

LOHP Oral History Interview

Interviewee: LESLIE FLATMAN Thelnetham villager all his life, farm worker

Interviewer: Karen Warren

Date of Interview: 4th Aug 2011

00-00 Introductions

When/where born/family at same address. 2, Council Houses, Thelnetham

Leslie age 81 at time of interview. Date of birth 11-11-1929

Father's work: Smallholder and labourer at Dairy Farm and Slades Farm, Thelnetham

03-07 Leslie's schooldays: church school, now village hall. Number of children, curriculum, playtime, sports detailed. Left at school leaving age of 14.

04-55 Work for Harry Burroughs (Burrows?) - Wards Farm. General farm work assisting stockman - Pigs, house cow, various crops/sugar beet

05-49 Family life/meals in Leslie's childhood/youth: Helped father in garden/vegetables grown.

Father lost one arm in World War One.

Mother cooked on open fire. Got a cooker when times changed.

No electricity or running water before this.

Water pump for 4 houses - filled pail to bring in for the day. Heating an open fire in one room

Bath in kitchen or outhouse cloak/lumber room. Outside toilet.

Fuel for fire - coal/wood - coal lorry/wood cut down on farm.

Things began to change/improve after World War Two.

10.48 Village houses/roads

Were fewer houses. Road surface maintained by horsedrawn cart with tar-pot/tar heated by making a fire. People walked, cycled. Horse and cart to bring home firewood

13-20 How World War 2 affected Thelnetham: Younger men went into Armed Forces.

After 6 years work for Mr Burroughs (Burrows) at Wards Farm, Leslie moved to Lodge Farm to work for Mr. Ferguson in 1949. Worked for him 26 years. Moved up from labourer, much work with horses, to tractor driver/cornstacker. Mr. Ferguson a tenant of John Middleton Murray, Lodge Farm.

15-15 Village activities. Fete mentioned/no details. Child friends "going about".

16-00 Changes: People have moved away from the village. To Hinderclay/Garboldisham (local) mentioned. Fields have changed - were hedges/ditches "everywhere". Collected nuts/fruit from hedges. Wildlife - more deer now. Fewer birds as fewer hedges. Were more rabbits - catching a rabbit in cornfield welcome harvest dinner. Birds shot for food - "every farm man had a gun".

19-39 River/Fen: River spoilt now/deeper now. Used to be high bank and fishing. Used to be kept clear but not now. Used to flood nearly up to the mill.

Thelnetham Fen: Similar then and now. Used to play on them. Raspberries still there.

No peat digging in living memory. People hired a bit to collect firewood.

Fires once or twice a year to burn off the top did it good. Now they cut it - looks nice.

Reeds/sedge - smallholders used to cut sedge to thatch cornstacks.

Thelnetham Fen never been ploughed. 2 meadows between Thelnetham and Hinderclay Fen

Were first ploughed 15-20 years ago when bought by Aves. Pity as used to be nice flowers there.

24-30 The Mill: Working when Leslie born, fell derelict, now restored.
Flour used to be bought from Hopton shop, not mill. Co-op grocer came round on Fri,
Rickinghall shop on Mon. No clarity of year. . Thelnetham shop/P.O. at Ivy Cottager run by
Mrs Aves (Mollie's mother

26.50 Leslie's retirement.
Finished work 1989-redundant- Mr. Ferguson cried as could not afford to keep Leslie and
another man on – employed a self-employed man to take their place. Technically retired at
age 65 in 1994. Still did work for people between those dates. Close/caring relationship
between employer and worker evident.
Now continues hobby gardening for exercise. Cycles to Hopton shop regularly.
Catches bus weekly to Bury St. Edmunds on Wed-market day. Car lift weekly
Fridays with Mr. Ferguson's daughter, Margaret Philip. She still cares for him as her parents
Did. Fewer buses now to Bury have spoilt things.

31-25 Church was very important when Leslie young. Had to go to Sunday School at the Rectory
(now The Manor House), then walk across to church service. Most families went to church
every Sunday, morning and evening. If parents went, so the children had to go too. Sunday
dinner-roast beef-mother good cook. Family Sunday afternoon walk

Interview length 33minutes 22 seconds