

# The loneliness of Foulness

by **Leon Dobson** (*Lifelong resident Leon, now 87*)



**The vast and lonely stretches of isolated marshland on Foulness Island might not appeal to everyone. One resident who calls his Foulness home tells us what it has been like to live on the island.**

Leon Dobson can trace his family's roots on Foulness Island back to 1832. His family moved from Suffolk to a tithe cottage on the island.

The church is now redundant. When Leon's grandfather died in 1897, they were forced to move out of the cottage and into the workhouse, where there were seven cottages. His grandmother died forty years later in 1937.



The workhouse no longer exists; however, the area has recently been excavated by retired defence contractor Bob Crump who is President of the Foulness Conservation and Archaeological Society.

In the 19th century the island was home to a number of large families. The Dobson's were a family of nine or 10.

Leon's father worked on the island as carpenter and joiner. He married a local girl, and had two sons. Leon was born in 1922, his older brother, John, was born before the start of the First World War in June 1914. When war broke out, Leon's father went off to serve in the trenches, before returning to Foulness at the end of the war.



The former Foulness Church of England Primary School at Churchend was built in 1846, closing in 1988. Leon remembers with fondness his time at school. It was a close-knit community with all the island's youngsters attending the old primary.

There was always plenty happening on the island with an am dram group, cricket, football and tennis clubs.

After leaving school most people went to work on the land or as fishermen. Leon joined his father as a carpenter. He met his wife when she came to the island for a social event with a friend.

The outbreak of World War II is the only time that Leon has left the island for any serious period of time. He returned to his old profession as the island's carpenter and joiner at the end of the hostilities.

Island life might not be for everyone, but for Leon he can't image living anywhere else.