

Voices of Hickling

Interview Transcript: Huggie Gibbs

Interviewed by Ann Louise Kinmonth on 25th October 2014

ALK: Thank you very much for helping us with this oral history, and can we start with your earliest memories? Where were you born?

HG: **The School House, Hickling.**

ALK: What do you remember about that?

HG: **Well, I don't remember anything about the School House then. We haven't lived there but we lived in Martin's Yard, opposite The Green. There was four houses along the road, we lived in the first one which was knocked down now. We lived there 'till 1953 when we moved up to the new council houses opposite The Greyhound when they were built along there.**

ALK: Were you the first family to move into one of those council houses?

HG: **Yeah, we were.**

ALK: How old were you then?

HG: **10.**

ALK: Tell me, what was it like to move in there?

HG: **Well that was, we still didn't have no sewerage but we had running water, we had tap water. We had a well up the other house where we lived, up Martin's Yard. And that was quite nice to have running water but we still didn't have the sewerage.**

ALK: Electric light?

HG: **Yes, we had electric light. We did have electric light down Martin's Yard.**

ALK: Why did you decide to move?

HG: **Well, they were condemned. The houses, they'd been condemned a long while along there.**

ALK: And who moved, who was in your family?

HG: **There was only me, my mum and my dad.**

ALK: Mmm. What did your mum and dad do?

HG: **Well, dad, he was a, he got injured in the war, shot up badly. Mother worked at Hickling school for about 35 year, cooking and cleaning and worked in the dinners, doing the dinners, and caretaker. And dad, he was a bricklayer but he couldn't He, he died in 1972, dad, he was only 56. And he worked for Leonard Corshon (?) building firms around here and W.A.G. Johnston.**

ALK: So, it was just you and your mum then after that, after.....

HG: **Yeah.**

ALK: dad died. How old were you then?

HG: When dad died, er, I'd be about twenty, 29, something like that.

ALK: And still living at home?

HG: No, I was married then.

ALK: Ah. Let's get back to that later then. Let's go back to, there you are living in School House for the first ten years. What do you remember about that? What were the good times?

HG: Well, we had some good times down Martin's Yard, that was where, that was actually our home, I was just born up there 'cos that was during the war and she just, when mum went down there, had me with her sister, 'cos they lived at the School House, Cecil and May Beale's.

ALK: So, who was in Martin's Yard with you?

HG: Well, next door to us was Hettie and Harry Choppin, then there was, er, Percy Postell and his wife. Then on the other, on the right, on the end was, er, Charlie Gibbs, they used to call him Grapes, and his wife, she was blind, his wife was. Fay Gibbs was the daughter and they lived down Stubb Road for a while after that, Fay did, when she got married, down there and that was all to do with the shop, remember the shop too, on the front. I can remember Jack Martin's mother when she was in there – they used to sell boots and everything in the shop in them days, you could get every sort of thing in there then.

ALK: He was a kind man, I think.

HG: What, Jack? Yeah, he was alright, Jack was, yeah, yeah. Yeah, he was a, he had a sister, Gwenny, who lived there with him. They were good days, I can remember. Well, you know, I used to go down the garden, I went down one year, in the springtime and I found a, a hedge sparrow's nest and in the nest was a young cuckoo. And that happened two year running and I never could find it before that egg hatched out to get, you know, 'cos in those days boys we all collected eggs, you see. 'Cos that wasn't banned in them days when we used to do that and we always used to collect the eggs but I never could get the cuckoo's out before they hatched out.

ALK: But you saw it, that's quite a

HG: Yeah, yeah, I used to feed it, I give it gooseberries and it would swallow a gooseberry whole.

ALK: You enjoyed birding?

HG: Yeah, yeah. We used to go every, when father left off on a Saturday we used to sometimes go down to what we called the Karnser, it's now called the Causeway but we always called it the Karnser, that was always the Karnser. And we used to go across Jack Platt's and get a haircut on a Saturday sometimes and we were walking across the fields and we used to look for birds' nests. And we were going across the fields one day and there was such a squeaking noise and I say to dad I said "What's that?" and he says "I dunno." So we laid on the bank and looked over and there was a stoat, there was a rabbit in the middle. I never seen it ever since, I never seen it ever since that day but he was going round and round, it was as if that was hypnotised. The rabbit, he couldn't move and it was like a spring and he was getting closer and closer and closer all the while, and it was just sat there, squeaking

and screaming, this rabbit did. And when it got in so close it pinned it at the back of the neck and killed it. Yeah, father said "We won't let the stoat", he hopped over the hedge and got it. We took it home, we had it for tea.

