



The Friends of Chain Bridge Forge

Geoff and Life Around the Forge

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Geoff and Ian 31.10.11

- Ian And we're looking at a map that is dated from 1911 and it depicts the High Street which is adjacent to the river Welland and Geoff is going to talk through the various buildings along the High Street and who was actually living there and what the usage of those buildings were and the occupation of the people who lived there. So the first house we come to which is just past Holland House on the map is which one, Geoff?
- Geoff It was Elmsford House which stood where the car park is now on the road.
- Ian And who lived at Elmsford House?
- Geoff I don't know who lived in it but I certainly can still remember it standing and knew it as the Labour Club and I think it was still used as the Labour Club in my, when I was very young.
- Ian I see. So we're talking about the 1920s - 1930s?
- Geoff Oh certainly, yes, I remember the 20s.
- Ian Right but 1930s and that was used as the Labour Club and moving back along the High Street so from Elmsford House what do we actually come to?
- Geoff Next to Elmsford House there were a pair of quite old houses. The one nearer the town was occupied and had been for a long time, I think and was until it was demolished by staff from the Girls High School.
- Ian And would that have been teachers or ..
- Geoff Yes, all teachers, yes.
- Ian I see and so that was a house, what was the one next to it?
- Geoff Next to it was rather run down, occupied by the Chilvers family..... Careful
- Ian And that was their main residence?
- Geoff Oh yes, I think they did ...I think they worked almost as a labour, gang labour. Bob Chilvers, the senior member of the family, I think he was not quite a gang master but they undertook casual work as a gang.
- Ian And was that something that was prevalent in the locality that you would have people who would work as gang labour on the ..
- Geoff Oh yes, yes there would be .. they weren't strictly gang masters as we think of gang masters now but they would be man who, it would be a man who could gather together a group of workers for an employer farm ...
- Ian So that was the Chilvers family and the one along from those, still on the High Street, who or what do we find ?
- Geoff That was a warehouse, it was used by Birchs in the 30s when I remember but around 1900 that's where Herbert Leverton set up his business. I think originally in cycles and then in, he got into motorcars. He was roughly contemporary with my grandfather. His two daughters were at school with my father and in those early years Herbert Leverton offered my grandfather partnership for £100 and my grandfather told him there'd never be any money in tractors Herbert.
- Ian Ah!
- Geoff Ha, yes, ha indeed.
- Ian And did Levertons actually, did he go into partnership with anybody else?
- Geoff Well, Fred Myers actually took up the partnership and quite soon after they moved to the old Drill Hall which was later the Regent Cinema and then Trustees Savings Bank, now a restaurant in the Sheep Market. When the Regent was demolished there were still motorcar, we saw still motorcar posters stuck on the walls behind the presidium arch and where the screen was. Herbert Leverton emigrated to Tasmania in about 1910 I think and my father was in Melbourne visiting my sister in the 50s and they organised for him to go over to Tasmania to visit the two, the two Leverton girls who were at that time, he told me, still unmarried.
- Ian I see.
- Geoff So, that was nearly 50 years ..

Ian And they were spinsters all their lives?
Geoff Yes, they seem so.
Ian I see. And moving on from the warehouse or the Leverton's premises, we're moving further towards Cley Hall, what buildings do we come to next?
Geoff Well, the warehouse was on the, was on the, that's right, was on the town side of a warehouse that belonged to Yew Lodge. I think they were all under the same ownership. It was largely empty I think in the early 30s but the Spalding egg packers used the first two floors. Women were cambling, that is they pick up eggs, two in each hand and quickly hold them in front of a lamp to test them for quality. It was all done by hand then. They packed them into wooden boxes being there a gross or half a gross, not sure.
Ian Could you buy direct from them or would you have to ..?
Geoff I don't, I don't .. except that on .. certainly on Saturday mornings they sold cracks which was a Saturday morning job for school children to collect cracks for home and friends.
Ian And what are cracks?
Geoff Well, pretty obviously, cracked eggs which couldn't be retailed and it wouldn't be allowed now, of course, could it?
Ian No.
Geoff Yew Lodge, then, this was the 30s, was the home to the Tointon family. Sam Tointon was a farmer, whether he was related to Ronald ?? Tointon, another farmer and cattle dealer who lived in The Limes, I don't know, probably could well have been brothers.
Ian But Tointon is a local name?
Geoff Yes, in farming, certainly in farming. It became the home of George Elsom, seed man, Yew Lodge and he developed the gardens behind for residential, had a big garden right through to Halmergate, as did all these big houses, of course, in High Street. Then Cley Hall was home to the Birch family from 1911 to 1964. Across the yard of Cley Hall were Birch's offices, still there with a bay window up on the first floor, now it's an annex to the hotel.
Ian Oh, I see.
Geoff Next to Cley Hall was Chislehurst, I think and fairly sure it was the home of John Grundy, whether it was John Grundy senior or his son who produced the 1732 map of Spalding that's in the Gentlemen's Society now.
Ian And is that the long building that we can see ...
Geoff No, those are the Birch's offices and behind it the dairy and outbuildings to the house. Now it's all annexed to the hotel and that bit will be Chislehurst.
Ian And remind us, what went on at Chislehurst.
Geoff Chislehurst, well I think John Grundy also owned the black granary on the river bank across the road. The black granary was a timber building and tarred. It often got scraped by lorries and tractors because the old mill, was the second mill, was right up to the road which was narrower then than it is now. Buildings often getting damaged and was demolished in the 60s would have been.
Ian And as a building that is actually on the .. still on the High Street but it's between the High Street and the river ..
Geoff That is the Black Granary.
Ian And that is the Black Granary.
Geoff Yes.
Ian What would have been .. ? What would the width of the road have been?
Geoff I don't really remember but I say it was .. there were vehicles coming in opposite directions quite often there would be timber boards pulled off the Black Granary. In the mill there was a big oil engine and that drove counter shafts on each of the two floors that ran the whole length of the building, then there were all the individual machines were driven from the countershaft grinders and clippers and winnowers and so on.
Ian And this whole area, just past the Black Granary, that on the map is, it has a label there saying corn mill.

Geoff Corn mill, yes. I think possibly, that was the original mill which was burned down, Margaret Johnson has the date, early, fairly early in the century.

Ian I see.

Geoff And it was replaced by, a bit more compact buildings than the old mill.

Ian So already we're building up a picture of, in this stretch of High Street, you've not just got residential houses but there were quite a few businesses.

Geoff There was quite a lot of businesses, yes.

Ian Which is a contrast to what you see today.

Geoff Oh yes, there were a few commercial enterprises. Bolty Neal ? was the engineer of the mill and he had a workshop in the mill yard with a lathe and a drilling machine and he also had a forge in there. He didn't do the shoeing but he'd got the forge there for his... As boys, we used to sneak into the mill, the doors, the big doors were always open to the pavement, we used to sneak into the mill to try and find locust beans. They were a .. it was the husk, the shell of a large bean which was ground up into animal feed but it was sweet.

Ian I see

Geoff So we would eat it.

Ian And the mill actually produced animal feed?

Geoff Oh yes, it was all animal feed but they .. and seed for farmers, wheat seed and some barley as well.

Ian And on from the mill, what do we come to? We're getting closer to actual forge itself now.

Geoff we used to pinch the locust beans but tramps used to go into the mill and beg flaked oats. Then would perhaps come to my own home and ask my mother for water, take it across to the workshop and boil it up on the forge to make a sort of a porridge.

Ian And was vagrancy a big problem then, I mean were there lots of people living rough?

Geoff certainly there were, I mean, out at Weston there is now a Beggars Lane, Beggars Bush Lane. There was a long length of shrubbery between the gate hub and on the right-hand side and Beggars Bush Lane , a long shrubbery along the edge of the fields and tramps kipped in there for the night regularly because they could spend a night at the Spalding? they called it, or possibly two nights, but not more and the next likely place they could find a bed was Holbeach. So rather than spend a night in a bed in Spalding and then the next night at Holbeach they would rough it for one night to extend the hospitality, I suppose a bit.

Ian And would they be very itinerant, so would they be going from town to town making use of the facilities?

Geoff I suppose they found a bed wherever they could, course if they'd been on a road a long while they knew exactly how and would tell each other where they were likely to find a comfortable night. The .. quite often, tramps spent the night in the shoeing shed at the workshop which was open, there was no door on the shoeing shed and quite often my grandfather never disturbed them, probably often cooked them up some breakfast in morning in the forge if they'd got anything to heat up.

Ian So it was an accepted part of local life at the time.

Geoff Oh absolutely

Ian I see. So moving on from the corn mill which again is on the Halmergate side of the River Welland, what do we come to?

