

Voices of Hickling

Interview Transcript: Derek Gibbs

Interviewed by Ann Louise Kinmonth on 23rd August 2018

DG: My name's Derek Gibbs. I was borne at Trowse, Norwich on 15/7/33.

ALK: Thank you very much. Now what are your earliest memories of Hickling.

DG: My earliest memories of Hickling was my father had a Raider called Vixen - which there's some pictures here of - and when I became about 12 or 13 he said we're going to start sailing up on Hickling on a Sunday morning with one or two people like er Ben Balls, Jim Turner, Jim Poulson, Frank Futter, Derwood Wright, George Gibbs my father, Waldo Beales and round the posts, exactly what they're doing Wednesday nights now, and when that's all finished we'll have a drink and a roll or something in the pub and then go back.

We had to go back to Potter, which was quite a long way, but if there wasn't much wind or going through the trees, I now realise why I was roped in being the youngest because my father used to say to me, "you paddle 'cos I can't paddle because it make my nose bleed". So I did all the paddling (LAUGH) all the way through the trees and that going down to Potter. That was my first memories.

And then, um, around, that was '47 onwards Sunday mornings if the weather was fine and like Ben Balls had an old half decker, Jim Turner he had an old punt called Flieder???. Jim Poulson, he - I can't remember what he had. Frank Futter he had a boat either called Meadow Sweet or Marigold, that was one of those two and um Derwood Wright had a boat called Mazurka, he was at Martham 'cos he was Martham Boats. Waldo Beales had the other Marigold or what I said and that's what we used to sail on. Just sailing round for a bit of fun and that.

And then when it got about '49, round about that time, that's when Jimmy Turner come along. I mean lots of people, I heard different names mentioned who founded the sailing club. Well that was Jimmy who started it 'cos he always used to say "I think we ought to turn this into a sailing club" and all this that and the other, and him and my father and one or two of these got together and that's how Hickling Broad really started.

And then a bit later on when his daughter Wendy got, did you know Wendy, got a bit older she designed the Hickling Broad Sailing Club Flag, Jimmy Turner's daughter did. With a Swan on and all that. And then that went from there.

And I joined that as a boy, but as I used to go to sea, so I wasn't there all the time. I'd sail when I was home and after a while I graduated to being allowed to sail it, Vixen, if there wasn't much wind and, er, that was about it. And

that's how I got introduced to Hickling Sailing Club. Well I sailed in the Summer and skating on it on the Broad in the winter times, that sort of thing you know.

And then Stanley Nudd had a son called Chris, I don't know if you know him, he live in the village now. Well George Bishop, I never mentioned him as one of the people who used to start the sailing on a Sunday Morning, he was assistant warden at the Trust, George was, and he had a real genuine Norfolk Punt, which the mast and spars would all stow inside it. They'd all go in the boat not big long mast like we had what used to hang over the there, called Trout and he said to me one day 'that old boat lay down at Whiteslea if I bring it round here would you like to have a - this was in the early days of the sailing club - 'sail it'. I said yeah I'd have ago.

So we brought it round and eh then we used to sail it, but the trouble was that was so trouble with punts and safety big crop on the fore deck, if you got behind the half decker what's making a bit of a stern wave, she stuck her nose in and she just keep going and you done a submarine act, bail out and away you'd go again and that was who that belong to.

I think that's still around: the last I saw of it or heard of it was, or heard of it - I found out it all out being as I was going to see you - a chap call Sutton, Sterton Bracey has got it.

ALK: *Trout*

DG: Yes, a punt called Trout. He bought it and the last time it was with him was in 1999, there should be another piece of paper here what told me his number. Never mind, and I think she was number 16 or something like that. I had it on a piece of paper.

ALK: *And your punt, was that related to Trout?*

DG: No, mine, the punt I built to sail as a racing punt was a Wyche and Coppock drawing, and I just got the plans and built one and, er, Jimmy Turner used to keep an eye on me 'cos he was, as you know, a first class boat builder. And I lost all the pieces - they blew off in a box off the top of my car, little pieces of plywood what I'd cut off and Jimmy would go and have look 'cos I was at work somewhere you see and he said 'Don't go any further ring me' (LAUGH)

And I kept them all, I kept 'em all in a box and went to work one morning I was going to do something and they was sanding something I stood 'em on the top of my car drove out the barn where I was building it 'cos they must have come off on the road.