ALK: Did you get involved in the harvest with

HG: Yeah. We used to go on the old horses.....

ALK: Yeah.

HG: Shop to shop.

ALK: Did you? Where was that?

HG: Well, on all the farms, anywhere, up Jones, or up, down Stubb. Mrs, er, what. Can't think of her name now, Mrs..., right down Stubb Road, er, Youngman. Mrs Youngman's down there, and all the different farms. Yeah, we spent hours and hours in the field, especially if you have a stick for catching the rabbits. Used to put a notch in it if you got one, when it come to the end, put a notch. We allus knew who got the most rabbits at the end of the season.

ALK: Who was it who managed all the rabbits because you didn't just take them did you? They were

HG: No. They wouldn't let you have them in them days. They wouldn't let you have them so you had to give them back to the farmer.

ALK: Yes, yes.

HG: Them days.

ALK: Yes

HG: Yeah, that's They wouldn't let you have a rabbit then.

ALK: Did you go ratting?

HG: Sometimes we used to go rattin' but not a great lot. Sometimes you'd go up Jones, in the old barns up there, try to get them down there.

ALK: Yes

HG: Up Jones, in the barns up there, the old rats. But we didn't go ratting much to be honest.

ALK: What other things did you do? Apart from going to school, we'll come on to going to school.

HG: Well, we used to have, we used to have seasons, what they call it in these days. We'd be marbles, there'd be marbles for one season, there used to be holes on the, where the chapel, not where the chapel, where the seat is on the green and we'd have a marble pitch there. Then one in front of the restaurant, there'd be another marble pitch there Then there'd be a time for spinning tops and we'd do that then we'd go, that'd last so long. We used play hares and hounds, so many chase one on one night and then we swap over to the others to run for miles. We used to have to get back to the seat on the green without anyone seeing you to get home.

ALK: How far did you go?

HG: Oh, we used to run miles. Probably about 4 miles, some nights, run.

ALK: Go to the beach or not?

HG: No, no. Just around here, around Eastfield and all the way round, all around. Then we used to have a, go down Jimmy Pratts' and get a tyre. We used to have like hoops, up and down the street, with a stick you know. Knock them down the, go down the road 'cos there wasn't a lot of traffic in them days. Not, not about here at any rate. Then

ALK: Do you remember the first cars around here?

HG: Well there, there, there was one or two people around here, Colonel Gordon, I suppose he was, he had an old Morgan. He was one of the first ones I suppose what had a sort of car, and one or two farmers. As I say, there weren't a lot of tractors, not about in them days. Then we used to get treacle tins, put strings through them and walk on 'em. And do all that type of thing, you know, there was always something you could do.

ALK: And who were your best friends?

HG: Well, there was, there was a gang of us, always was, we used to call like, there was Morley, Lobbert, Banto – they were all boys, you know, Colin Beales, Buster. There was a whole gang of us, we all played.

ALK: Fantastic.

HG: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

ALK: And tell me about going to Hickling School.

HG: That was, that was alright, yeah. That was nice that was, yeah, lovely school there, yeah.

ALK: What was it like?

HG: That was lovely, there was Mrs -----, there was Fred Drake, he was the headmaster, and Mrs Myhill, Hilda, and Miss Gold when I was there. And that's different at the front now 'cos there used to be, as you look from the -----(?) to the road, on the left hand side at that end. We used to call that the Dell, that was full of willow trees, big willow trees in there then, in them days. We used to have school dinners. And the school dentist used to come round in, in a, like a caravan, so they could do your teeth.

ALK: Do your teeth?

HG: Yeah, yeah. Do your teeth, you never went to ----- . Then after he packed up you used to have to go to Stalham school on a Friday sometimes, when they were there to do your teeth.

ALK: Did you go to school on those days?

HG: Yeah, yeah. Oh yeah you went to school, you still had to go to school, yeah, yeah.

ALK: Did they have the, um, pond shaped like.....?

HG: Yeah, Hickling Broad. Yeah, yeah.

ALK: What did you think of that?

HG: That, 'cos they drained it then, there wasn't any water in. But we used to do all the gardening in the gardens with a, and, er, that was, I think they filled it in in

the end, the pond. But we used to have garden lessons out there, do all the garden. I think all the products what they got used to go to Stalham school for the meals, I think.

ALK: Mr Drake, a good headmaster?

HG: **Yeah, he weren't bad. He'd sit there sometimes doing his, doing his football pools when we were doing lessons, yeah.**

ALK: And you went to school? You didn't play hookey? You didn't take days off?

