

David Lloyd recalls the area around the River Gade, before the Water Gardens were constructed, and the little restaurant run by his Grandmother

Well there's not a lot that I could say because it wasn't an area where you could go to, it was private property. What I can say is that the bit that you could see, quite literally all the way along, was if you went along what was then known as Cotterells, it's now Leighton Buzzard Road I think, you went along there going towards - north - towards Leighton Buzzard, on the right hand side of the road there were some yards where lorries and things and goods were parked and I don't know quite what it was all about but they used to be there and the river was the other side of that, which one could see. And the other side to the river, of course, there were houses - private houses and what have you so you couldn't go to it - it was completely isolated. Well as I said the - what you could see from the road, was Cotterells, you could see a bit of the river but you couldn't go there it was private property. But the area where I was able to go to it and did know was where my Grandmother lived, she lived then, she had a little restaurant which was called Woodmans - she was a Mrs Woodman - and it was almost, partly underneath the old railway arch, just near that and there was, as you looked at it from the road, Woodman's Cafe was big windows and a door and you could go in through there, turn left and you were in a little restaurant with tables set up. The right hand side of it was where my Gran lived - and the kitchen and everything - and after that there was a big double gate which enclosed a yard behind it and to the right of that was Woodman and Anderson who are still working in the town. It was their place of business there and when I used to go down to see my Grannie I used to go through the side gate next to Anderson and Woodman between the two. Now behind - or when you went into the yard that was behind this gate there was a Mill on the left hand side where they use to make - no they didn't actually make anything they ground old nuts and things like that which I can remember they used to make buttons out of - fancy buttons for ladies and that. And what was left over was ground up for cattle food I think but behind that was the river and there was a little wooden foot bridge of, I think probably about two or three planks wide and a little hand rail on the side there. But that's really - you know it was a quietly flowing river, it was a good width and probably, probably - could be a couple of feet deep, I don't know. But I can remember seeing quite sizable fish sort of hovering around under the bridge. Water Gardens as such - they were not gardens it was just a river. And the other end right the far end of the town, where the river came through from what is now Gadebridge Park, there was a Mill at that end which I think they used the flow of water to, to drive the Mill and after that you didn't see the river at all really because it was on private land - it wasn't a park.