Geoff Got a few bits here .. yes, I mentioned Bolty Neal ?, that he didn't shoe the horses, they came to the forge but my father talked of Birchs having 40 horses, I wonder if he wasn't exaggerating but there was the farm down at Locks Mill and there were horses there as well so they probably could well have had nearly 40 horses. The .. yes, Locks Mill, the milk from the farm came up every day to Cley hall to the dairy that was behind the offices and Percy Proud was their gardener/handyman and he put it through a separator and Lizzy Smith who was the cook/housekeeper at Cley Hall, she made butter and cottage cheese which she sold at the kitchen door and the separated milk we fetched nearly every day I should think for 1d a pint in a tin can. Lizzy always was very careful how she measured out the pint but if we happened to have Percy Proud to serve us then we got a can full for a 1d.

Ian And this was all unpasturised?

Geoff Oh yes, er, I don't remember anyone actually living in Chislehurst, though we're going back a bit aren't we, But it was requisitioned during the war by the army for billets. There were cobblers there at one time I know, and one winter holiday all the children around the area, we had a running snowball fight with the soldiers who obviously couldn't do anything else anyway in those conditions. Running snowball fight that lasted for two whole days. The first of the stick of bombs that dropped on that Sunday afternoon in 42, was it? Landed just a few yards behind Chislehurst, it didn't seem to do a lot of structural damage but it blew out all the windows. Later Chislehurst was pulled down to make a car park and the mill became a pet food shop and a gymnasium in the garages at the bottom of the yard which had been replacing the stables over the years. Holywood, or was it Hollywood, I'm not ever so sure, was demolished to make, to build the Services Club. It was the home of Mrs. Bulmer and her son Jack, I think he farmed at Saracens Head, and Mrs. Bulmer had a companion, that's something we don't see nowadays, an elderly lady, a Miss Crust, and they always were together out shopping, walking.

Ian And she was her constant companion?

Geoff Oh ye, she would employ her as a companion. She probably did some work in the house as well. I'm sure she would have done.

Ian Yes ..

Geoff Miss Crust was the sister of Walter Crust who was a drover and a butcher in the 30s.

Ian And what does a drover do?

Geoff He drives cattle or sheep and cattle and sheep still in the 30s, not an awful lot, but were still moved from field or field to market, from field to the cattle market or the railway station along the roads.

Ian And so the buildings we see on the 1911 map from corn mill, I'm just indicating on the map here, what would they have represented?

Geoff Well, that was Holywood, Bulmer's home. The small building there, was a small warehouse and it was demolished when Holywood went.

Ian I see. And the buildings adjacent to the, next to the small warehouse, were they private dwellings?

Geoff Er .. yes, yes, no, the Montague buildings, a terrace of five houses were converted from a warehouse in 1882 by one of the Mutual Benefit Societies, perhaps, I'm not sure and I think that the tenants largely were members of the Oddfellows even into the 30s.

Ian And what strikes me from looking at the map, is just the size of the land that they had or the plots are really quite large.

Geoff Aren't they, yes? The .. well, of course it was a row of large houses there which would have started with a large plot. Whether the businesses originally, the corn mill I imagine, would not have been as big when Cley Hall and Welland House and others were built in 1600s, late 1700s. I mean, the businesses were obviously later but there would probably have been a small corn mill there or a warehouse originally. Most, I think most of the people in the big houses had business connected with the river and the port so that would explain the warehouses.

Ian And just adjacent or across the road, rather, from the Montague buildings is another building that is between the High Street and the river.

Geoff Welland House this is a little bit of history of Welland House .. here we are ... Welland House, the warehouse you're talking about belonged to Welland House.

Ian I see

Geoff David Smith, whose father bought it in the 50s, tells us it was one of the oldest houses in Spalding and built in 1663 by Maurice Johnson who was the founder of the Spalding branch of the Johnson family of Ayscoughfee, related to Ben Johnson, the well known poet ad Martin Johnson who built the house was head master of the Grammar School before becoming the Anglican minister in Spalding. It seems to have changed hands a number of times and in 1872 was in the possession of Mr. H.T.R. Buckworth. Buckworths were the lord of the manor of Spalding. ... like all the big houses along High Street had a long vista and so the main entrance to the house was from Halmergate rather than .. and the rather plain side of the houses is actually now the front facing the High Street, was originally the garden ..

Ian .. tradesmen's entrance

Geoff Was the back of the .. Sir John Gleed or Mr. Gleed, bought it in 1912 and David tells us that within 24 hrs. the granary fell into the river. It no longer exists. The Gleeds were wine merchants in Red Lion Street.

Ian So the map that we're looking at, dating from 1911, the warehouse that we see here is soon to be gone.

Geoff Yes, yes.

Ian Soon to fall down after being bought by John Gleed.

Geoff John Gleed was, he was chairman of the Holland County Council for many years and also chairman of the Education Authority for a long, long time. He was knighted in, I think, 1937 and the Gleed School was built in 1939 -40. The girls and the boy's schools were named after him.

Ian So he was really a public servant and ..

Geoff Yes, yes, not a man I knew very well. Oh, he died in 1946 but I had very little contact with Sir John Gleed. Lady Gleed was, well, not so busy perhaps, she was more approachable and sociable. Their daughter, Kathleen, who her husband, Harvey, was killed in the First World War had been a solicitor in Spalding, and there was a daughter Joy, who was never seen by her father and they lived in Welland House. Welland House I think, John Gleed changed it to West Elloe, I think, but when Arnold Smith bought the property in '52 he changed the name back to Welland House which it had always been. Mrs. Harvey, after Lady Gleed died, Mrs. Harvey sold the house and built herself a house in the bottom half of the garden and spread the garden and sold the property which then became part residential of the Smith family and part offices of Smith & Co., accountants.

Ian I see. And moving on from the warehouse, we come to a relatively large building which is really very close to the forge.

Geoff That is, Wes that's Welland House.

Ian And just remind us who lived at Welland House.

Geoff Sir John Gleed. Got it right, haven't we?

Ian Yep

Geoff Yes, that's right.

Ian And we then come to a cluster of buildings

Geoff Well, these buildings are the out buildings of Welland House. Those were domestic out buildings and this was the coach house and stables.

Ian And the time you knew it, there weren't any horse-drawn coaches, it was for cars?

Geoff They had a car. Ray??, who was the gardener/chauffeur, they had a 1930-31 Austin, quite a big Austin car, a superior version to the one which my father owned in 1939. Father's car had artillery wheels and Smith's car had wide spoke wheels and superior finish.

Ian I see.

Geoff But as neighbours we had a super car, I think ours was a couple of years older, 1929 model, I think,

Ian I see. And the forge is clearly identifiable, adjacent to the Albert Bridge. Talk us through the cluster of houses that are opposite.

Geoff From '31?? to '39. No.31 was .. no those are the out buildings .. this narrow strip of land .. originally that was no.27 so it's a bit confusing, they've all changed but I'm referring to them under their present numbers. 31's the cottage my grandfather bought with the blacksmith's shop, that's right, he rented it for a little while, the shop and the house and then bought it in 1895. In the early 1800s 31, 32 and 33 were all owned by Joseph Rose, also owned the forge at that time and possibly he, although .. this chap is telling us the forge goes back quite a bit further than we'd thought.

Ian To the mid 18th century ..

Geoff Archaeological that we've got... But the present shop was probably built by Joseph Rose and that's an assumption, and nos, 31 and 33. He probably possibly built .. he was a blacksmith and himself, he worked in another forge on London Road but now we think the forge perhaps goes further back, he may have started here and then moved on to London Road but that we've got to determine, we hope we will. And he also owned other property in London Road. He died in 1814, got a copy of his will. His daughter, Rachel Christian, lived in no.32 at that time. 31 was rented from the 1800s with the forge by Francis South and then it was bought by Edward Fisher from the Joseph Rose's estate, eventually came into my grandfather's hands in 1892. 32 is originally, we discovered when we

demolished it, had consisted in originally of one square room. No, I'm mixed up here. That's right, I'm talking about no.32 now.

Ian I see, yes.

Geoff Yes, 32 had originally been one room with two rooms above and the small chamber behind, according to some of the deeds, it was at one time a retail shop and had glass fronts. There is a photograph which you can just make out no.32 in the background and having a shop window to it. 31 was simply front and rear walls built between the walls of an out building of Welland House and no.32, that's the front and back walls and a middle wall were very substantial. They were 14 ins walls .. er, wonder why when it had no side walls of its own. There was a square front room and originally there'd been only a very shallow room behind that, probably 6 or 7 ft. deep so that's all that ... and two bedrooms above of similar size. The back small bedroom that the roof had originally come down to within 3ft of the floor and the window, the back window to the back bedroom was down at floor level. Must have been. But 31 and 32 later had been extended at the back in several stages, both of them into much bigger houses.

Ian I see

Geoff 33 I don't know very much about except that it belonged to Joseph Rose. 34 is a double-fronted shop. In around 1900 it was owned by someone called Nichols, was a hay and straw merchant. My ?? remembrance of it is as a branch of the Spalding Co-op, later Lincolnshire Co-op, the windows were blown out by the blast from the 1942 bomb. Then from the 50s it's variously been an antique shop, plumber's show room, and at present it's a orthopaedic clinic,

Ian Let's just leave it there for the moment, Geoff, thank you.