HG: **No, no I went to school.**

ALK: Yeah. Your mum was firm on that, was she?

HG: **Yeah, yeah. You weren't allowed to play hookey.**

ALK: Yeah, yeah.

HG: **Then when we left Hickling, we used to have to go to Stalham then.**

ALK: Did you bicycle?

HG: **Yeah, yeah we did.**

ALK: Did you get an allowance for that?

HG: **If you had your own bike.**

ALK: Yeah.

HG: **That it, but we, if you did, I had a school bike.**

ALK: A school bike. Tell me about that. I don't know about school bikes.

HG: **Well, they used to supply you a bike, cape and leggings, yeah.**

That was, that were, that were a bit of a bone shaker, old bike, but if you got a puncture or buckled wheel, you know what boys are like, we used to play about after school. You used to have to stay behind after assembly. Then you used to say I got a puncture or whatever's wrong with it, then you used to have to take it up Stone Street to Addy's and they'd repair it, and then you'd pick it up when you come out of school at night, come home again.

ALK: So, how many of you were bicycling to and fro do you reckon?

HG: **Oh I reckon there must have been about, over the years that got more and more, but there'd probably be about 10 of us in the bike school 'cos there weren't a lot of traffic on the roads then so that was really a good job, that was only then, but some used to go by car, the ones who weren't really fit enough to go by bike, they, they had a car.**

ALK: And what was Stalham school like then? Just after the war, yeah.

HG: **Yeah, that the, well they got there about 19.., in the fifties, early fifties that was, that was a**

I didn't mind Stalham school, that was, that was alright.

ALK: What did you like learning?

HG: Well anything, sort of, arithmetic and all that type of thing. 'Cos they had several different clubs, they had like photography clubs and all that type of thing.

ALK: Did they do languages with you?

HG: No. We never did have any languages.

ALK: Did you do science at all?

HG: Yeah. We done a bit of science, but there was never like no languages or anything like that.

ALK: Biology?

HG: No. No.

ALK: Nothing about the birds that you were seeing and that?

HG: No, no, nothing like that.

ALK: What were you doing?

HG: Well we, just the ordinary lessons really. Geography, history, reading, writing, that was it, just the basic.

ALK: Do you remember them teaching you any history?

HG: Oh yeah, yeah.

ALK: What did they teach you?

HG: Oh. 'Bout the Romans and Saxons and all that type of thing.

ALK: Yeah.

HG: Geoffrey Taylor, he was the history teacher.

ALK: You remember him?

HG: Yeah, yeah, yeah, Geoff Burgell, he was the geography teacher and, er, Butch Bayfield, he was the PT man when I was there.

ALK: And what were you all thinking that you would do when you left school? What did you talk about doing?"

HG: Well, that didn't really come into it much in them days. Never said a great deal about, you know, what you want to do. It wasn't until it was nearly time to leave school that they, you never went to like careers evenings, anything like that. There was nothing like that. You really found your own self jobs, really.

ALK: Mm. So what happened to you?

HG: I went, I started work at Sands', at Ingham, well its now Frontier. There in 19..., what was it, 58. I was there about 4 or 5 year, 5 year and I left and got on machinery and I worked...

ALK: Did they teach you stuff, skills? How to manage stuff, that kind of thing or not?

HG: What? At Sands?

ALK: Mmm.

HG: Well, no. That was just doing ordinary work, you know, like on 'dozers, all that type of thing, and spraying. But then I got, I got another job. I was offered another job, I went on machinery, full time driving, you know, diggers and that.

ALK: Well, that's quite skilled.

HG: Yeah, well it is, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

ALK: So how did you get to learn how to drive big machinery?

HG: Well, you just picked that up.

ALK: You just get on it and drive it?

HG: Well, yeah. You just done a bit here and there. Yeah, used to drive it in the yard to start with.

ALK: You didn't have to have a certificate or anything?

HG: Not in them days no. No, not in them days, that was all, you just, you just learnt yourself and that was it. Same as most things in them days, you had to learn yourself. If you didn't you never had, never done anything.

ALK: So, how did your work go on?

HG: What? How did....

ALK: Yeah. Well, so you told me about your first job and then your second job on the big machinery. Then what happened next?

HG: Yeah.

ALK: Next. You stuck with it.

HG: Well I stuck with it for 45 year.

ALK: Blimey, LAUGHS, right.

HG: Until I retired when I was 66. I worked an extra year, they wanted me to stop on but I said "No, I'll do one more year, that's, that's it.". That was mostly down the roads and sewers all the while.

ALK: Was it? In this region or ...?