My wife went up the road to look for it and the dinner tin that went off with it and she knew where it fell off 'cos there was loads of seagulls all eating the sandwiches. But never did find it and I went to all the lorry drivers and said if they'd found a box with old bits of wood. I suppose anyone look at it and think that's a load of old pieces of junk and throw it away. But that was really interesting some of the things he put up there, yeah, yeah, so. And he kept an eye on me you know and say we got to move this, we've got to move that. He never done any work on it he'd actually advised me in a real...

ALK: *When he built the pushing punts, he had the design on the bottom of that shed.*

DG: **Yeah.**

ALK: *Did you do that, how did you do the...*

DG: **He did all that. He was an expert in that sort of thing. And I learned a lot - a lot - about boat building through building this boat off him and, um, he was funny. You know, some of the things he used to write on these bits of wood.**

ALK: *What?*

DG: **Well, such as, 'If you put that bit of wood in there, how are you going to get the next bit in?', and he'd blocked off. All the things that were really funny anyway, and he wouldn't let me go ahead until that was dead right to the drawings. If that was slightly out where you were bending a piece, 'that won't do', he said. "You'll have to move it back a half a goot", and I found out half a goot was about a millimetre.**

ALK: *Half a goot?*

DG: **A goat**

ALK: *Half a goat*

DG: **He had such funny sayings! Well, you knew him, you must have known what he was like.**

ALK: *Very dry.*

DG: **Yeah, his classic was him with me, they hired a band of chaps from London, 'cos they were all behind to paint the white hulls of Woods's Boats and you'd never seen such a mess, "I'll have to get rid of them", Jimmy said. "They'll have to go". I said, "so what did you say?". He said, "I got the foreman in the office, I said you aren't making a very good job with this so we don't want you tomorrow." "What do you mean?" he said, "We're painters". Jimmy said "No, no. There's painters, then there's daubers then there's you."(LAUGH)**

And things like that he just you know... Classic. yeah. But he really helped me with that boat build. Not the work but telling us.

ALK: *And it didn't turn out too bad that boat?*

DG: **That turned out I won loads and loads of things. The Punt Championships, Fastest Boat Drives, Cock of the Broads, er, loads of cups and all those Club regattas, everything. So he'd got it right somewhere hadn't he, between us we had, yeah.**

ALK: *So can I take you back to, um, when the Hickling Sailing Club was being built and so on...*

DG: **He said, I only saw the first part of it when. Robin and I and his brother, they tipped a load of soil out to fill in, you know, to fill in to make it high enough 'cos there was all just reed there at the keyheaded across and then filled it all in and um... I went away 'cos I worked for P & O and that sort of thing and,**

um, I remember Robin coming to me I was home a bit and he said and he said they'd shot loads of soil up on the pub car park, you see, and they'd got to be barrowed round and just tipped in a heap really to level out where the club house now is and I done that for 2 or 3 nights, evening like nights and then I can remember I think it was John Bannister built it, putting all the piles in and that sort of thing and then I went away and when I come back that was near enough done, you know.

ALK: *Was that an improvement, having that?*

DG: **What, the club house?**

ALK: *Yeah.*

DG: **Yeah 'cos in those days we used to sit in an old boat.**

That was another one of Jimmys sayings. He said I got some shelter 'cos they'd used a reed lighter in the reeds with a post across the other side of the start line and that. He found, it was during the war Woods's cruisers were all moored up on the broads on wire from one to the other to stop the sea planes landing.

And one of the cabin tops - they used to lift on two arms - blew off and that was in the reeds somewhere miles away. Jimmy found it and put it on four legs in this reed lighter with a square hole cut in it for when the flag went up so when you want a five minute gun, Jimmy Poulson used to pull, old Jimmy used to pull on this log and the flag would come back through the roof and go up the post.

ALK: *And then you'd pull it down at the go...*

DG: **Yeah, at the start. That was all really a bit primitive, but good. And, eh, you know. And I always used to, he build that Trout he used to come with me sometime and I used to sail on him as well when my father wasn't going.**

ALK: *So let's go back a bit, did you have brothers and sisters?*

DG: **Two sisters.**

ALK: *And what became of them?*

DG: **One of 'em worked for Vospers, wiring out Motor Torpedo Boats and Air Sea Rescue boats down at Southampton. And my other sister was a hairdresser, and she did nothing else but work in this shop in Yarmouth. Well, she ended up on her own at the Bridge Stores at Potter Heigham for Herbert Woods set her own little hairdressers shop up there, years and years ago, yeah, so...**

ALK: *And your parents, what did they do?*

DG: **Well, my mother was a housewife.**

ALK: *Yeah?*

DG: **Well, just looked after the house. We had a fairly big house and a big garden and so she used to do that and my Father was a yacht skipper in that**

Mayflower which lay down at Candle Dyke and in the winter time - where they now flooded out all those marshes and that - well they were all osier beds, different colour osiers for making baskets and he used to cut them in the winter time and bundle them up and they used to go away.

