

LOHP Oral History Interview Summary

Interviewee: ROLY FARR Interviewer: Karen Warren Date of Interview: 2 Aug 2011  
Interview length 1hr,2mins,50seconds.

- 00-00 Introduction. Where/when born - Mill Pond Farm Cottage, Garboldisham.  
Lived there all his life. Born 1923. Age 88 at time of interview. Wife is in 90<sup>th</sup> year.
- Father's work-lengthman/foreman Norfolk Highways Dept, Carbrook, near Watton  
Cycled to work from Garboldisham, retired age 65. Roly employed there to fill his father's  
place: year in life of village lengthman 1950s, Roly worked way up to Superintendent, then  
Inspector – Attleborough area, also taking over Thetford area with 1972 reorganisation  
(Weeting, Mundford to Watton, Banham, Lophams).
- 04-50 Roly left school aged 14 -1937- to work on Mr. Laurie's (Scotsman) Ling Farm, Garb.  
Hours of work, pay rates, numbers of men, nature of farm work over year, good heavy land.  
Moved on to Lambert's Street Farm, light land due to poor health-bone disease. Norwich  
hospital unable to cure. Cured at London Hospital under world specialist. Left farming to then  
work on the roads- see above.
- 07-45 The Heathland – bracken never cultivated. Owned by Molyneux Montgomery, Garboldisham  
Hall-killed World War 2. Wife kept estate but auctioned off Hall 1945. Sold for £48,000 to  
Brig. Gen. Painter-sawed down much woodland, sold wood, bought whole estate, tenant  
farmers bought their farms, eg Lambert.  
Forestry took over woodland remaining-noth sides of A1066 Garboldisham to Gasthorpe
- 13-00 Army/Home Guard training World War 2. Rifle Range on The Heath. Description of  
Garboldisham Home Guard (Roly was a Sergeant). Also mentioned Home Guard  
Riddlesworth, Lopham, Blo Norton, Snetterton, American Air Force, Thetford Rifle Range,  
Observer Corps.
- 15.29 Family Names/Roles in Garboldisham 1940s. Hogg family mentioned (Roly's wife's family)  
Roly's own family's main events, village childhood football/cricket. Brother died RAF  
before World War 2 at Chatham Naval Hospital, aged 22. Mother died age 59. Role of  
mother in family/women didn't work after marrying, domestic service pre marriage at  
Thelnetham Rectory and Cley, Norfolk. One of 10 children, maiden name Frost, lived at the  
Dial House, Garboldisham. Girls in service around the country, Boys to local trades-  
butcher, carpenter, decorator -most lived to their 80s/90s. Roly's father's brothers also did  
village jobs –postman, gardener.
- 21-58 Roly's schooldays 1928-1937 (born 1923- age 88 at time of this interview)  
Garboldisham School-curriculum, pupil numbers, lunch arrangements, playground games,  
sports, teachers' names-Mr/Mrs. Stafford lived in school house, Miss Wilson cycled from  
Diss, Rector-Church School. How children played after school and helped at home (Roly  
grew vegetables with father and still keen gardener).
- 28-45 Vehicles/Roads. Cars but not many/ Garboldisham bypass built 1963, straightened 1968
- 29-38 Shops in Garboldisham: General Store/Post Office-Mr. Whitton, Sweetshop-Mrs. Chapman,  
then Mrs. Cook, 3 carpenters, 2 garages. Nunn's Garage, where now Chapel Close, was Home  
Guard HQ/weapon store in World War 2. Butcher until 1960ish, Bakery until 1960s-70s.



- 32-48 Entertainment/Village Events. Annual Sports Day run by Ancient Order of Foresters- Church Meadow per World War 2. Coronation George VI village celebration at Garb.Hall/Manor (Mr. Montgomery), Jubilee George V-fireworks.
- 35-27 Garboldisham Hall after M.Montgomery: Woodall, Lancelot Smith (Berings Bank), Borthwick(New Zealand met importers), Dr. McCurdey made it into flats. Fire- pulled down.
- 36-21 Garboldisham Manor- 1948 Major Denny died, became school, hired by Jews-came to bless milk at Lambert's Farm every day, became club-fire mystery-pulled down.  
Roly says we miss the big houses. Manor had 30 acre park/wood/walled garden/ orchard/ avenue walnut trees. Boys collected walnuts. Villagers bought milk from farms.
- 38-20 Changes to land/farming: Modernising from World War 2 .Hand labour/horses 1937-9- sugarbeet-tumbrils-cornfield drilling/hoeing, gang cut thistles, removed stones,pulled docks. 4 yr crop rotation – beet, wheat, barley, hay for cattle/horse food. Sainfoin(flowered hay) cut by a “sailor” in Roly's boyhood, After harvest soil broken up by gyrotiller- worked by gang living in hut.
- 42-22 How fields/hedgerows changed – 3-5 fields made into one 10 acre field,then on to 60-70 acres today. Fields were all named, Garb. Parish Council has map with field names/hedges/ditches as they were. Meadows had hedges, fields had ditches. Hedges trimmed with hooks-trimmings, called flashings-laid down as bases for cornstacks.
- 44-46 Wildlife: Rabbits were plentiful-essential food in World War 2, also hares, fruit trees at Pear Tree Farm, nutbushes-hazelnuts. Birds: many coveys of English partridges /many pheasants For shooting. Big shoots. People caught or shot rabbits.
- 46-55 River/Fen: Old common (now LOHP land) all gorse. Football pitch on Parker's Piece. Water course flooded right from Lopham. Culvert under Hopton Road floods the Common. Flooding no worse now than then. Houses flood from time to time. Gorse was full of rabbits before myxomatosis. John Sillett looked after the common-he checked the fences. People kept cattle on it. Boys used to set fire to the gorse but it shot up again. Today gorse has spread. Roly recommends burning it to keep it down, as used to just happen incidentally. Water course needs clearing to let water flow through.River was straightened/cleared in the war. Not sure if common ploughed in war.
- 49-40 Roly's flooding theory: Heavy lands. Ditches held the water. Ditches now filled in.Big drainage systems/pipes today means water gets to the main water course more quickly and so flooding can occur more quickly. Floods occur winter or summer when thunderstorms (53-38)
- 51-00 Management of Common: was by leaving cattle on it. Stephen Brocket at mill, and then Fulcher, did this. Fen reeds sold (for thatching 55-06). Sedge grounds- everyone in Garboldisham had small sedge ground- about 10yardsx20yards. Roly's father used mowed, dried sedge to lay down/store potatoes on/cover over to keep out frost. Used more in past. Roly has heard of peat digging but no knowledge. Didn't collect firewood.
- 59-30 Changes to the Common/Roly's views/recommendations  
Snipe were common – land nests in reeds. No bitterns. Was less gorse when it was grazed. More people walk on it now as footpath. Could tidy up watercourse- never been properly cleared. Water builds up, causes floods. Scarfe's meadows were very rough-owned by Cross -were cut for hay. Better now. Flats meadow were always fed and kept clear with cattle .