't you, by the river?**

R: Yeah. I mean obviously Jim had died just before the pandemic. So obviously the river was my place to go and sit and contemplate. *[Laughter]* always has been. My sister told me once that when I was a child, I was born, because I was a war baby. I was born out of London. And she said that where we moved to, 'cause obviously she went with my mum and my brother. They went to Newbury to stay with my aunt who was out there. And because pregnant ladies couldn't stay in London during the blitz, because of taking up the hospital beds, so she moved out. Actually where they lived in the cottage right next to a nice river, a small bubbling brook more than a river. And she said, "You used to sleep soundly 'cause the river noise puts you to sleep." *[Laughter]*. And I said, "Seriously?" So she said, "Yes." She said, "You've always liked running water better than the sea," 'cause she loves the sea. She finds that comfort. I don't. But she always said it was the river for you. So that's my sister and she's nine years older than me.

**I: That's lovely, isn't it? Yes. I think the river's obviously got into your...**

R: Into my bones.

**I: ...bones. Yes. From early on. How interesting.**

R: Yeah. My history.

**I: And here you are next to the river again. It's very fitting really, isn't it?**

R: Yes, it is. So that's my history of the river really.

[00:57:30]

**I: That's fascinating. Thank you so much. It seems like it's a...**

R: It's very nice.

**I: ...good place to pause unless there's anything else you can think of, we haven't.**

R: Not that I can think of now, no. But...

**I: Quite comprehensive really. That’s wonderful.**

R: We've got a man here. When he first came, he started fishing on the river from the bank. But he doesn't do it now. He's got dementia but he did. But Mark and I, we often talk about the river because we are neighbours. We live on the same floor. And we got to know Mark and Carol very early on. And Mark always wanted to have a competition between Jim and him but they never did, as it happened.

**I: Was Mark a fishing, or is Mark, well, I dunno if he does it at the moment if he was a fishing person.**

R: Yes. And he's not so long since he'd been fishing. He's a fishing person and he's a local. So he'd be very interesting to talk to. But when we were sitting down in the garden one day, when my younger brother came over, he was sitting talking to him about the river, you know, about different things. And also with my daughter-in-law, he sat, and my granddaughter, they were over one day and he sat talking to them about the river. And they're the ones that go fishing all the time.

**I: They're the ones with the long Thetford history.**

R: Yes. So they were able to...and they can often be seen walking along the river, going for a long walk along the river. And like me, they gravitate to the river *[laughter]*. They live in Thetford, but they don't live very far away from any of the rivers there, and they gravitate. If they're going out for a walk, it's always by the river. Sometimes they've walked from Santon Downham up to here and met me in the garden, *[laughter]*, and then gone back to Santon Downham. But usually Joe goes back to get the car and pick up Lynn. Or if they feel like it, they walk back, but they walk along the river. So it's something that's happened in the family. Even when we used to go away in the caravan, they were with us.

**I: Yeah. No. As I say, it really threads through your life, doesn't it? It's actually what's changed your life in that you moved to Thetford and a completely different life really, than you might have had if you'd stayed in London.**

R: But of course the other thing is, whenever we went on holiday, it was always a river somewhere around.

**I: So you've seen all sorts of different rivers as well.**

R: Yeah. We've even been to Ireland and Joe and Lynn came with. They'd got their own trailer tent at that time, and we'd got a trailer tent. We went to Ireland and we did fishing in Ireland as well *[laughter]*.

**I: It's a lovely way to travel. I mean, in a way, I do the same thing by swimming. I would go and swim in the river anywhere, although I haven't been so many places that you mentioned. It draws you to the river. Whichever your particular thing you like doing, it draws you to the river. Do you feel that you want to come back to Thetford and Brandon and that's your sort of...**

R: That's our home.

**I: Want to come back to it.**

R: Home is back. We hired a boat on the Thames. Had a cruiser on the Thames and we went from all the way up to the, its source, and as far down as we could go to without going through into London. We had a fortnight on the river. So that was a holiday. We also had an narrow boat on the canals once, as a holiday. So that was a week. We took my sister with us and she loved it. And this year we had a cruise on the Rhine.

**I: That is a river, isn't it?**

R: That's a river and a half. And we went as...the whole family, six of us, seven of us with me, *[laughter]*, seven us went on a cruise on the Rhine. That's my immediate family, on the Rhine this summer.

**I: Gosh, how exciting.**

R: Yeah, it was. It was beautiful. And we went as far as Switzerland. It was wonderful. So, sea doesn't do anything for me. I can't say I've never been on the sea. We did a cruise to Norway and that was wonderful as well but of course that was the sea. But it wasn't my cup of tea, not really. But it wasn't a river.

**I: *[Laughter]*.**

R: *[Laughter]*It was a sea. And I said, there's nothing to see at sea *[laughter]*. So yes, the rivers are my be all and end all. And I often come down and just sit by the river or just look out at the river. Unfortunately, this time of the year they, well, I say fortunately really, the trees are losing their leaves. So I can actually see the river at the moment from my flat. You can't when it's full.

[01:03:18] End