HG: Yeah, all around here, this area, yeah, yeah.

ALK: Very good. So, turning to the seasons here in Hickling, do you have any memories of, you know, very severe weather, winters?

HG: Yeah. Yeah.

ALK: What can you tell us about that?

HG: 62/63 was the worst one.

ALK: Yeah.

HG: I ever did know. That was really, really cold 'cos I worked with Sands when we had that and we couldn't do anything for weeks and weeks and weeks, 'cos that was frozen, about 3 ft. down into the ground. You couldn't, you couldn't do anything.

ALK: Mmm.

HG: I remember we used to go ice skating on the Broad, and, er, we went on the Broad, first time we got on it was Boxing Day in 1962 and that lasted, that broke up on, er, that was a Sunday, March 11th.

ALK: Mmm, mmm.

HG: That lasted all that while. And they drilled through the ice just off the jetty at the Pleasure Boat and there was 16 inches of ice on there that year. And, as I say, that went on all that while. That's the worst one I ever did know, but before that we used to go on here, say, about once in 3 year, we'd be on the Broads skating.

ALK: You'd got skates had you?

HG: Yeah.

ALK: What sort of skates?

HG: I got them in the shed.

ALK: Have you? You can bring those on Saturday. We'd like some photographs of a couple of pairs of skates because everybody talks about it.

HG: Yeah, yeah. They're hanging in the shed there.

ALK: Yeah, great. You were quite good at skating I imagine.

HG: Yeah, I could skate alright, yeah. Well, they all, everybody could in them days, 'cos you went on the, on the Broads. They used to have ice boats on there and they used to have an ice cream wagon stand out there, bloke used to drive up in an old van and sell ice creams. But, as I say, that went on, that was the worst one I ever did know.

Before that winter we used to be on it about once in every 3 year but after then that seemed that everything changed and you can count near enough on one hand how many times we've been on there since 1963. I suppose if we've been on 7 times, that's about the most since 1963.

ALK: Mmm.

HG: That seemed that just everything altered after that year, '63, that severe winter. But we used to, in them days, you know before '63, you'd have frosts in November, right sharp frosts, everything. It seems different now, seasons have changed to what they were. You don't get the cold winters like you did in them days.

ALK: Did you get flooding?

HG: What, er, not really. But we've been flooded down here when those, that dyke off the road there used to fill up and the pit would be full up so it'd be right on the wall there but otherwise you don't get a lot of that now, not floods like they did 'cos they put new pipeline mud dyke right down through here right down to the dyke....

ALK: Yeah.

HG: and it's been alright ever since. So we haven't, you know, had any floods.

ALK: That's good. Good story, the 62-63 winter. Now what about courting? You've obviously been successful in that regard.

HG: **Yeah, [LAUGHS] yeah.**

ALK: Have you got any nice memories of how you met up and that kind of thing?

HG: **Er, I'll tell you mainly about our, it was a nice memory, we met in a fish and chip shop. [LAUGHS]**

ALK: What happened?

HG: **Well. I just got to know her then and I see her once, twice after that, then I did ask her out and we went from there.**

ALK: Pretty steady.

HG: **Yeah, yeah, yeah. We've been married now 45 years today.**

ALK: Congratulations. And, er, for courting couples, what was there to do then, dances, was there things to do, did you go walking? What did you do?

HG: **Well, there was always something to do. You, well in them days you used to go down the pub a lot, in them days. That was the, more than anything 'cos there wasn't much else to do but ----(?) the village years ago, they all had good football teams 'cos there was nothing else really....**

ALK: Were you a footballer?

HG: **Yeah. Yeah, I played till I was 43.**

ALK: Did you play on Carrow Road? Did you go up there with.....?

HG: **No, I didn't play on there. No, I never did get to play on there. No.**

ALK: Did you play the girls, in the girls' team?

HG: **Yeah, yeah. We played in that, we got some photographs that we had of that, outside The Greyhound there, I don't know what happened to them.**

But, er, yeah. We had some good times. That was all, you know, things were, I dunno, more friendly and everything in them days.

ALK: What pubs were here then?

HG: **Well, there was The Bull, The Greyhound, and, er, The Pleasure Boat, but there used to be The White Horse. I've got a pint pot out there somewhere what was in there, 'cos my mum used to do the old girl's hair. She's a Gibbs, Fred Watts' wife, she was a Gibbs before she married, and she gave mother a pint pot what used to be in there.**

ALK: That'll be good.

HG: **That's about here somewhere.**

ALK: I'll just write it down so we don't forget it.

HG: **Yeah. Can't find it.**

ALK: Don't move, you're fine.