And because of the 1938 flood, when that came through Horsey, that killed all the osier off. All the marsh and everything, so that was the end of that, so in the winter time - he used to stick with the boat in the summer time - and he was friendly with Herbert Woods, they were youngsters together, he used to go a work up on the yard, you know painting and repairing boats and that sort of thing.

So they then, after the osiers all went, and they set some; they never would grow again.

That's where they done that scrape down there for birds and all that. Right in the corner of Candle Dyke.

So that's what he did and they were all sort of into that sort of thing.

Two of his brothers. One of his brothers was a skipper for the Glacier Mint people, Fox, on their big yacht, he used to go all over the world, he was skipper of that, and one of the other brothers he was an engineer on, I forget whose boat it was, another big yacht down in Southampton, did the engines and that sort of thing, yeah.

ALK: *So thinking about your own growing up, where did you go to school what were the highlights of your holidays and that?*

DG: I went to Potter Heigham School and Miss Wilson, the head teacher, said I was the worst boy she'd ever had to teach in all her teaching career. Um, disrupted the school. Disrupted everything in the village and everything like that and well, I suppose, in general fact a general nuisance that was how she put it and em....

Anyhow, I went and funnily enough I passed the scholarship and went to Grammar School in Yarmouth, one of only about 3 in the school, and she reckoned I was never attending or paying attention or anything like that, but, you know, I was one of the brighter ones!

And, anyhow, I went to Grammar School and I didn't like that much, so the last two years I went over to the Technical High School at Gorleston. And then I finished there in '48, came home, came back here and I wanted to go to sea, so I applied for Outward Bound School and I got a place at Gravesend Outward Bound and I then, that didn't start till September and that was Easter, so I went...

ALK: *What year would that be, September...?*

DG: '48. I went in the shop at what is now the Bridge Stores, like paper boy: I used to go down the river bank and right round Repps with newspapers in the morning. And then I had a boat with milk and butter and that in it and used to go out to the bungalows. A lot of those bungalows, although it was just after

the war, there was loads of people working for Herbert Woods who were still on military work like MTBs - Motor Torpedo Boats - and Air Sea Rescue Boats coming up here to be repaired and all that, so they lived in a lot of those bungalows alongside the river.

So I did that 'til I went, and then went to Gravesend Outward Bound, er, where you get half killed and, um...

ALK: *Half killed?*

DG: It's a hard life Outward Bound Schools, believe you me. Well you know the rules of it, don't you? "Make or Break you" they call it. And, um, you're free to go when you like, if you say "I've had enough of this I'd going to walk out", they'd just say, "Right ho, go" and that, and if they achieved like 365 boys a year, they'd done what they want to do.

And then, when you passed, when you'd finished out there, then you'd go to these Officers after a job - you know you'd always find it was the shipping companies in them days who used to pick the Outward Bound boys first, you know.

I went to the Blue Star office and there was only two jobs going and both me and another boy who was from another Outward Bound School, we got the jobs.

So I went for P & O on the boats going backwards and forwards all through the Middle East and Suez and that way, India and Ceylon as that was called then, down to Australia, round Australia and back. And I did that for a few years.

Then I worked for Blue Star and Lord Vestey's Boats, on the meat boats running down South America for beef and on out to Brazil, Uruguay and that.

ALK: *What were you doing on the boats?*

DG: Deck boy, and then gradually worked up to Ordinary Seaman, that sort of thing, and then, um, Patagonia in the winter time when the sheep were there and general steam all round the continent and everywhere with different shipping companies.

Then I overstayed - that's when I went fishing, and I overstayed my time and got called up to National Service. I didn't realise that: I thought fishing was the same as the big boats. So I had to do 2 years in the army, and I came out there and I worked for Trinity House on the boats and lightships and Harry Ellworth on their boat. A bit of work here in the boat yard then a bit of work there in the boat yard and, then, um, and then when the oil come along I worked for them and I worked for Amoco for 30 years up here and Bacton in the North Sea and got my pension from there and done more sailing!