Geoff Right o.

VN680029 Meeting with Geoff Dodd, 3rd November

Ian We were talking about the 1903, or thereabouts, map for Spalding, Geoff, and we got up to No.34 which was a shop which was owned by somebody of the name Nicholls. Just talk us through what that property was used for and continuing up the High Street where the road forks.

Geoff My own memories only go back as far as the Co-op shop and after the Co-op closed that branch it was variously an antique dealers, two ownerships I think, and then a plumber's showroom and latterly it's become an orthopaedic clinic. 34, that's the shop and 35, in .. when my grandfather bought 35 they were both in the same ownership, I think, in the early years of the century. Then there are four cottages, the first is no.36, there are two three-storey houses. No.36 grandfather bought when my mother and father married and I was actually born in no.36 but my mother at that time, at that time no.35 had become vacant, it had been let probably, I think to Birches and their mill foreman, Mark Moon, lived in it and he had left that and moved into no.40 and that's the house in the middle of the road that looks straight up High Street towards the town and Birches certainly owned that and Mark Moon lived there for the rest of his life. In one of those four cottages at one time, lived on of the master mariners in Spalding but I'm not aware of his name, certainly not in my time. The end is the entry into Laws Yard, that's T. Law & Sons, the family butchers from Hall Place. The Law family, had actually lived before my father, before my grandfather went into no.35, for a short time he'd lived in Albion Street and he and the Laws lived next door, next door to each other at that time so they were all family friends. The boys, that's my father and Ted Law were of the same age and had been to school together. Laws Yard, I understand, and it was bought from another butcher, Bert Barker, who had the next property he had, and back to back are Barker's slaughterhouse which was a very old building and rather primitive as a slaughter house when we were boys and Laws which is nearer the town, were almost back to back. I think Laws slaughter house, I should think looking at it was built in the early 20s or a bit before that and they were in use .. Barker didn't actually have a shop. I think most of his business was done from a van and from the horse and cart before that.

Ian And were these butchers shops .. did they look different to what you would find now?

Geoff Certainly they did. I've done quite a lot of work for Adams in their earlier days, not in recent times and they've got bigger but the .. but Adams had a very primitive slaughter house as well in .. by the top of the Station yard, in a little room down there.

Ian And they would slaughter their own ..

Geoff Most butchers slaughtered their own and even businesses in an even smaller way. In the 1800s, I mean, did their own slaughtering on their own property without a proper slaughter house. Pigs were slaughtered and butchered in the yard behind what was probably a shop.

Ian And what was the animals that was predominantly slaughtered around here around Spalding?

Geoff Certainly I remember watching sheep and pigs and beast slaughtered. Horses were slaughtered by a specialist, knackers, ?????? Yes, several times a week, holiday time particularly, it was an interesting place to go.

Ian And was horse meat on the menu?

Geoff No, I dont think so, I don't think horse meat .. and of course that was why bullocks were popular for farm work really because a bullock could do your ploughing for you and when he was no longer strong enough you could kill him and eat him which wasn't normal practice in this country anyway.

Ian I see and would there have been distinctive smells ...

Geoff My goodness there was, I'm not sure I can remember them ever so well, there was quite a smell. I mean, when a pig was slaughtered and they took out the entrails, I mean the porch, the stomach was thrown into the pig sty for the other pigs to eat.

Ian And so it really would have been quite a strong smell that would have emanated from the butchers. What about the other businesses that were working along the street? So for example, did the corn mill, did that have a distinctive smell?

Geoff Yes, it did.

Ian Was it all a lot more pungent that you'd find today?

Geoff I suppose that we were quite used to it. Another smell we got when the wind was in the wrong direction was the beet factory of course from 1925 which was from before I remember but certainly during the sugar beet season you could tell which way the wind was blowing.

Ian Was it a pleasant smell?

Geoff Not particularly, no, could remember. Better when it wasn't there I think.

Ian And was that something that was more prevalent in the summer months, the heat, would that have exasperated.

Geoff Certainly from the slaughter houses, the sugar beet season was in the winter anyway.

Ian Ok, so moving along from the ... from 36 to 40 along the High Street we come to a very narrow street that leads, what street is that?

Geoff That's Willow Walk.

Ian Which leads into ..

Geoff Leads onto Marine Road, Marine again there's the connection with ships captains, certainly there's a ship's captain lived in slightly more impressive house in Marine Road, Marine Villa.

Ian And were they active in their trade?

Geoff Not within in my memory, I can only remember Captain Hayes and he lived at the top of Albert Street in a terraced house.

Ian I see and so were they quite imposing houses or were ...?

Geoff No, most of them seemed to live in rather better, perhaps, than two up two down but not the sort of mariner's houses that I know in Grimsby which are very impressive.

Ian So we come to .. we've mentioned Willow Walk which was very narrow and between Willow Walk and the remaining part of the High Street, so going into Commercial Road, there was a sort of finger that was in the middle of the s that was between ..

Geoff Between Willow Walk and Commercial Road.

Ian And were these private properties?

Geoff Yes, pretty well. Well in Willow Walk, after Laws Yard, was Aystrops basket makers yard.

Ian Basket makers, were they actually weaving?

Geoff Oh yes, he was a basket maker, William Ayrstrup and his son and daughter-in-law both worked with him and they had a small retail shop at the top of Double Street. They had a plantation on Cowbit Wash and the three of them, I remember, seeing them walk from Cowbit Wash with a hand cart loaded with willow.

Ian Which is the material they used to make baskets?

Geoff Yes, mainly I think they were making potato baskets which were wicker. There was a stripping the willow, a steel fork set vertically, rather like a fence, they threw the willow into the fork and pulled it to strip off the bark.

Ian And how long would one of these baskets take them to weave?

Geoff I haven't the faintest idea. Don't even know how much they are, how much they cost. But a wicker potato basket was the standard basket that was used for picking potatoes by hand. They were replaced by wire baskets.

Ian And if your mother, for example, wanted a new shopping basket, would it have been to the Ayrstrups that she would have turned?

Geoff Possibly, yes, that's certainly, they did make shopping baskets. There was another basket maker in Double Street, a Jason Wright and he certainly had baskets but mainly I think they were what they made were for commercial purposes.

Ian And you mentioned just down into Willow Walk we've got the basket makers, there were a number of buildings here as you're going down on the right as you're going away from the town, can you recall what their use was?

Geoff Well, this yard was ... this yard would have been Seaton's, the bakers that were on Commercial Road, the bake house was on the other side of that road.

Ian I see

Geoff That was Seaton's, no that is Laws yard. I don't remember that being two separate properties. That was Aistrup's yard. That's right, yes, those two properties ... this was Seaton's yard, that's right, those buildings were in Law's yard and that would have been the leirage where there, sorry and that would have been the slaughter house in that area, those two bits, that would have been Barker's slaughter house. Law's slaughter house would be beyond here and it would have been built on, just in that area somewhere and all these buildings would have been built in 1800/1900, I'm not sure, that's Law's and that's Barker's, Barker's the access was down here and that was the yard and that was the paddock.

Ian And Barker's were involved in ..

Geoff Barker's were the other butcher and slaughter man. I'll get it right on the copy. And that would have been Seaton's yard and they were bakers.

Ian And Aistrup's were beyond Barker's ..

Geoff Aistrup's were in these two bits here, I think, yea, sorry ...

Ian And going back to this finger of buildings that separated Willow Walk from I suppose this bit would now be Commercial Road?

Geoff Commercial Road, yes.

Ian Who lived on the corner because there's a house

Geoff That is the house that Birches owned, Mark Moon, the foreman lived in there.

Ian Birches obviously being a big local employer?

Geoff The millers, yes.

Ian And the dwellings going back from ..

Geoff That's right, well actually on the ... the white house, Mark Moon's house, there's a small building facing Commercial Road, facing the river there, it's still there but it's been incorporated into the house now but that was a little grocer's shop. I can remember buying Jonty Longbottom ...

Ian Quite a name!

Geoff Yes, wasn't it? And it was .. the door was in the middle of the shop facing the river and now .. that property actually belonged to Seaton's. When Jonty was there were two windows at the front were quite small but when it was incorporated into the house it was altered anyway and the door in the end, the door faces the town.

Ian I see and can you remember ...

Geoff And a man called Godfrey and his wife took it on. As confectioners

Ian And can you remember you mother's shopping habits, would she have frequented a particular grocers or would she have patronised a number within the area.

Geoff Mainly for her groceries at the Co-op because it was quite a big shop for a .. I mean much bigger than many of the other shops in the area. But for green groceries just across the river were Colbins, again they were all close friends.

Ian Would she have had an account?

Geoff No, I don't think so, paid cash.

Ian So goods would have been paid for as and when. And you mentioned that there was a confectioners, ice cream shop here. There were quite a number within a small area.