HG: **That's about somewhere.**

ALK: Yeah. Yeah. And you'd go to all of them?

HG: Yeah. Yeah.

ALK: And you didn't have one that was yours?

HG: No, no, we used to draw, we used to draw round all of them. Well, actually The Greyhound, in them days, used to be like a meeting place, 'bout like on a Saturday night they used to bring the -----(?) in, the bus used to bring the ----- (?) in on a Saturday night from Norwich, and, er, people come there and everybody meet up there to go out from there, and you used to, till about 8, 9 o'clock and then it would sort of empty then you'd get...

ALK: Gwen was in charge then still or...?

HG: No, she wasn't in charge here, that was Bill Smith who had it then. Gwen was up The Pleasure Boat.

ALK: Sorry I thought you said The Pleasure Boat. They started at The Greyhound.

HG: Yeah, that was the meeting place.

ALK: I beg your pardon.

HG: Yeah, yeah. That was the meeting place, The Greyhound and, er, they would drift out, go their different ways from there, wherever they were going to, from The Greyhound. But The Pleasure Boat was the, was about the top pub – that done a good trade down there. That used to really be packed out down there.

ALK: And did you go on the water at all when it wasn't frozen? Were you a?

HG: No, I never did go.

ALK: No fishing, no boating?

HG: No. Well, the only time I used to go fishing was to take my father when I had a holiday 'cos he couldn't do nothing. I used to take him fishing.

But we used to go when we were boys, well that was before we even had fishing rods, that was a bamboo, but we used to catch fish with it.

ALK: What did you catch it with? A bamboo?

HG: Cane, and a bit of string.

ALK: And a hook.

HG: And a hook on it. We used to have a cork, put cork or a feather through for a float. But we still caught fish with it.

ALK: Yeah. Yeah.

HG: Yeah, that we did.

ALK: What sort of fish did you get?

HG: Bream, eels, yeah. We used to go eel babbing too. On a Saturday night we'd turn out of The Pleasure Boat, take some beer with us and go and sit out until 5 o' clock, eel babbing that's with the wool, we got a hundred and eighty one night, out there.

ALK: Describe it to me in more detail.

HG: Well, you got a bit of wool and you thread the worms through the wool.

ALK: Yes.

HG: Lengthways so that went right through the worms (22.04) and you had 'em in a, in a bunch, so they hung like that, and you tied a bit of line on a stick. You just kept up and down, up and down 'till you felt a bite 'cos they suck an eel do, and you snatch it and it just fall into the bottom of the boat, that's what you do.

ALK: What's the wool doing?

HG: That's how, I don't know, that's through the worm. But I don't know why that was wool but that was always....

ALK: Necessary.

HG: Yeah, yeah. You had to have wool. Yeah we got 180 once out there.

ALK: Very interesting

HG: That's before all the disease come about, that was.

ALK: The eel disease.

HG: Yeah, yeah. All the fish when they got all that there trouble, that be in about, 60s, when they got all the trouble with the -----(?) and that. Yeah, that was quite good. We used to sit out there on a summer's night.

ALK: What about the other birds you saw, apart from the cuckoo? When you were out there. What kind of birds were there around?

HG: There, there was all, there was lots of, er, all the tits and that were out there, you know, all the ----bearded tit and all that sort of bird, you'd hear them chirping in the mornings.

Er, well, out here too, we once got a bittern out here, he got a broken leg from and ,er, old Mr Gibbs who lived over here, well that was another blacksmith's shop next door, Lou Potter lived in -----(?) and, er, we were in there and we see this in the pit there 'cos that used to come right off the road, years ago, that come right up to the road and the phone box was right in the middle, in the middle of the cross between the road there and, er, we found this bittern and he had a broken leg and we took him.

So he got a rake and got it over his head and we got a hold of him, and Rex Brooks was there and he -----(?) and it went for him and went for his eye and that pecked him just underneath his eye.

So we took him down to Whiteslea and I forget who was there, don't know if that was Wilson or who was here then, and they put it in plaster and that got better and they let it, let it go.

ALK: What a story

HG: Yeah. Yeah. When we were boys we used to play in there, that used to be dry in the summer, you could run all through that in the summer, all through the reeds, play and mess about in there.

ALK: Did you have any other doings with people out at Whiteslea, I think the Desboroughs used to come up there?

HG: No. No I never had, I used to go with George Bishop a lot.

ALK: Yes

HG: Yeah.

ALK: Tell me about that.