ALK: *And were you well, did you get bad illnesses during this time?*

DG: No, no.

ALK: *Nothing.*

DG: Once when I was fishing I got a lot of salt water boils. That's 'cos they never bandaged my wrists and that, they used to tight bandage the wrists up to stop the oil from chafing.

ALK: Tell me a bit more about fishing for herring.

DG: Cor, you want to talk to Doddo about that. He was fireman on the boat I was on.

ALK: Doddo was?

DG: Yeah, yeah. Kenny [Addy], him and I were on the deck, we slept together up I the fo'c'sle just us two and he used to smoke, and Doddo will tell you, and there was a canister up there of Carbide Gas, water in it, making gas for the light, and he used to smoke and I used to say to him, Kenny if that went off you know this boat would go to bits. I know enough about life like that, you shouldn't smoke there's gas is "That's alright," he used to say.

And, er, yeah, and he said to me once that we had a little stove down there, and he said I'll light that. And he got up on deck and he poured some paraffin down the chimney where it went out on deck. "When I say right", he said, "throw a match in the fire", and, well, 'woof', that went up, how that never set the boat on fire I'll never know. He was a boy he was. Yeah.

ALK: Now he said they once won some plate.

DG: That was on... They were on a boat called the White Owl YH 105, called White Owl. She was a wooden one they won the Prunier trophy, which was the highest catch of herring in one night. The biggest catch in one night.

ALK: You never got that.

DG: No I weren't on there.

ALK: You were on Ocean Rambler...

DG: That's it yeah, but that, the White Owl had a lot more Hickling lads in it.

ALK: Oh yeah, but there are a few on this picture that showed me of the Ocean Rambler wasn't there.

DG: Yeah, only three of us from round here, Doddo.

ALK: Doddo on the far left.

DG: Kenny Addy.

ALK: Yeah.

DG: And me.

ALK: In the middle, yeah.

DG: In the middle, yes, with the beret.

ALK: How long would you be out at sea when you were fishing.

DG: Would be one, two or three nights, something like that.

ALK: Yeah, yeah.

DG: I was trying to think who was in the White Owl when they won that trophy.

I think, um, Arthur Tillet, he would have been in there, oh, and Barney Amis. There would been, about four or five of them from Hickling in the crew of the White Owl when they won the Prunier Trophy.

ALK: Did you enjoy it, going out after the herring.

DG: Oh yeah, but it was always a good laugh when you're that age and that sort of thing. I loved the sea. I still do. I still go to sea. In fact I might be off again in about three weeks' time. I do work for Jubilee Sail trips in square rig ships. Um, we help to take the disabled people to sea and all that.

ALK: Fantastic.

DG: I sailed across the Atlantic about four or five years ago, which was a crazy thing to do at my age. But, yeah, I'm still here!

ALK: So can I take you back to what it felt like sailing up onto Hickling and back. You've shown me some nice pictures of the Eel Set. If you can describe what it was like and then how you've seen changes in the Broad.

DG: Oh, seen changes! I mean I can remember like Duck Broad when you turn in here just past the Holt and sail around on it. I used to sail around on there when I was in a dinghy, me and my sister. Um, wonderful deep water and there was little entrance went out nearly into Waxham Cut, the river that go up to Waxham. You could get out through there and because the Sound was nowhere as big then. There was a lot more bunches of reed and what not. Then when the geese come along they slaughtered everything. And the Coypu. Really made you know, like, changes over two or three years. You could see the changes, where there was a lovely little peaceful waterway going up to Hickling through to Deep Go Dyke where it came out there.

ALK: More like Meadow Dyke?

DG: Yeah, yeah, yeah. And then they ate all the, them Coypu used to love the roots in the bank, they could get at it, you see, and that's what really spoilt it all. To some people, I suppose. Some people, they thought it was good really, because that made them more water. Yeah so, um, that was about it...

ALK: And you were saying that when you came onto the Broad there were cattle and things you could see?

DG: Catfield Corner you could.

ALK: At Catfield Corner?