Geoff Yes, there were indeed. James, a Mr. James and a Mr. James had a shop there, right on that corner. That was a sweets and groceries. In later years it was owned by Doris Dack who lived in .. this house was her home, her parents lived in this house until Judith and I bought it. But there was another little shop opened ... which one would it be .. it was the end one there ... there, that one was opened, I would think after the war. I don't think it would have been a cottage until then. It was opened as a little sweet shop and then after it closed, it think the people who took it, they opened one here. That would be in the 50s certainly open in the 70s because our daughter would take her trike with trailer behind. It was safe then to let her go and fetch things from the little shop. And then of course, across the river there were several

Ian Did Spalding have a particularly sweet tooth?

Geoff I don't know really. A lot of people made very little money I should thin out of selling sweets. Course we're getting ... do you want to deal with this now?

Ian Yes,

Geoff That was Culpins/Colvins, no ..

Ian This is just over the Albert bridge

Geoff That's the bridge at the top and that was Colvin's shop, that was The Ship ... Colvins shop and next door the cottage they lived in and they had and orchard and nursery in this area. It had been previously owned by a Mr. Wilcox, I had heard of but certainly don't remember, a prominent member of the Pentecostal Church that used to be in Love Lane (can't hear) used by Scouts, it became Moose Hall and was let for old time dances we used to go there. There was still the cover in the floor over the baptistery, it was still there in those days.

Ian And none of these shops were self service, they were something went it an be served ...

Geoff And the door rang a bell and Mrs. Colvin came from the house, from the living part of the house to serve you. clipped onto a bell. But they .. it was more of a green grocery than a general grocers shop but they and then , we're on Albion Street .. here's the pub ... several little cottages there ... Bob Bennett had a little shop, again with a ding on the door, step down into it, it never sold much, all ever saw in the window was one or two second hand books and perhaps a bunch or two of bananas. He sold a bit of fruit I think but otherwise very, very little, they were a fairly elderly couple.

Ian And would it have .. it wouldn't have been unusual for people to work into their 70s, I mean certainly your grandfather did?

Geoff Oh, yes, yes, yes. You didn't retire in those days, did you? Yes, he retired but I don't suppose you had a little shop. Then one or two residential houses and then I think that would be Sadd's grocery shop.

Ian Double D

Geoff Yes, double d. Mr. and Mrs. Sadd. The Free Press .. Rodney Sadd seems to write a lot of letters, he's ... to the Council recently, he's their grandson. That's Sadds, then there aren't any shops then, that was a shop, grocers shop, Nobby Walker. that for a grocers shop another building there, (can't hear properly) school

Ian And this was the school I'm alluding to here which was on Westlode Street, is that the school that you ...

Geoff That's the school that I to and my father, yep. Westlode Street, it was known as the council school, before that the Board school, the local Board was the local authority before Spalding Urban Council. And on either side of the school was a little sweet shop.

Ian Strategically placed

Geoff Yes, absolutely, there were two, perhaps three, wooden buildings which, I think, they'd been built for retail. I think originally Ginny Taylor had the sweet shop on the right of the school and I think next door to the school was Ginny Sparks in again a two up two down cottage, the front room was a little sweet shop. Ginny Sparks.

Ian And were there bakers around her?

Geoff Yes, Seatons were the bakers on Commercial Road. The shop and the house on Commercial Road, which one they would be, Keith could put us right, want to make sure. Well, let's think, that's Bobby's house there, the white one so that would be Seatons bakery, that's it, that would be the bakery at the back and the house and shop in front.

Ian And as far as sweets were concerned, were you allowed sweets every day or was that a treat?

Geoff Well certainly not every day, no. There were sweets in the house I suppose ... to spend, don't recall getting regular pocket money.

Ian What sweets would you have bought? I mean, what were they called? What were your favourites?

Geoff I don't know, very popular were the a bag of mixture, a something bag, probably cost a penny. There were also packets of kayligh (??? Spelling), fizzy yellow with a lollipop you sucked and dipped into it. I was never ever so keen on .. there were a lot of cheap and nasty sweets, perhaps it was our mother's influence but I didn't go for those as a lot of my school friends did.

Ian You were more of a connoisseur?

Geoff Perhaps with out knowing it. Just what we did buy I don't recall very much. Barley sugar, I suppose that's something out .. that mum would recommend as a healthy sweet than most.

Ian So within just a few hundred yards of where you lived in the forge there were bakers, there were grocers, there were sweet shops, there were pubs, it was really ... there were butchers, there was everything that you would need to feed an ordinary family.

Geoff Yes, mother did shop in town, there was a butcher's shop just across the bridge. Here, that's the little Joe Arnold's barber's shop, another man with a flowing beard, but he was also a coach painter and he had let the barber's shop was the smaller property. Then his, that's right, then his house, still there, and then here a two storey building. The bottom was a butcher's shop and above it was Joe Arnold's paint shop. But I don't recall him doing very much but grandfather certainly shod wheels for him in earlier days. but coach painting would drop away, wouldn't it when coaches did.

Ian And moving, so we're on the other side of the river now, moving along Albion Street to where it forks with Westlode Street and another street which I ...

Geoff Double Street

Ian Double Street. That was a mixture of private houses and again businesses?

Geoff up the riverside. Joe Arnold, then these were residential. There were two tiny little cottages on the river bank there, two and three .. that photograph .. I was looking at the photograph. I had in mind that there were three but probably when I looked at this there were only two. Two very small cottages with a tiny little back yard to them, very mean and then of course the brewery buildings which had originally been Spalding Brewery, the yard was theirs, owned by a man called Bock originally. He changed that to Burg and then it became Lea and Green's ginger beer and mineral water. That was a Bourne firm and along the building in very big letters, it had been painted over but gradually it began to show through Lea and Greens, Mineral Water Manufacturers, Brewers of Stone Ginger Beer.

Ian And I seem to remember reading about the stoppers to the bottles ..

Geoff That's it, when they were making, when they were making ginger beer, before the days of screw top pop bottles, there was a glass ball ...

Ianmarble

Geoff That's it, probably built inverted I should think and then the gas blew the marble down to a rubber ring, sealed the bottle and to open it you used something to push the ball down from its rubber

seating and then once the pressure had gone from the bottle and I don't remember this but father said that and if you wanted, didn't want to drink it all you put your thumb over the bottle, shook it and inverted it and of course that pushed the

Ian The pressure went back up

Geoff And sealed it up again. And father talked about ginger beer bottles exploding in the factory and the glass would be swept up and the marbles would be washed away with the water and came out of a pipe, outfall of waste water down into the river and leaving school and running across the road and through that jitty by the old fire station, an Italian restaurant now, shouting pop hole, pop hole to find these glass balls settled in the

Ian And they would have been used to play marbles?

Geoff That's exactly what they, yes ..

Ian Now on the map here we've got, it says mooring

Geoff Mooring posts, that's it, there were a few left when we were going to school. We used to leap frog and we used to go to Westlode Street School along the river bank rather than along Albion Street and leapfrog the mooring posts. As you got older you could leap frog the taller ones.

Ian And do you remember there being any barges or anything moored

Geoff No, not along there, no, only on Birches side of the river. Their boats, their barges were not the sort of boats that would come up and down in the 1800s. It was for sailing sea-going boats. Birches barges were simply flat bottomed.

Ian I'm thinking because I'm looking at a photograph where the river is all iced up and its obviously very cold weather, was there any, was there ever a problem with flooding?

Geoff No, not until 1947, I think it was, yep, the flooding then was mainly due to the ice and snow melt from the higher country and fresh water coming down more quickly than the ..

Ian I think I'm right in saying 1946/47 was a very harsh winter.

Geoff It was, yes, yes.

Ian I remember my grandmother for example, talking about that being a very bad winter. So when that snow and ice was melting this area was affected?

Geoff The workshop got 8-9 ins of water in it because it's lower than the road but this end of the town but none of the town got badly flooded. The lowest part of the banks is at the bottom of Herring Lane in Double Street and that area. Got flooded a bit.

Ian And was Spalding ever affected by the floods in 1953?

Geoff No, no.

Ian Is that because the drainage was particularly good or ...?

Geoff I think so. There was flooding at Postland and further up river. Of course you see the river is tidal and if fresh water can't get away, if you've got a high sea tide coming up.

Ian I remember reading somewhere that the river actually had a boor.

Geoff Yes, we, yes, we talk of the Severn boor and the Trent and I think it's only the Severn, the Trent and the Welland that have a tidal boor now but we knew it as the ego, I think the eagre and certainly in springtime, time of high tides the, of course the Coronation Channel had not been constructed then and there were no lock gates down on Marsh Rails Road, and the tide quite how far up the Welland the tide went in those days. But certainly well through the town and the tidal wave, kids ego, ego, ego and run and try and keep up with it. I'm not quite sure whether we could or whether we couldn't, it flowed up the river quite quickly. I think one, I would think not more than 12 ins and sometimes 6 ins. Barely.