HG: Well, he used to, he was a warden, there then, George was, yeah. He got a son, Arnold, and I got some photos somewhere of me holding a, a marsh harrier, a young one, with the wings held out. That used to nest on the Jarvis pond (?). They're about somewhere, I'll find them up.

ALK: Sounds fun.

HG: And that was about the only time I ever went up, I used to go with him sometimes.

ALK: Mr Vincent?

HG: I can remember, I can remember but I never did go.

ALK: You never did.

HG: No, no, no, no. But I always went with George if I went.

ALK: So you were born just as the war was ending.

HG: '43 yeah.

ALK: Yeah. Do you have any memories that relate to the war at all?

HG: Not, not really. I can't sort of remember that.

ALK: Do you remember rationing?

HG: Oh yeah, I can remember rationing, yeah, yeah. Yeah, the old ration books, yeah.

We used to go down to Enoch Gibbs', greengrocers, and there was a lot of shops around here then, in them days.

ALK: Take me down the shop row, tell me what there were, from your memory.

HG: Well you started up near the church, there was the Hollies, that was a, up near the church, that was a shop.

Then you come down, you come to the paper shop, then there was, come across the road and there was Jack Martin's, then you went a little further on his side and there was Enoch Gibbs'.

Then there was the post office the other side, then there was another Turners shop, the other side, Dick Turner, they went to Canada, I think they emigrated.

Then you went down Stubb, there was Doris Osborne's. Oh, before you went down Stubb there was a shoemakers, then there was the butchers when you went down there, Harry Martin's, then you went down Stubb there was Doris Osborne's, then Les Folgan had a shop on the Heath Road, a thatched shop up there where they used to do Sunday papers, up there, there was a lot of shops about.

ALK: Yeah

HG: Then, Yeah.

ALK: Yeah, Yeah.

HG: That was quite, you know, they all done a trade. 'Cos nobody couldn't get out to get anything in them days.

ALK: Yeah. Yeah.

HG: Yeah. I can remember all of them.

ALK: Now, something different. You've said a bit about, you know, your dad not being well and that kind of thing but what about health and illness at home. Do you remember going to the doctor or having the doctor or nurse in when you were a child?

HG: Not really. Not too much. No

ALK: You were well?

HG: Yeah, I kept fairly well.

ALK: Yeah.

HG: Yeah, we just got the common complaints, like measles, chickenpox, and that sort of thing. But otherwise, touch wood, I never broke a bone in my body but I don't....

ALK: Not even a fish hook through your finger?

HG: No, no. I've been lucky that way I think.

ALK: Because the National Health Service was coming in just about when you were about 5 or 6.

HG: Yep. That's it, '48 wasn't it?

ALK: But you probably don't remember anything about that because you were just....

HG: No, no, no.

ALK: a primary school child.

HG: Yeah, I remember the old doctor, that was Dr Brown.

ALK: Yes.

HG: He was our first doctor.

ALK: Was he here, or was he Ludham?

HG: Ludham. No. He was still Ludham. Yeah.

ALK: Did you go and see him, at all?

HG: I had, I remember going and seeing Dr Brown, yeah.

ALK: What was it like? What was the house like, and going in there and waiting and all that?

HG: Well, you used to sit round in the surgery. Charlie Gibbs, who lived down the road, he used to look after the surgery and unlock, Charlie Gibbs.

There'd be several people in there, and they'd just sit there, and there was a few books to look at, and.er. you know, that was just across the road, you didn't have far to go.

ALK: When you went through what did you get?

HG: **Well I**

ALK: Can't really remember.

HG: **Well I can't. I know if you had anything....**

ALK: Yeah.

HG: **.... There used to be little pills or something in a little tiny cardboard box.**

ALK: Yes.

HG: **Used to be in them days.**

ALK: Yes.

HG: **Nothing like it is today.**

ALK: You remember the injections?

HG: **Yeah, I can't really** remember a lot about the injections.

ALK: Did you get injections at school?

HG: **Yeah, we used to get them at school.**

ALK: Yeah.

HG: **Yeah.**

ALK: Some people didn't go to school that day.

HG: **I dunno, no. Most of the people did I think.**

ALK: Yes. Yes

HG: **Probably some didn't go.**

ALK: So it wasn't an issue, the affordability of healthcare, or getting better healthcare? It wasn't like that for you?

HG: **No. No, we were....**

ALK: Not for you and your family and your dad.

HG: **Well father, he was always ill after the war. He was never any....**

ALK: Did he get care? Not really.

HG: **Well, I don't, er, he sort of, he got, mother got she got allowed about £5 a week for him but she was still paying about £1 a week for tablets what he had to take in them days which, you know, he was never treated fairly I don't think, how he was.**

ALK: Where did he get his injuries?