DG: Yeah. Mr Ling, who had a mill down there called the Hay have you seen it (??????), or had it grown into the reeds right in the... , Tom Ling, he lived in that end house there that part. He used to let us boys go down there and we used to go to that mill and all sit round on the grass and that and swim in

there and all these old cows they used to walk down bring down to the edge of the Broad at the corner of Catfield Dyke. His side, Potter Heigham side of it, yeah..

ALK: *What was the water like?*

DG: **Crystal clear.**

ALK: *What could you see?*

DG: **Well you'd see odd fish and that sort of thing you know. A lot of big of big stones up there, boulders...**

ALK: *You didn't swim in the dipping place?*

DG: **No, no I never did that, no. Chris used to the bloke who was sailing Trout with me he used to go Dipping Place. I hear all about it, you know, talking to all these other boys, but, um, I never did do.**

ALK: *How did you get to the Catfield Corner swimming place?*

DG: **Go down Decoy Road. Where Balls's Farm is up on that corner, go down that lane as far as you can get to where Mr Ling's Farm was endways onto the road at the end there, go through his yard. Then there was a river - not a river - wall, a marsh wall as they used to call it went all the way round to the mill, so I suppose when they were working the mill, yeah.**

ALK: *And what do you remember about the seasons, you were talking about skating a bit there and floods and those kind of things...*

DG: **Oh, funny you should say that I keep telling my grandchildren all this. In my day, as soon as you was ready to break up for Christmas holidays at school, just before you broke up you was always getting your skates on your boots, on a pair of boots. Strapped on with a leather strap, and screwed the skate, screw each screw in the heel bit, into the heel of your boot and you'd have them all ready 'cos that would be um, you know near enough guarantee that every year. Well there wasn't above three quarters of an inch to skate on if you keep going...**

ALK: *Did you keep going?*

DG: **Yeah.**

ALK: *What went on out there on the ice?*

DG: **Ice hockey and all that, you know, that sort of thing. Coot catching, 'cos it was black with coots.**

ALK: *Where have they gone?*

DG: **You tell me. I went from Thurne the other week to the Three Rivers to Horning to take a boat round a bloke I sail with and I never see a coot all the way. Is that otter? Is that mink? There's both of them about in numbers now, as you know. I don't know there's something doing it. Um they just went, I mean from thousands to nothing.**

ALK: *Do you remember the coot shoot?*

DG: **Oh yeah**

ALK: *Tell me about them.*

DG: **Yeah. I used to help line the punts all being pushed across the broad. Ted Pigginn, he was in charge of all that, the Head Keeper, and George Bishop he used to be on the wing to keep them all in a line. And Stanley and Jack and all them, they used to push punts. And Thane, Mr Thane who lived down Arthur Planes father, just past John Tallowin's on Stubb, down there, in that bungalow, he was one of the pushers. I can't remember who else.**

And, um, they used to sweep them all across and the old coots used to try and fly back over and then they'd come out and they used to shoot them, you see, and 'cos all the hobos of Hickling, Potter Heigham, while they were coot shooting we used to get round the edge of the Broad with our guns 'cos they didn't notice the banging going on, so any that flew over the reeds and what not everyone was at.

Someone told me, that was Chris Nudd that erh one of the walls down there at Hickling you got to be there early to get a place.(LAUGH) Yeah. When the coot shoot started, when they started banging you see they didn't hear anyone else was at it.

And they used to lay them all out on the Pleasure Boat, on the grass up there, I don't know if anyone have told you that. Yeah. Then all the people of Hickling could go and, you know, get a brace if you wanted. They used to get a bit confused with all the Nudds and Beales's that used to go. Are they all the same family taking half the coots as their proper allocation. Yeah.

ALK: *Did you get to do with any of the farming going on at all?*

DG: **I used to go as a boy on a Thursday go and lead round a horse when they were cutting corn, that sort of thing, and stop while they put the shoots on and lead it up a bit, haller and halgy they used to call it**

ALK: *What?*

DG: **Haller and holgee. So you got to come haller and holgee, so when you were about to move you called holgee and then hold tight on top, hollering that out. Haller and holgee.**

ALK: *Who? Which farm was that?*

DG: **That was Janet Blaxell's Hall (???) at Potter, where is used to do it, and can remember I could take you and I took people to the very first place in the field where I was when the war broke out in 1939.**

We were carting wheat and his mother, she was on the end of the hall - I don't think that's on there now - had a big bell and if she wanted Charlie, that was her son, she used to pull this string and ring the bell. You'd hear it all over the farm, he'd go home and I remember her ringing the bell and she come out

and across one field and into the one, the other and said, "Charlie, we're at war with Germany".

