

David Cooper

Memories of fishing the river.

So going back to when you were a child in Postbridge, tell me what you did, how did you occupy your time?

Well there was no television or anything like that of course; I used to fish a lot in the season, which started on the 15th of March till the end of September.

Where did you fish?

On the East Dart river.

How far did you go up?

Oh, right up as far as the waterfall and fish down.

And what were you fishing for?

Trout, fly fishing for trout.

So was there a lot of fish?

Oh, it was good fishing back in those days, yes. You were allowed to take 18 fish on a day, and used to quite often do that, and nice trout as well.

Was it quite closely regulated?

Not really, because my uncle was the water bailiff!

Your uncle was, who was that then?

Fernley Warne, his nickname was Swifty. He was a bit of a character - he knew so many people, and there was a lot of gentry used to come down and fish, especially on the West Dart, for salmon and it was nothing for some of these quite wealthy people to come over here and pick him up in his welly boots in a Rolls Royce and take him off and he used to go out and show them how to fish really; he'd usually hook the salmon and then he'd pass the rod over to them to let them play it out.

So did Fernely teach you to fish?

Yes he did, yes, when I was about six years old I started fly fishing, and me grandfather as well taught me, and my father, we all fished.

So everybody fished?

Everybody fished, that's what you did.