HG: **Burma.**

ALK: Did he?

HG: Yeah. Going into Mandalay, sniper's got him. He got shot through the back of the head, through the mouth and his arm and everything. Yeah, he was a poor old thing.

ALK: Yeah.

HG: He never did, you know, recover properly. After the war from that. That's what done him in the end.

ALK: Yeah. How could he?

HG: We did go to the tribunal but they wouldn't, they wouldn't, er, give mother a full widow's pension. Afterwards, and the funny thing, we went up there and the bloke who was on there, the British Legion, his name was, he was on the Tribunal, they had a Harley Street specialist, er, a doctor and a layman, and the, the, the doctor, his name was Dr. Hickling. That was a coincidence, you know, we come from Hickling and his name, his name was Dr Hickling. Yeah, that was a long while ago.

ALK: But still a sad memory. I'm sorry

HG: Yeah. Yeah, yeah.

ALK: Absolutely. Absolutely. So, thinking of happier things. Why was Hickling such a lovely place to spend your life in?

HG: Well, I. We got everything really, if you weigh it up, we aren't far from the beach, we had the Broads, we had the fresh air, the countryside.

What more did you want really?

Everybody was friendly, everybody knew everybody. Never a lot of trouble or anything, some boys used to get up to a few pranks but, pinching apples and that.

You had your local bobby, he knew everything what was going on and he knew if any stuff been done he knew where to go, who to look for, to find out what happened.

ALK: And the kind of social side of the village, that was run a bit more by the football club and that kind of thing then?

HG: Dances and that.

ALK: Yeah, who ran them? Who organised...?

HG: Jack Payne, used to do. Old Jack Payne, his wife, they lived down, down Stubb Road. You used to have dances, they'd all be, you always had something. Put, you know, concerts on, the church would put concerts on, where you all went to Sunday School or chapel, I went to Sunday school.

ALK: You went up to Sunday School up at the church or.....?

HG: Church, what was the church rooms, opposite the school, what's now a house. I used to go there

ALK: Yeah.

HG: There, and that was the, that was the Village Hall and they used to put concerts, there was a stage there.

Then they used to have a whatsitsname across the Chapel there where they used to do pool, you know, and all that sort of thing, I forget what that was called, that day now.

On a Sunday they used to give three, one morning, one afternoon and one evening, singing and had sang, recitals and everything and they used to get money for the chapel, sort of thing.

Them days, yeah that was, you know, one big turn, things going on, most of the while there'd be something to do. Whist drives, there was some whist drives, beetle drives.

ALK: Who was the vicar up at the church when you were....?

HG: Er.

ALK:a kid.

HG: Bullough.

ALK: Yeah.

HG: Reverend Bullough that was married to Ena.

ALK: Exactly. So he came after the Reverend Cross?

HG: Yeah. I don't think I can remember the Reverend Cross.

ALK: Right. Time before you, some of the older people can...

HG: Yeah. Yeah, yeah. I can remember Bullough.

ALK: So, how do you think Hickling's changed over your lifetime?

HG: Well, thing, thing is there's a lot more people sort of moved in so your local people who lived here, their children 'cos the houses, couldn't afford no houses, so they all had to move out.

They used to call Sutton, where my boy used to live, Neville Road, they used to call that "Little Hickling" 'cos a lot of the kids had to buy houses over there 'cos they couldn't afford nothing in the village, and that's what happened.

That way, that spoilt the village, 'cos everybody was trying either to get retirement homes or, em, holiday homes what people with money were buying holiday homes and they never give, you know, the youngsters never had a chance, they couldn't get the money 'cos wages weren't that high around this area, not like London and them places. So they had to move out.

ALK: What children did you have?

HG: Just a boy and a girl, yeah.

ALK: What are they up to now?

HG: Well he's a fireman and the girl's a sister. And, you know, in A&E, well, at Cromer and Norwich.

ALK: Good for her. And the little girl picture I saw as I came in?

HG: That's my boy's little girl.

ALK: Right. So they've stayed local?

HG: Yeah

ALK: But not as local as you'd like.

HG: Yeah, she live up Norwich, the girl do. And the boy live at Stalham.

ALK: Yeah. Yeah. So that's an important thing that you are saying there about the next generation couldn't afford to live in Hickling.

HG: No, no, no, that was...

ALK: That's the big change.

HG: Yeah, that's why you ain't got that many locals left now, because they've all had to move out, like the kids. That's what I think at any rate.

ALK: No, it's an important thing.

HG: Yeah.