"Let them get on with it", he said. (LAUGH) And I ran home; I was frightened.

ALK: *How old were you?*

DG: I'd have been, '39, so I'd have been 6 wouldn't I.

ALK: *You were young for leading a horse about!*

DG: I used to ride it down the road with its..

ALK: *With its huge feet...*

DG: Yeah, and another one sometimes in front of it a trace horse with loads of corn on it

ALK: *At six?*

DG: Oh yeah.

ALK: *Amazing.*

DG: Yeah, Yeah. During the stabling I could fit one out put the halter on and all the, what the boys do.

ALK: *What are your memories of the war? How did affect you and your family?*

DG: Well, fairly black. We lived at, do you know Potter Heigham, if you went past the church to go down to the marshes, you got Hall Farm, don't you, and there's another white house on the left hand side up on the top there, that's where we, I lived all during the war. The bloke who owned that boat, what my father was skipper on, that built for him so he running light from Trowse in Norwich and what not, in 1936.

So we lived there: Siberia my mother used to call it because the wind used to come straight across the north sea, across them marshes. Cold! There was no central heating (LAUGH). Yeah.

And, er, I used to - funnily enough I got a picture at home - I used to climb up and sit on the chimney pots and watch the planes come in from sea. I got a photo of me sitting on the chimney pot, on look out I used to call it. Messersmidt look out. I could find the photo for you if you want it. I'll dig it out when I get home. I didn't bring it today 'cos I thought that isn't really of any interest.

ALK: *Oh, it is interesting isn't it...*

DG: Yeah. And, um, and then I saw parachutists and I jumped off there with an umbrella off the roof, 'cos I thought that I would parachute down and broke my ankle. That's one of the memories of the war...! (LAUGH).

And I can remember that when the war in Europe, VE night, everyone opened the curtains. Woods's boat yard what had been blacked out at night, a

massive place like that. Suddenly everywhere was light. You could even see to go about on the road, you know without lights on a bike or nothing like that. Amazing.

They said the war is over, you don't have to worry about black out. I can remember my mother pulling them down saying we'll have a bonfire tomorrow and to burn all this old black stuff. And when you went outside, everywhere lights in houses, like I'd never seen before had got lights in. Yeah that was a lovely sight.

They had a big fire up on outside the stores at Potter - in the middle used to be pill box up there, you know - a machine gun pill box. Sidney Grapes the Garage man had it and he piled it all up with tyres and they set fire to it. A big fire for VE night.

ALK: *Fantastic, great stories,*

Now what about wild life, you mentioned the coypu and the coots and things, what other stories have you got about encounters with the birds and animals as you did all your sailing about?

DG: **Encounters, how,**

ALK: *Meeting them, suddenly being surprised by them,*

DG: **I, well...**

ALK: *Bitterns or...*

DG: **No, I used to see the odd Bittern flying around and that sort of thing, but they were just everyday things like.**

ALK: *Everyday things...*

DG: **Yes.**

ALK: *Yes.*

DG: **And like, um, I sailed a catamaran up there and 'cos there were lots of swans there then, and what used to make me - they went between the two hulls they would duck, you never hear them hit their head and they just come out the back end and carry on swimming as though nothing had happened...**

ALJK: *They thought they were swans but they ducked.*

DG: **Yeah, they did that, yeah. Never did hit one or anything like that. They just go down and out the back end. And there weren't that, well I suppose we didn't take it in, there weren't that many type of, rare type of birds about like I used to hear of now. They were all either mallard or teal or shoveller and just the common type of thing coots and moorhens.**

ALK: *Pike?*

DG: **Oh yeah big old pike. My father caught a real big one down at, in the Holt. Showing someone how to fish. How to fish for pike and he put the fish on the**

hook - I've got some pictures of that at home - dropped it over the side and whoosh, up towards Hickling that went yeah, that's nearly four foot long and he couldn't do nothing about it cos they were out of season, he was just showing someone how to do it, you know how to cast with live bait and that sort of thing. And off it went.

Yeah, he used to do all that sort of thing. Um, but they never, never really used to, he had little old 410 gun used to go shooting, you know, down the marsh after the odd duck for dinner that sort of thing. I suppose they'd call that poaching nowadays, but no-one used to take any notice then. They were only going to shoot one for your lunch or dinner and that was it.