Ian And presumably it would have needed to be tidal like that to allow for the river craft that once plied the

Geoff Exactly, yes and then the boats that needed to get from the Welland into the Westlode. There was a sluice gate but there were no locks so they had to wait until the two river levels were the same to be able to pass from one river to the other.

Ian And looking down at Double Street if we can, which was the other side of the river from the forge, sort of across the river from places like Holland House and ????? House and Yew Lodge, can you recall anything about this section of Double Street?

Geoff There were four or five pubs in Dutch Street, but the number of warehouses along the river bank, all gone now, converted into accommodation but there were, in 1835 seven coal merchants in Spalding and they were all either in High Street or Double Street. I don't remember myself a coal merchant in High Street but certainly on the river bank facing the river was a small warehouse, the door had carved into it Captain J. Hayes Best Victoria Cold Store and he had a sloop, a sea-going boat anyway, and would bring his own coal from Newcastle and probably take farm produce up as he went. There was a coal yard somewhere in Double Street, don't quite remember where it was but that was still in business when I was at school. Used to have a chap come by, my father used to charge his wireless accumulators, chap used to bring his wireless accumulator to be charged, he talked, he had worked in a coal yard and talked of a little girl coming with a bag for 3d worth of coal. 'and Mam says not to give her bloody great lumps, she wants some nice nobbly bits'.

Ian And let's just talk about communication if we may at this point because it's quite a close knit community. How many postal deliveries were there have been?

Geoff I think we had two a day, I'm sure we did.

Ian And was that just Monday to Friday?

Geoff Don't recall

Ian Were there deliveries at the weekend?

Geoff Don't recall.

Ian And certainly more frequent than one would get today?

Geoff Certainly twice a day, yes

Ian And would most people by the 20s and 30s, would they have had radios? Because I don't think your father was involved with that.

Geoff Yes, yes, I think certainly in the 30s, well, yes, he'd been charging wireless accumulators from the 20s and he delivered wireless accumulators like a milkman in the evenings around Queens Road area, Queens Road and Royce Road where a lot of residential property.

Ian And this was a sideline of his.

Geoff That's right, from the workshop.

Ian And I think you mentioned before once the accumulator had sort of lost its charge he would deliver a new one to the property and he'd take the old one away. How did it charge?

Geoff Well he had two battery charging plants, one which is still there in the workshop, with a rectifier which converted the alternating current to direct current and a transformer which reduced it down to the voltage for the batteries. I helped him as a lad and just coupled up the accumulators with little bits of wires from terminal to terminal and probably charged a bank of 10 or a dozen batteries at the same time and the charging plant would charge two banks, two charging banks he could charge 40 accumulators at once but there were other people that, the Commercial Road garage, he charged accumulators, Masseys on the other side of the river charged accumulators, Beales the bike and radio shop in Swan Street they did.

Ian So would this have been kit that had had to invest in?

Geoff Oh yes, yes, that's it.

Ian To start himself up and then go into business?

Geoff Yes.

Ian And the radios at the time were made in bakelite?

Geoff A lot of them, yes they were. I certainly remember a round radio, KB Pup which I think was about the cheapest radio that you could buy in those days and you had besides the glass accumulator you had to have a high tension battery which was 9-10 ins long, 6 ins wide and 3-4 ins high, which was simply a load of single cell batteries coupled together to give out up to 110 volts for the radio and then another small battery, battery you had which was 9 volts.

Ian And presumably you had a radio at home?

Geoff Er, yes ..

Ian What would you have listened to? Just the BBC

Geoff There wasn't an awful lot of choice, BBC. My grandmother out at Weston Hills was a great fan of Luxemburg Radio which was a commercial

Ian And you could transmit from Luxemburg?

Geoff No, it was just called Luxemburg Radio. I always imagined it did, that it came from Luxemburg and wondered how they knew how to speak English but where they, quite where they transmitted from but it was a national wide thing, yes. It carried advertising of course.

Ian I see. Whereas the BBC didn't.

Geoff No

Ian And when would television have first come to Spalding? When can you first remember television?

Geoff I don't really. The first television I saw was on a youth club visit to the Science Museum and we all went into a darkened room and there was a 9 ins screen set up 7-8 ft up into a cabinet. People were walking in to stand and watch it. But we didn't have television at home and we'd been married a number of years before we even had one ourselves. Majority of people, I think, had probably got one by then.

Ian So, you mentioned, going back to Double Street, there were a number of pubs, there were warehouses along this frontage to the river, if we just look at ...

Geoff Scupham's had a pie factory in there, they were butchers in town, they had a pie factory in Double Street

Ian And what sort of pies would they have been?

Geoff Pork pies and meats pies.

Ian And from your notes, would there, is there anything that you think we've missed? Anything ...

Geoff Jack Peak was a builder, carpenter and builder in Double Street. Levertons bought up most of those properties. Quite a ??? business was Jack Peak, an eccentric.

Ian In what way?

Geoff He carried a plank from his workshop down to my grandfather's workshop to put it on the floor to demonstrate to my grandfather how he could sit on this plank, his legs in the air and his arms in the air and jump along it on his bottom. Just to show he ... he made his own coffin, it stood in the workshop a long while before he died and I understand it was made of 2 ins oak which couldn't be sure of that. I certainly remember him, I knew several people who worked for him. I mean they all spoke of him in the same way. Apparently walking through the workshop one day an apprentice at the bench had noticed that he was there and measured something and said to himself near enough. Jack Peak heard it, he said now lad, near enough isn't near enough, you just measure it again. He measured it again, Jack said now boy. It's exactly right Mr. Peak. Right that's near enough. When he was buried he was buried in his Sunday suit with his watch and chain on and Sis Knight who I knew and worked for Jack, and at that time said I could have had that watch and I screwed him down. I mean if anybody, if you knew Sis Knight you'd know the last thing he would do would be to take Jack Peak's watch.

Ian And as far as he was a local character, were there lots of people like that that you can remember who were quite individual?

Geoff Yes, perhaps so. Another man in similar way in business was Charlie Wheatman. Charlie Wheatman had an undertakers, carpenters and undertakers business on Winsover Road, opposite the top of St. Thomas' Road, it's still there as an undertakers business. The tales told of Charlie, apparently setting up a fence or something two of his men were standing holding posts and Jack Peak at the end lining them up so the junction be straight, he sort of motioned to the left or the right, bit more, bit more, two chaps at the end moved their pole a little bit more, bit more, bit more, bit more, and frustrated instead of moving it a bit they took a big jump with it, woa said Charlie, woa there's a difference between farting and tearing your arse.

Ian But that's a local turn of phrase which actually leads me neatly to talk about the terms that were in use or you can remember at the time. Now, maybe not an exhaustive list because

we've got various books of various Lincolnshire dialects and sayings and so on but can you recall the sort of phrases or words that your grandfather, for example, would have used.?

Geoff I mean, I suppose because we lived here we didn't think we were talking with an accent but there wasn't a particularly strong Lincolnshire accent in the Spalding area.

Ian Talking to you now doesn't sound particularly ...

Geoff No, no and I don't recall really and although my father, grandfather came from the Sleaford area he never spoke with a very strong Lincolnshire accent. Sort of one or two expressions that he used which, whether they were particularly dialect or whether they were just ..

Ian What were they? What can you remember?

Geoff The one that sticks in my mind more than anything else, if I did something that I shouldn't have been doing he would say ya mon do that boy.

Ian And what did that mean?

Geoff Stop it, it suppose you mustn't I suppose. Another expression he used – so byus. So byus I suppose that was so by as, so that, so by as we can get on with ...

Ian So that we can

Geoff Not particularly south Lincolnshire I suppose – nubbut – nothing but. Another thing he used to say and then we talked about that Birches would slide his feet we'd be told to pick our heels up I suppose, wouldn't we? could wear out a pair of shoes in a bit more than a week which he called a sloremy old thing. particularly local in the workshop over the door nailed up hare's feet for luck and he called that the door darn. Whether that's a local expression ... Otherwise I can't ... Odd words, he talked of a gait, that's a gate rather than ... and that's further up Lincolnshire really.

Ian So the accent in your experience wasn't particularly pronounced?

Geoff Not at all, I never thought of it as speaking strangely as one or two people who came from that area

VN680030 -nMeeting with Geoff Dodd, 7th November

Ian And we're still reviewing, I think it's a 1903 map of Spalding and we're populating it with details of who lived where and what they did and it's really Geoff's recollections of that and if we could start this session by looking at Westlode Street which, of course, is where the school that Geoff went to school ..

Geoff And his father

Ian And also Geoff's father, thank you very much, Geoff, was sited on Westlode Street. Previously the course of the river, and I think your parents called it something different to Westlode Street.

Geoff Always Westlode Side which is the name given to it, that'll be the north side of the river, is the name given to it in the early maps and I think on the other side, the south side of the river, I think it was known as Rose, along here, south side of what is now Westlode Street, was called Rose Lane, I think.

