**Susan Harris 28 March 2022** **at Oxborough Village Hall**

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**Summary**

Born 1957, lived at Lilac Farm, Eastmoor then Sawmill Cottages, Oxborough. Paddling in the river by the sawmill, catching fish, played with children camping in the field nearby. Swum at the ferry in the Wissey. At Lilac farm, Stringside, people called it Springside, could get watercress. Collected frogspawn at Foulden Common.

Key:

**I = Interviewer**

R = Respondent

[00:00:00]

**I: My name is Helaine Wyatt. I'm a volunteer for the Breckland Fen Edge & River Project, and I'm about to record memories of Susan Harris who now lives in Northwold, but once lived in Oxborough. Sue?**

R: Yes.

**I: You lived in Oxborough. Whereabouts in Oxborough?**

R: I lived at Lilac Farm in Eastmoor. That's where I was born. And then I lived at Sawmill Cottages.

**I: Right. I've heard of those. What was your father and mother's name?**

R: My father's name was George Reeve, and my mother's name was Maureen Reeve.

**I: Okay. And your father, what was his occupation?**

R: To start with, he worked on Lilac Farm with his dad as a farm labourer, but towards the end of his life he had a garage at Thetford. He was a motor mechanic.

**I: Okay. And did your mum work?**

R: Yes. She worked on the land.

**I: Okay. And when were you born?**

R: 1957.

**I: Did you have any siblings?**

R: Yes. I've got a brother, Derek, he was born here, and I've got a sister, Linda, and she was also born here.

**I: And do you work?**

R: I don't now. I've retired.

**I: What did you...**

R: I used to do admin at the NHS.

**I: Okay. And what are your memories of using the river, then, as a child?**

R: Well, we used to go into the river. Near where I lived, near Sawmill Cottages, there's a little stream and I used to paddle in there all day with a little net to try and catch little bits of fish, or little fish. But also, the field that you went through to get into it, whoever owned it, I don't know who it was, used to let people camp on there in tents in the summer, and there was always families with children. I used to go over there and play with the children. We used to play in the river for hours.

**I: And there were cottages there as well, were there?**

R: Yep. Sawmill Cottages is down there.

**I: Okay.**

R: And the old sawmill building, I think that's been done up now, but it wasn't when I lived there.

**I: It was derelict?**

R: Yes, it was. Yeah.

**I: Okay. And so, could you swim?**

R: No.

**I: Right. So, it was really sort of just paddling...**

R: It was just paddling.

**I: ...and fishing for tiddlers, that sort of thing?**

R: Yes, it was. I also, I went down the ferry. There's a ferry, and that was a bit...I did try to learn to swim there, but I was only about seven. I thought it was really great 'cause I could walk across it, but I couldn't swim. But we used to go down on Sunday. That was lovely.

**I: Okay. And so, you would walk across the fields to the ferry?**

R: No, my dad had a car, and we would go down there in his car. Yeah.

**I: And take a picnic or something?**

R: Yeah, we'd take a picnic.

**I: And were there other families there?**

R: Loads. Loads of people. My cousins were usually down there. Yeah, there was always loads of people down there. Always. It was lovely to go down there.

**I: And how old were you then?**

R: About six or seven.

**I: Yeah?**

R: Yeah.

**I: And are your brother and sister older than you, or?**

R: No, I'm the oldest. My brother would've been about four, and my sister, she wasn't born until I was eight so she wouldn't have gone down there.

**I: 'Cause I think at the ferry, it's the River Wissey.**

R: Yeah.

**I: But I think at the sawmill place it's the River Gadder...**

R: Yeah. I think it...yeah.

**I: ...that goes towards Gooderstone?**

R: Yeah. Where I lived at Lilac Farm in Eastmoor, there's a river at the bottom there. There used to be an otter in there, but I don't know what...I think that might come from Stoke way. I'm not sure.

**I: I wonder if that is what is now called Stringside.**

R: Might be.

**I: As a child, I remember everybody called it Springside. It was a narrow little river. It was nice and clear.**

R: And it had...

**I: And it flows underneath the bridge on the way to...**

R: Yes, it does.