ALK: And what other changes do you think you've seen?

HG: Well I've seen a lot. We never had a sewer at Stalham. We used to have the old light cart come round, before that you used to have to dig a hole in the garden and bury them.

We, as I say, we never had running water, nobody had that.

Then there's, like telephone and all that, all come in, that's the changes, some of the biggest changes.

But, er, I don't know about the, there's a lot of houses been built I know. Whether they will build many more about here I don't know. But I think if they get too many that'll spoil the village.

So I don't know how, how, you know, how we'll fare in years to come, I don't know.

ALK: No, none of us do. So, coming towards the last few minutes now, and I just wondered if there was anything else when you thought I was coming that you thought "Yeah, I think I'd like to tell them about that", were there any other stories, the stories you tell to your family or that kind of thing, you know, family stories that, er....

HG: Well I know down the old blacksmiths, we used to go down the old blacksmiths. In the winter time when that was cold, when he was shoeing the old horses we'd work the old bellows of his pump to get warm. When he was shoeing the horses, so we could get warm we used to stand around the forge, get warm, us boys.

ALK: That's really interesting. Yeah, so that's quite, somewhere just here, is it?

HG: Where the old pub was.

ALK: Yes.

HG: Just past the Greyhound on the right hand side.

ALK: Yes.

HG: They lived in the, there's one what's got a gable end. And there's, I forget what his name is who lives in there now, he's a gardener now, that was where the old blacksmith's shop was.

ALK: Yeah.

HG: And there was another one, just as you go out of here to turn left and on the run up to the Greyhound, on the right hand side that was the old blacksmith's shop.

ALK: So there were two blacksmith's shops in the village, and they kept busy?

HG: Yeah, and er, Fred Watts.

ALK: How big were those horses?

HG: Oh they were fairly big horses, yeah. 'Cos they were working horses, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. And they all had, well every farm had cattle round here in them days, and all in them days.

ALK: And you remember the horses working?

HG: Oh yeah.

ALK: Would they be working in a team?

HG: Probably. You'd get two, sometimes if that was heavy going they'd put two like, one in front of the other, in traces in front of the cart, or there were always two on the drill and harrowing there were always two horses together, side by side.

ALK: So there'd be the ploughing, harrowing and drilling?

HG: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah, they done everything.

ALK: And what about when it came to the harvesting, what did they do there?

HG: Well they, they would just pull the binder, two of them pull the binder round and one in the cart carted the corn up to the stacks after they'd all been stood up in shocks (?). Yes that's how

ALK: Did you help with that?

HG: Pardon.

ALK: Did you help with that process?

HG: Yeah. We used to ride the old horses from shock to shock.

ALK: I'm not sure I'd call that a help.

HG: Yeah. ----- (?) boys they used to call them. Yeah.

ALK: You mean you were actually doing some work. You weren't just sitting on the horses?

HG: Yeah, you just sitting on the horses, yeah, yeah.

ALK: Did you sit on the top of the hay as well?

HG: Oh we used to sometimes, yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah, that was lovely.

ALK: Lovely thing to do.

HG: Yeah, yeah they were, they were good days, I think we lived through the best.

ALK: Do you? Yeah.

HG: Things aren't so fast them days like they are now are they? Everything's rushed now really isn't it? Them days we'd have just carried on slowly...

ALK: Yeah.

HG: but we'd have got just as much done.

ALK: Yeah.

HG: Well, that got done in the end, somehow. It's like nowadays that seems so much of a rush.

ALK: There's a great story about the, um, shoeing the horses. What else do you think you'd like your grandchildren to know?

HG: Well, I dunno really, be honest. There's so many things we used to do, you can't remember.

ALK: No.

HG: Half the things

ALK: Do you remember when the milk and fish and all that came round with horses and, or had that gone?

HG: Oh no I can't. I can't remember the, I know Jack Martin, I remember he had, he had a pony and trap, he had a shop and I seen him go at nine o'clock at night. I know, when I was a boy we lived down Martin's Yard there was a light on, cart going to Palling delivering groceries at nine o'clock at night.

ALK: Yes.

HG: He had the horse and cart, that was a trap, they used to put the groceries in it, take them to Palling.

I dunno where they kept that horse, there wasn't any stables there, not there then so I don't know where they kept that horse.

But they had a pony and trap, whether they kept it when they lived up, up the road there, up there where he had the greenhouses, I don't know. But they did have a horse, many moons ago.

ALK: Yes, yeah, yeah. Well, we've covered a, covered a lot of territory. I think probably give you a rest [LAUGHS]

*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...