ALK: *So how's Hickling Broad changed in your life time? How's it changed for better and how's it changed for worse?*

DG: **That's changed for the worse.**

ALK: *Oh. Well, tell me about it.*

DG: **Well full of weed, because no one don't do anything about it. There used to be weed but Kenny used to be about the old weed cutter and he used to keep it all down. That's what that big heap is at the top of Catfield Dyke, that's where they used to ditch it all on the shore there. That's what made that mound on the top at the top of Catfield Dyke**

ALK: *Where that chaps camping? Somebody camping up there.*

DG: **Is there? What, regular?**

ALK: *Regular, yes.*

DG: **Yes.**

ALK: *That heap...*

DG: **On top of that heap?**

ALK: *Mmm. If I'm right where I'm thinking*

DG: **Yeah, yeah. Where Catfield Dyke go down. I didn't know anyone camped down there. In our days we'd soon've got rid of him...**

ALK: *Right, so you're talking to me about changes for better or worse in Hickling Broad...*

DG: **Yeah I've seen it go down all the while.**

ALK: *Apart from the weed, anything else?*

DG: **Well, yeah, there's all different things. You're not allowed to do this, you're not allowed to do that, you could go where you like in our day. Because, Pleasure Island, no the one this side of Pleasure Island what's under water, Reed Island, weren't it called?**

Where they used to have teas and that out there and that in right just after the war big on Regatta days that sort of thing, they used to take them out in a

Lighter, a Reed Lighter, and, um, Primus stoves and run trips from the Pleasure Boat quay out there, to stand on there and watch the races, and it was all lovely grass.

Then the motor cruisers, you see, afterwards. That's what done it and kept washing it away, when they were all roaring up and down there and, um, they made a lot of the washing away

And not long ago they were looking for some mud and everyone keep running aground and I said to this chap I knew on the Broad, "you want to dig that island up there's plenty there", and they wouldn't even do it they wouldn't it, it was an ideal way of getting rid of it. There must be something about it, but that used to be lovely.

And on the next one, Pleasure Island. Who farmed the farm were John Tallowin live? Them people used to drive their horses through - they were only up to their bellies - across there onto that island all summer to eat the grass and that.

All the colts, the young horses, they were on that island to eat the grass. And then came off again the winter. There's nothing like that now it's all just grown up, they only want it all grown up, that's how it I read it.

ALK: *And what about Mrs Turners island, Miss Turners island did you go there?*

DG: **Yeah, used to go out there during the war, skate out there....**

ALK: *Did you visit her?*

DG: **Not her no. When during the war, when there was no one in there, I never knew her.**

ALK: *Jimmy knew her, I think.*

DG: **Oh yeah, he would have known her, yes. She was around in my day but I didn't knew her, but, um, we just used to go there, it was never locked. There wasn't anything in there only a coup[le of chairs, like a table and that sort of thing.**

I think she used to take a little bag with her writing and drawing, something to eat or knit or something and she used to go out there. But, um, we used to just go out there, never done any damage to it, just to get... That was cold when you were skating: go and sit in there for a little while.

ALK: *Did you call that area of all those little dykes and things the war bush that was just...*

DG: **Yeah.**

ALK: *Did you play around in there as a child?*

DG: **No, no. I was t'other side you see, Potter Heigham side. All in the Plans...**

ALK: *What did you call it?*

DG: **The Plans.**

ALK: *I haven't heard that...*

DG: **Plantations.**

ALK: *Didn't know they were called Plans.*

DG: **Plans, plans.**

ALK: *Short for plantations.*

DG: **Back of the Plans, they used to say. And there used to be a big heronry in there. That's dwindled all away, 'cos they've got scaffolding all up the trees and that now in there.**

ALK: *Got cuckoos there?*

DG: **Had. They're all out in the Sahara now.**

ALK: *Yeah, but they'll be back!*

DG: **Yeah, hope so, yeah.**

ALK: *So if you were in charge of the broad rather than the Broads authority and the Norfolk Wildlife Trust, tell me what would you do.*

DG: **I'd, I'd, my main aspect would be to get to work on that reed and get it back to good sailing again**

ALK: *And what would that mean?*

DG: **I don't know...**

ALK: *Would it be like if it was good?*

DG: **Well like it used to be where you could sail all over the broad, never had to worry about pulling centre boards up to get weed off or anything like that you know. There used to be some coming, but they used to get rid of it. I mean now you can nearly walk on it, so them boys tell me down the Sailing Club. Sad thing**