Ian I see and we've got a number of dwellings just passed the school so as if you were progressing into town, as it were, do you have any recollections of this area here, Geoff?

Geoff Quite close to the school was a pub and that one was The Crown, I'm sure, close to where Jimmy Sparks is, either next door to Jimmy Sparks' sweet shop and Mumford's bike shop.

Ian And were there many public houses

Geoff Er, yes, in that corner, well, yes, it was a busy corner of Spalding for a long, long time of course. There was The Crown and The Butcher's Arms and The Still Vaults on Westlode Street within a couple of hundred yards, perhaps a bit less than that, all on the north side on the old Westlode side. In fact there wasn't much development on the other side of the road for a long, long time, certainly Levertons were there in the time I remember but before that, that area was part of the Manor House garden and the Manor House walls came right up to the roadway along the riverside.

Ian And the Manor House, was that in existence in the first part of the 20th C?

Geoff Oh yes, long before, it's now the Constitutional Club.

Ian And we've got quite a large sort of gardens ...

Geoff Well, that was the Manor House garden but that was all taken over by Levertons, their workshops and yards going through eventually, right through to Double Street. Prior to Levertons it was, my father could remember it, it was the South Lincs Motor Company which I'm not quite sure how far it extended but Levertons took over ...

Ian And remind us, what did Levertons do? What was their line of work?

Geoff Mainly tractors and agricultural implements. The big job that Levertons made, of course, was when they made, got the franchise for Caterpillar tractors from America. I think there was only one other firm in the country that had the franchise from America and they're workshops and buildings extended tremendously during the war. They have, they went out of motorcars, Herbert Leverton started mainly in motorcars and they had a garage in Broad Street opposite the Methodist Church, was Levertons. Motor car garage and petrol pumps as well there so at the end of the war but they developed quite quickly in Westlode Street. Armstrong and Thompson had a farm in Westlode Street, a farm yard, a bit further along van, the Salvation Army hall and a few cottages and then an entry into Armstrong's farm yard, and I mean there were horses stabled in there.

Ian We're used to now the urban side of Spalding being quite separate from the fields and the farms that are round and about, would it be fair to say in those days that the line was a lot more blurred.

Geoff It must have been. I don't know whether Armstrongs actually farmed any of that land north of Westlode Street, probably not but I can certainly remember horses and trolleys in the yard. They were probably potato merchants as well, not sure about that and the house even further towards the school. There was an old house which still stood and Levertons had built a store warehouse behind it but the house was actually the front of the machinery spares stores and I think they used to call it the farmhouse.

Ian And as far as the tractors were concerned, you mentioned that Levertons had the contract for the tractors, were they very reliable or were they prone to braking down?

Geoff I, no Caterpillar was a reputable manufacturer. They built bigger tractors than were made in this country. They built a tractor showroom where two buildings, the one on the right was their computer headquarters the one on the left just offices, it's now, I believe a labour exchange of some sort is it?

Ian Yes it is.

Geoff That's right, the new building there, well there was a big, they built a big showroom with big glass windows looking in there and seeing a V8 or perhaps a V9 Caterpillar tractor which was I think at that time, was the biggest they made but to me it had a little diesel engine on the side of the main tractor engine as a starter. have electric starters now, I wouldn't know.

Ian So, this area, you've mentioned there was a sweet shop, there was a couple of parts on Westlode Street on the sort of the Westlode side of here, as well as private dwellings.

Geoff Yes, there were private, there were residential properties. Billsby's were builders having a yard, don't quite know when Billsby's house was built. There were two houses with an entry between them, I think that one might be on this road probably.

Ian And just for understanding purposes, would people have owned their own houses or was there a greater prevalence of people renting?

Geoff No, it's the 30s, I would think most of the bigger houses were privately owned. Quite possibly the little cottages would have been rented.

Ian I see.

Geoff There are two cottages there, somewhere which are very old, in fact several of those are quite old but there's a pair of cottages there which are very early

Ian I see and these roads, Westlode Street and Double Street, were they single carriageway or were they ... how ... were there people coming from both directions?

Geoff Oh yes, they were, Double Street, it's one way now but it was a two lane roadway till 60s probably.

Ian I see. So moving further up Albion Street, so really we're looking at the part of the road that goes from the junction of Westlode Street and Double Street up to what was then the gas works and presumably the gas works were the source of power for the electric light in this area?

Geoff Lighting, yes. We had a lamp lighter coming round to light the street lamps at dusk. Did we mention Henry Massey?

Ian Can do, yes.

Geoff I think that would probably be Henry Massey's workshop, was the Excelsior Engineering Works.

Ian And what did he specialise in, were they a particular branch of engineering?

Geoff They were precision engineers but they also did motor vehicle maintenance as well and he was actually making, he was manufacturing in the 1800s, pre-war, my memory. In the 1800s he was manufacturing small machine tools, lathes, got a friend now dead, I'm sure still in his garage is a lathe with a long bench, it's an HP Massey, Spalding maker. He made small lathes and machine tools, shaping machines and similar and also was manufacturing a, two models two cylinder steam engine for small boats.

Ian So we got Masseys really on the corner here and what looks like a number of private dwellings, back yards, back gardens.

Geoff Yes, that's right. Yes, there was a row of smallish, smallish, not the two up two down cottages but there's a row of houses there, now demolished and replaced.

Ian And I noticed that on the map there's what looks like the main house and then it tapers out, would they have been sort of outbuildings?

Geoff No, part of the house I think. Three bay-windowed houses there, still there and I'm pretty sure that this one at this end which at that time was no.11, I think, was where my grandfather moved after he left High Street for a few years, then later came back to High Street by 1928. But they were rather bigger houses, I mean they were quite a lot bigger than these cottages on the ...

Ian Yes, yes. And there was no such thing as central heating at the time

Geoff Absolutely

Ian So there would be individual fires in each of these houses?

Geoff I'm sure there must have been, yes.

Ian And what fuel would have been, was it coal?

Geoff Coal, I'm sure, yes. There were a number of coal merchants mentioned in 71 possibly 2 in Double Street, one in Commercial Road along the bank.

Ian And going up Albion Street we come to Albion House and we've got George Follins who was an egg merchant. And his house, it faced really, there was nothing between it and the river by the looks of the map, is that your recollection?

Geoff No, well, sorry, Albion Street was there, on the other side of the river opposite Albion House and Langtoft House which was next to it, the Law family lived in later years. After they left, there was a narrow strip of garden on the riverbank between the footpath along the riverside and the road, a narrow strip of garden which belonged to the houses on the other side of the road and now it's been incorporated into, there are raised flower beds now maintained by the Council.

Ian And in those days they would have been private gardens?

Geoff Oh yes, but it was quite narrow, I mean, Laws certainly, used it for growing vegetables I remember not a flower garden.

Ian And was that, other people did grow flowers. There was a far greater preponderance of the growing of vegetables?

Geoff Oh I think there must have been, yes. I mean particularly as my strong memories, of course, during the war, everybody, those who could, grew their own vegetables.

Ian And did most people have poultry to keep?

Geoff I'm sure they did, yes. My, we certainly had, father had chickens and a chicken yard at the bottom of the garden and grandfather did too and immediate neighbours in this house, we lived in that one, they kept a pig and also the King family who lived in no.33 also had a pig.

Ian Just briefly, I know we're going off the topic just a little bit, but talk me through what you can remember your diet would have been like at that time so, you know, you're living in a town in the middle of a big agricultural producing area, what sort of food was eaten that was in contrast to the convenience stuff we're used to now?

Geoff I'm sure my mother bought basic food even before the war. I mean her father was a smallholder at Weston Hills, quite often we were given vegetables then. Meat .. modest meat eaters I would say. I certainly remember a chicken at Christmas was a treat.

Ian And would you have had a large breakfast or would that be something where you would have just had bread and jam or ...?

Geoff I think my mother saw to it that we had a substantial .. we had a, generally I would think probably a cooked breakfast be it scrambled egg or egg and bacon. In the early days when war came along of course there weren't so many eggs or so much bacon but we thrived.

Ian And would you have had three meals a day or more than that?

Geoff No, three meals a day, never had a school meal ever in my, we came home for lunch from school but the main meal was mid-day.

Ian And you mentioned at Christmas a chicken was treat, what were the staple meats that you remember eating?

Geoff I suppose we had everything but certainly if we'd had mutton or lamb, don't get mutton at all now do we? ... a cheap A mutton roast on Sunday, on Monday it was cold mutton. If we'd had beef, possibly mother would put what was left of the joint through the mincer and we'd have a minced beef and basic vegetables. There was always a variety.

Ian And lots of milk or other dairy products.