**I: ...Eastmoor.**

R: Yeah.

**I: And then I think it turns up towards...**

R: Yeah. And then I was born on the left hand side going towards Stoke and Lilac Farm. Now, there's W.R. Chapman Plant Hire...

**I: Yes.**

R: ...that's where I was born. There was three houses at the bottom where his diggers and all that are. I was born down there, and behind the house there's a river, and there was a bit of an old tree across there. We used to run across that when I was little. But there was an otter in that river. It was...

**I: Was there?**

R: Yeah.

**I: And was it quite a small, narrow river?**

R: Yes, it was. Yeah. It wasn't very big.

**I: Because I think I remember going with friends to the Eastmoor Bridge, we called it.**

R: Yeah. I know where you mean.

**I: And you could get watercress from that end of the river.**

R: You could. Yeah, you could.

**I: And also find freshwater mussels.**

R: I didn't know about that.

**I: Yeah.**

R: Oh, could you?

**I: Yes.**

R: I know that you could get cress, yeah.

[0:05:08]

**I: And have you got any other memories, or memories of other children in particular that would be with you?**

R: Well, I would play with Catherine Greef, and my cousins. So, there'd be Jenny Reeve, Chris Reeve, Paul Reeve, and Andy Reeve, and also my other cousin Bernie Chapman, 'cause he lived down there as well, we'd all be down there. But, yeah. We just used to play about. And I used to have a really good friend called Trisha Suckling. She lived in the council houses just opposite the school.

**I: In Oxborough?**

R: Yeah. In Oxborough, and I used to go to hers after school every day and then I'd walk down to Sawmill Cottages home. And one night I was a bit late, and mum and dad thought I'd been abducted.

**I: Oh, dear.**

R: No, I hadn't. I was just playing. But, yeah. It was...

**I: So, you'd go down to Sawmill Cottages and then back to Eastmoor? Is that where you lived?**

R: No. I was born at Eastmoor. I moved away from Eastmoor when I was four.

**I: Okay.**

R: We actually went and lived at Gooderstone for about a year, and then we moved to the Sawmill Cottages 'cause that was owned by a lady farmer. That was a tied cottage then, and my dad worked for the farmer. That's why we were there. And next door to us was Mr and Mrs Warren. They was in the middle one. There was an end one, I never ever knew who lived there.

**I: Oh.**

R: Never. But we lived the one nearest the road, and Mr and Mrs Warren were in the middle.

**I: Okay.**

R: We had outside toilet.

**I: Yes. I'm sure.**

R: No running water.

**I: No. I think that's excellent. So, is there anything else you can recall of using the river?**

R: No, not really. I did have a little sort of dinghy thing, but I was only allowed to take it down there when my dad was with me.

**I: Okay.**

R: But the river, that was just like little stream, really. It weren't very deep. But there was loads of little tiddlers down there. Always.

**I: You talked about fishing for tiddlers.**

R: Yeah. There was down there. Yeah.

**I: And, the river was always lovely and clean?**

R: Always. Yeah, it was. Until when that was a bit later in the year and then the cows had been there on that field, and then the cows would do whatever they had to do in the field.

**I: Right. Okay.**

R: But I think when I was at the school, I got a feeling that we had to go...oh, no, we didn't. We went to Foulden to get some frogspawn.

**I: Okay.**

R: Yeah. We just went on, you know where Foulden Common is?

**I: Yes. Yeah.**

R: My dad got a big wet foot 'cause he fell in. So, I didn't have any frogspawn to take to school the next day, which didn't go down very well, but never mind. But, no. I used to play in the rivers with Trisha Suckling and Catherine Greef, and yeah, it was really nice. And then we moved.

**I: And as a child, you always attended Oxborough Primary School?**

R: No. I went to Oxborough Primary School 'til I was six, and then when I was six I went to Gooderstone Primary School. I had some really good friends there, Susan and Jeannie Palmer. They were my friends there. I loved...that was a lovely school. But I didn't get on very well with this one Miss.

**I: Well, I think that's excellent.**

R: Is that alright?

**I: Yes, I think so. Thank you very much.**

R: You're very welcome.

[End of recording at 00:08:43]