ALK: *It's like a duvet...*

DG: **Yeah. They reckon you fall in you don't go through it, I haven't been out there so I don't know any...**

ALK: *So, tell me about your boat. At Thurne.*

DG: **My punt.**

ALK: *Is that at Thurne now?*

DG: **No, my punt. I sailed with a chap do main sheet in a big river cruiser, right.**

ALK: *The boat you described to me that you keep at Thurne.*

DG: **I sailed with him as a main sheet hand, on the main sheet at the back...**

ALK: *Still...*

DG: Catspaw that's called. He's got the punt as well, he own it.

ALK: *I remember you saying that you go there more to coil the ropes than to sail these days.*

DG: Yeah, I do now mainly...

ALK: *That's the boat we're talking about.*

DG: Catspaw,

ALK: *Catspaw, yes. And you said she was 1875 built or something like that,*

DG: No, no, no...

ALK: *No, Im confused.*

DG: You are. Catspaw's a very modern one 11 or...

ALK: *So. But you've got an old boat.*

DG: That was Vixen, I reckon...

ALK: *Ah. 'Cos I told you I'd got an old boat, and you said you'd got an older boat..*

DG: We had one, that's what I said. She lay in the cuttings at Potter Heigham Bridge, her last days and one of Richardson's old motor cruisers, wooden ones from Stalham, 8 berth. Some boys reckon the steering went and they went in the cutting with her and so it crushed it all up and she was smashed to smithereens. 'Cos she was two skins of 3/16th under a cedar. Diagonal, with canvas in the middle, so that's to stop her leaking. How they used to build them. Cost a fortune nowadays to do it, but, you know, that worked in them days.

ALK: *So we're coming towards the end and I'm just wondering if there are any other stories that you would like to have on this tape for your grandchildren to listen to or whether we've done you justice...*

DG: I don't know. Do you think so?

ALK: *I think you've done a lot of good stories, but I never know what's left and I always ask if there's anything else you want to say. In case you had something else on your bit of paper or anything.*

DG: Just the names.

ALK: *Their names...*

DG: I used to put the names down so I knew who was who, you see. 'Cos you forget, don't you, when you get over here.

ALK: *You could just say a word about your first Saturday job and the Perfect Ladies, because we've got a nice picture of that.*

DG: Well, my father ran Wood's Hire fleet, the sailing side of the yard. All the sail boats. And so, when they started getting the boats ready after the war,, or the last year of the war, they were sneaked home and put in a shed at the side of an Air Sea Rescue Boat and was getting painted when they send out a (?)

They suddenly turned a lovely white and varnished again like they were in their heyday!

And so after the war in 1946, the summer of 46, there was some funnily enough amazingly ready to let! (LAUGH) And, um, one jump ahead of everyone. And he had to recruit a team like a lady and a man on each five or six of them to do cleaning, someone to do batteries, someone to check the sails over that they hadn't go any tears or if they had, to change it for another sail. You know, all things for sailing, all things like that, um, and that's how I come to get a job.

He said do you want to come watering on a Saturday, you see, so I said yes. Be no long hose they had different pipes along the quay so you didn't have drag it two people from one standpipe to another and fill them up with water and that was it.

And as they got more - I didn't do it then when they built a lot more yachts and that - they had to have 2 people doing it to get 'em ready for going out by 3 o'clock in the afternoon, you see. Some people down there at 11 o'clock ready to take over.

That was a bustle and hustle I'll tell you, yeah, and, er, like Potter Regatta - that was all a big day weren't it.

ALK: And then, there's just a word about the Yacht Station at Yarmouth, because you had a bit of a job there...

DG: Yeah, I came home from something... Well, to tell you the truth, my first wife died so I was quite young and out a job so they gave me a job a Woods and Son in the yard and what they said was why don't you work in the yard. My father used to do masts and that in the wintertime, help him in the winter and go down on the Yacht Station and help out down there in the summer, that's how I come to be down there. Only done it for a couple of years then the oil came along and I went with it.

ALK: Well, thank you very much. What a life! What a marvellous life!

*This transcription has been made to back up, not replace,
the audio tapes that form the main record output of the VOH Changing Village project 2015 to 2020.
The transcribers used their best efforts and checked back for proper names and places.*

We ask for forgiveness for any errors...