Geoff Yes, we had milk delivered twice a day from the milkman. His can, measuring can, I mean we have talked about the separated milk which nowadays we call skimmed milk don't we, from Birchs who separated the milk from the dairy at their Locks Mill Farm and made butter out of the cream, cottage cheese in the summer time but the separated milk, yes the sold it off at a 1d a pint and us lads from or I fetched in quite a large can so we must have got through quite a lot of milk.

Ian Is there anything about that diet that you miss?

Geoff No, I don't think there's anything that I miss. I'd have felt more deprived at that time if I knew what I was going to eat later in life, I think. We ate fairly well, even through the war and it was a basic diet and probably we'd have eaten bigger quantities if they'd been there, obviously it was adequate.

Ian The reason I ask is that a lot of the work in the forge could have been quite physical work and so therefore you would have needed the, to put it in its technical term, the calorific intake to enable you to do the work.

Geoff Yes, well, I wasn't working obviously,.. my father .. I don't think so, we were ... I don't think he ever had anything that we didn't. Certainly I remember seeing a report in newspaper once that, the Daily Herald this was, a local chap, very well, and it was obviously politically biased, but the husband had to eat all the cheese rations to give him enough energy to work on the farm. I'm not sure that it ... I think it was just a political bit on the part of the Daily Herald.

Ian And so moving back to the various locations in and around the forge, we've mentioned Albion House on Albion Street, we then go out of the town, so we're going out of the town, away from the town centre.

Geoff There was, have we mentioned Osmond's granary, yes we have, that's right, which is now White House Chambers, what's the next ... It was empty, I don't remember Osmonds using it, my father does. But part of it was used by George Monroe as a box factory.

Ian Box factory, is that boxes for eggs or ...?

Geoff I'm not quite sure but probably for bulbs and potato trays, for chitting trays for potatoes, probably, I really don't recall, certainly remember seeing steam from it, working there. George Monroe was a horticultural supplier, flower boxes.

Ian And it just makes me think that a lot of the industries or businesses in and around Spalding, they strike me as being very inter-connected in that they were fulfilling separate tasks but they supported one another if that made sense.

Geoff Yes, yes, certainly grandfather he talked, grandfather did an enormous amount of work for Groom Brothers who were supplying timber buildings and chicken houses, mangers, woodwork for stables and grandfather of course, did the ironwork that they needed.

Ian So obviously your father and grandfather, they would have been part of this inter- connected work.

Geoff Yes, yes ..

Ian And were there any things that you couldn't get in Spalding that you would have to get from further afield? Because it strikes me that Spalding is very self sufficient, you know if I want eggs, it's got the millers, it's got food stuffs but it's also got engineering works, it's got blacksmiths, it's got so many different ... are there, is there anything you couldn't get and you'd have to get from further afield in your recollection?

Geoff No, I don't think so, I mean as time went on and farm machinery which had been manufactured out of the area, although local firms were making farm tools, Levertons and later on Petitts, but in the earlier days spare parts for those machines but then people like Johnson Bros. and agricultural merchants kept a stock of spares which farmers sometimes could collect and fit them themselves or grandfather or father and I did too, fetched spares from Levertons, yes, Levertons and from Johnsons when I was repairing machinery in the workshop. Those were factory made replacements which of course, earlier would have had to been made in the workshop before factory made tools were commonplace.

Ian And moving on, on the map you've got something that says Willesby.

Geoff Willesby is a house, I remember it as the home of Maples the solicitor.

Ian Looks a very substantial house.

Geoff I think it's originally, possibly 1600s. It was built, there was a disastrous fire in the 1800s and I understand that it was largely rebuilt as closely to the original house as it was possible.

680031 on Stick

Ian So just continuing with Geoff on the 7th November. We've mentioned the large private home that was owned by the Maples, the solicitors, and again we're proceeding along Albion Street, towards the Gas Works and, as far as you were concerned, Geoff, the Gas Works were always a feature in your recollection.

Geoff Absolutely, yes, there was a gas works field. The Gas Works Manager had a house in there, it's not on this map. The gas works, yup, the gas works .. had .. were I think, had a whistle or a buzzer, I should think about 12 midday, always blew, whether that was for .. to let people know what time it was or whether it was to let the workers know that it was .. but it only, it only went at around the middle of the day some time once a day.

Ian And were they a large employer?

Geoff I'm not sure how many employees there were but it was a big site, of course, with two big gas holders and cooling towers.

Ian And have I got it right that they would have supplied Spalding and the surrounding area?

Geoff I don't think the gas went much further than the town.

Ian I see.

Geoff Certainly not in the

Ian So Boston would have had its own gas works.

Geoff Oh certainly, yes,

Ian Spalding had a gas works

Geoff Yes, that's right.

Ian Peterborough and so on and so on.

Geoff Yes,

Ian I see

Geoff And I suppose small town like Holbeach just didn't have gas, probably. And the gas works, in the .. when my father was small folk too their children who had whooping cough, I think it was, to breath in the fumes from the top of the retort ..

Ian And what was that supposed to do?

Geoff To cure their whooping, I think it was whooping cough.

Ian Were there any

Geoff I mean, they'd have to go up the steps to the top of the retort to ..

Ian Did it work?

Geoff I really don't know. I think it probably must have done or they wouldn't have continued to do it. And on Saturday mornings, another job for schoolboys, any boys who had a truck or barrow of any sort, often on pram wheels would go .. they sold coke to .. well retailed it in small quantities and there was always a lot of boys from all around the town fetching coke for home or for neighbours like the ???? that we

Ian There seemed to have been a number of opportunities, if you were a schoolboy and you wanted to earn extra money there were lots of opportunities. If you were a budding entrepreneur

Geoff Yes,

Ian There were a number of different things you could do.

Geoff That's why every lad wanted a barrow of some sort. Perhaps it was only an old pram chassis with a board on it but the coke was sold by the strike. I think a strike of coke was a half a hundredweight, I wouldn't be certain.

Ian Ok.

Geoff But there was a chap at the bottom of the yard you paid and were given a ticket at the office which was just at the left at the front entrance, just Saturday mornings this, and the chap had a weighing machine with a big skuttle which tipped and it was a Mr. Enderby and he was known as Dummy Enderby because he was deaf and dumb, little bit frightening for some children when he tried to talk to them and couldn't and he, you took your own sack and Dummy Enderby weighed up your half hundredweight of coke and tipped it into the sack and put it onto the barrow for you.

Ian That's still quite heavy, I mean a half-hundredweight.

Geoff Half hundredweight, yes.

Ian It's not inconsiderable

Geoff I mean it was bought to eke out the coal on a fire. I mean, coke on its own wouldn't burn very well in an open grate. It just didn't produce enough draught to keep it going. It'll work in an enclosed stove where you've got the depth of coke but in an open grate it had to be mixed with coal.

Ian But of course in very urban areas, I remember for example, my parents and my grandparents the pea souper fogs or smogs that there were, everybody using coal fires, was there, especially in certain weather conditions, did the air seem quite heavy at times?

Geoff I don't think so, I mean we regularly had fogs in the autumn and right through the winter perhaps when the weather conditions were, yes it would get quite foggy but I don't think there was enough smoke pollution to make it any worse.

Ian Because it was predominantly a rural setting.

Geoff Yes

Ian I see and opposite the gas works we've obviously got Albion Street, we've got the River Welland, we've got quite a few houses.

Geoff Sorry, we didn't mention the gas works wharf on the river bank.

Ian Ok

Geoff It was restored in a way, some years ago but it's got into a very poor condition now. I mean, not restored to use but simply as a bit of old Spalding and the gas works coal, coal for the gas works, all came up by boat because there was no railway siding anywhere near the gas works.

Ian Right, I was going to ask you where it came from.

Geoff And there was a big crane on the river bank with a long jib which actually went over the road and dropped the coal into the gas works yard.

Ian And the coal/coke, that would have come from the north-east?

Geoff I imagine so, yes.

Ian By boat?

Geoff Yes

Ian Into Boston?

Geoff Into the Wash

Ian Into the Wash

Geoff And then straight up the Welland, yes.

Ian And then straight up the Welland, yes. Ah, right, ok, yes. And, thank you for that. And ..

Geoff I don't remember ... I can't remember coal coming by boat to the gas works. The crane, the jib of the crane was still, lay on the river bank when we were at school.

Ian I see.

Geoff Don't remember whether the steam engine was still there as well but the jib certainly.

Ian And opposite the Welland, so we're now onto Commercial Road, before you get to Holbeach Road, these were predominantly private dwellings?

Geoff Oh yes,

Ian It looks quite ..

Geoff A lot, a lot of quite small cottages along Commercial Road, both on the river bank side and on the other side of the road.

Ian And I know this is, you know, you can't remember absolutely everybody but what sort of jobs would people be doing who lived there?

Geoff I should think most of them worked on the land.

Ian As labourers?

Geoff Oh yes,

Ian I see

Geoff I mean there were other employers in town, of course. I mean, Birchs had a number of men and there were quite a lot of small businesses too employed a few men.

Ian And if we can, without turning this map over ...

Geoff can't quite hear what he says

Ian Ah, before we do, there in the river there seems to be like a what can only be described as a vein or a cut in the actual river. Talk us through what that is.

Geoff That was just a little bit to the south of Albert Street, well roughly opposite Willesby House, a vein cut into the river bank so that the boats could come up to town to the port, if you like. They would have to be reversed along the river and could then turn round in that, we knew it as the swinger, it wasn't quite as deep as the river. Boats would only be coming in and out at high tide anyway.

Ian And in the summer, would you have ever gone in the river? Would you have ever played in the river?

Geoff Only one year do I remember and probably the middle 30s I should think, and for some weeks the river was very, very low. The only time I can recall that the bed of the river was just pools really, not a lot of continuous stream at all. There would have been no fresh water coming down and tides must have been exceptionally low in the Wash. There were many, many tiny crabs in the little pools so perhaps at high tide a bit of water came up and went. Don't ever remember seeing crabs in the river at any other time but we did play in the mud in the bottom of the river just that one summer.

Ian I see, so this is really the .. you mentioned the swinger when barges were reversed to .. If we could just touch on going further away from Spalding town so we're going towards the, where the existing West Elloe bridges are at the moment, past the gas works. We've got on the, if I can call it, the Holbeach side, so Commercial Road, we've got a series of many, many look like private dwellings along here but on the other bank we've got what look like lots of large gardens or fields.

Geoff Fields, yes, they were fields, would have been fields at that time, certainly the one next to the gas works was a field. We played football there. I think and I'm not certain that I can remember that pair of cottages in that field or whether it's just a vague memory of something I've been told. A pair of houses known as the Ink Pot houses because the two together made just about a square and they had a hip roof on all four sides to the eaves and a chimney in the middle and the houses were tarred and it looked like one of those little square ink bottles we used to buy.

Ian And on the .. we've got in the actual river it says mooring posts and there's also what looks like an offshoot, a very small offshoot in the river, what is that?

Geoff That was Joe Pannell's slipway. Joe Pannell was a boat builder, not quite sure on the family history but I certainly remember Joe as a very elderly man but my father and grandfather worked with him. I can remember a smallish boat or two on his slipway which I was originally repairing in the 30s. I

don't think he did any boat building at that time. I'm sure he had done when he was a younger man. And Joe had charge of a lot of the Drainage Board's sluices in the area.

Ian I see.

Geoff And he looked after the woodwork and quite often, occasionally, I remember father would go in to say he was with Joe Pannell on a particular day to do the ironwork. He'd make up the ironwork the shop and then go with Joe to fit it. Certainly he was working for two or three days at Tydd or one of the Tydds anyway, and came home the first day and said that the river, when the sluice gate was closed, the river was alive with big eels as thick as your wrist and the following day he took a length of cord and put a wire on the end of it and baited it and threw it into the river and brought home and eel which was nearly as thick as your wrist. Anyway, probably a couple of feet long which my mother refused to deal with but he took it to his mother, my grandmother, and she cooked it and the two families had a meal from that, from that eel.

Ian What does eel taste like? Never having eaten it.

Geoff It was a long time ago and I've not eaten it since but I think just fish. Varieties of fish vary a bit, perhaps the eel did as well.

Ian Ok. So we've got on the north side of the Welland, past where you've got all of the fields, we've got a road called Marsh Rails Road.

Geoff Well, from some point along there, roughly I suppose where the West Elloe bridges are now, it became a .. it was just a grass road, a grass road along the river bank and my father as a boy remembers it as a gated road so that it ran, the fields actually went right down to the river bank and if you used the road which was a right of way, you had to open and close the gate as you went through each field. Of course, in 1925 the beet factory, but I should think before then. In the 20s West Elloe Bridge was built and on the left-hand side where Geest are now, was a big area of allotments, turning to allotments. There was a refuse destructor where all the town dustmen took the collection as they collected it and it was tipped and it was burnt. There was a tall chimney at the gas works, there was a tall chimney at the refuse destructor and metal tin cans were bailed up into bags.

Ian And I want to jump, if I may, to the junction of Commercial Road and where it goes into the Holbeach Road and was, did this have a specific name? Was this still part of Spalding?

Geoff Well it was known as Pigeon End, the Pigeon pub was on the riverbank, still is, now a Chinese takeaway I believe but Pigeon End, it had been before .. I mean, this must be in the late 1700s or middle 1700s. Probably the Pigeon pub had not been built then but it was at that time a community, a bit separate from Spalding, came to be known later as Pigeon End. I came home from school little bit untidy, my father would say you look like a Pigeon Ender, boy. And I imagine at that time, before most of the cottages on Commercial Road there'd been very little ..

Ian .. development

Geoff .. development before the gas works was built, between Chain Bridge probably or a little bit further along, Albert Street perhaps. Between there and the Pigeon there'd have been very few buildings of any sort in the 1700s.

Ian And why would you have been called looking like a Pigeon Ender? Were they deemed as looking a bit rough or?

Geoff Perhaps it was a little bit of prejudice, social prejudice perhaps. It could well be .. you see looking back in the 1700s, I mean before all these working class cottages were built some houses that they lived in probably were extremely lean. Most working people ..

Ian But in your experience, I would they'd mainly be just houses or ..

Geoff Yes, that's it, it had obviously been developed in the late 1800s I should think. There was a mill which I don't remember, and in the 30s, how far it went back I don't know, probably as contemporary was my grandfather's so he'd been there since the 1900s was Freddie Creamer, a coach builder who employed a blacksmith.

Ian And we are looking at Holbeach Road, also Pigeon End as it was called, this area here, would people have regularly travelled to Holbeach or would the traffic have been coming the other way, Spalding being one of a local hub?

Geoff Probably but I would think in the 1700s, I wouldn't think there would have been much traffic either way apart from people involved in farmer in say at Weston. There was another forge here catering for that area. My grandfather took that forge for a while, not very long I think.

Ian In addition to ?

Geoff Yes, in addition to.

Ian I see.

Geoff Yes, yes, probably not so very long after he came here because I .. Derek called my father over talking about it in his boyhood time so I think ..

Ian And when I'm looking at this map, so we're passed the gas works and towards what was called Pigeon End, predominantly what I can see are fields.

Geoff Yes

Ian What sort of crops would have been growing ..?

Geoff I really don't, really don't know. The .. a lot of this area had been, see here, this is Wheat Road is it? Queens Road was a little bit further over there was ... Exeter Drain .. further over here .. a big area here was all Council housing, Wheat Road and then later on Royce Road and the Atton Avenue and the four roads off that. When the first council houses were built, probably in the 20s or even before that somewhere ..

Ian And that's quite a way out of town.

Geoff Queens Road. Not really, it was part of that .. and of course Halmergate which led to Queens Road and Albert Street was down here somewhere. It .., yea, it certainly was some of it was still fields when I was at school until .. and then it was developed very quickly, the whole area after 1945.

Ian Right, for housing?

Geoff Housing, yes, Council housing.

Ian Yes, I see. Is there anything else that you think we haven't mentioned on either side of the map that you feel would warrant a mention?

Geoff No, I suppose there wasn't much more in the way of business along there. It was all residential but sort of disappeared quite quickly after some .. there were council houses built on Commercial Road opposite the Anchor Pub.

Ian Was there a general thrust to improve the quality of housing?

Geoff I'm sure that was the whole idea.

Ian They would have been considered almost ..

Geoff But to build ..

Ian Dare I say the word slum?

Geoff Yes, they would have been better than slums, not thinking in terms of an industrial town's slum area or ..

Ian No but very old ..

Geoff Very old poor quality housing, yes.

Ian I see. And going back towards Spalding proper, if I can put it like that, so going into the town, is there anything that you think we've missed in terms of the area from the gas works up to the junction of Westlode Street and Double Street?

Geoff Did we mention Kate Hemfrey? Yes, we did, who sold cakes and pastries somewhere in there.

Ian No, so just along from Albion House.

Geoff Between the Ship Albion pub and what is now White House Chambers was a row of .. White House Chambers .. what is that big house .. Albion House .. yes, Langtoft House, we've got that haven't we?

Ian Yes.

Geoff There was certainly a row of small cottages there .. Colwins we mentioned. In one of those cottages Kate Hemfrey, we got it?

Ian No, no

Geoff Not down there?

Ian No, can you spell Hemfrey for me.

Geoff Hemf

Ian Ph?

Geoff No I think it's an f. Like Miss Herling, we mentioned her down here, did we? This one?

Ian Yes, there's a cake shop

Geoff A cake shop .. steam oven it was in the back garden.

Ian I see. So really what we've been able to do is, really from Holland House, all the way along both sides of the Welland and also into Westlode Street but also past the gas works and up to where you've got the West Elloe bridges now and a place called Pigeon End which is at that junction where Commercial Road goes into Holbeach Road. We've been able to put in the various businesses that you recall and what they did and how the usage had changed. So thank you for spending the time looking at this map and giving us some information.