

## Radley History Club

### Life in Radley in the 1930s and 1940s

Information extracted from interviews in the Radley Remembered series, mostly carried out in [2003 and 2004?]

Archive number:	A.55
Date of interview:	10 March 2004

### Personal details pre 1953

Interviewee (complete separate form for co-interviewee if also resident in Radley pre 1953):	<b>NANCY HOMEWOOD</b>
Date of birth:	1931, at Peachcroft Farm.
Date came to Radley (if different):	Lived elsewhere (Shepperton, then Sussex coast) for few years in 1950s, but came back to Radley in 1958.
Address in 1930s/1940s:	Peachcroft Farm (access to which was lane from White's Lane); quite isolated in 1930s, and very quiet.
Other family information:	Married (husband John) in 1952 (in Radley Church, by Rev. Dugdale (more a farmer than a priest) of Chandlings). Interviewee's paternal grandfather came as tenant to Church Farm in 1890s. Interviewee's father born at Church Farm in 1900; enlisted for WW1 in 1918; returned to work on Church Farm in 1921. Elder brother born 1920; younger brother born 1933.

### Education

Schools/colleges attended:	St. Helen's Prep. School, then St. Helen's School as boarder.
Other information about education:	After school, domestic science college in Eastbourne for a year. Then to Reading University.

### Work

Occupation and place of work of father:	Farmer (tenant of Radley College).
Occupation and place of work of mother:	Farmer's wife (worked very hard on farm); lived to age 100.
Occupation and place of work of interviewee in 1930s/40s (if any):	

Information about farm work and farms:

When Wick Hall Estate was sold in 1929, Church Farm was bought by family called Ballard (jewellers in Oxford). Interviewee's father stayed at Church Farm until 1931. But Radley College had bought the 'outlying land' at Peachcroft, where were several barns (one of which prob. 18th century) but no farm house. Radley College offered tenancy of Peachcroft Farm (~200 acres) to interviewee's father, and built farm house (built over ~2 months in the summer), cowshed, dairy and stable. Peachcroft Farm supplied Radley College with milk (and supplied surplus milk to Wigmore's Dairy in St. Aldate's in Oxford).  
Big change from livestock to arable farming during WW2. During WW2 park land north of Chestnut Avenue [track from Lodge Hill to Radley College] ploughed up to grow wheat; to farm increased acreage managed to get combine harvester (pulled by tractor) from America.  
Got good crops of mushrooms from horses' paddock at P. Farm.  
After WW2, in addition to arable, had beef cattle, sheep, and some chickens and turkeys, but no cows for milk.  
During 1930s, some farm turkeys would roost in trees in Chestnut Avenue.  
During WW2, father grew sugar beet (new crop for him); sugar beet went out by train.  
For a while kept rare Oxfordshire breed of pig — 'Sandy Blacks' — produced good tasty pork.

Other information about what jobs people were doing:

### Travel

Mode of travel to school:

In old Morris milk van.

Mode of travel to work (interviewee and parents):

Any comments about the station and use of the train:

Station was an important part of village life, especially during WW2. Used the Bunk to go into Abingdon 'as a treat'. St. Helen's boarders (many from London to escape bombing) used the Bunk at beginnings and ends of terms.

Any other comments about travel including, including car use and ownership:

In 1930s, probably only ~6 cars in Radley village.

### Buildings - location and characteristics

Location of interviewee's home:

Any comments on size, numbers of rooms, sharing, outside loos, source of water, electricity and telephone services etc. of interviewee's home:

At Peachcroft Farm, water pumped from well morning and evening; only got mains water in 1946 (although Radley College already had mains water). When Water Board tested well water prior to connecting mains water, they said 'don't drink another drop' — but family had been drinking well water for years. Waste water went to cesspit; still did at time of interview.

Any comments on location and characteristics of other buildings in Radley including dwellings, shops, village hall, barns, laundries etc:	
<b>Services and pastimes (excluding education and travel covered above)</b>	
Comments about shopping including retail deliveries:	In 1930s, Bayliss's general store (also Post office) on corner of New Road.
Comments on health and health services:	
Comments on play, pastimes and recreational activities - e.g. swimming in river, pub, clubs and societies, football, darts, guides:	When young, interviewee and brother used to play sometimes with Dick Frearson's brother and sister in Lower Radley; also picnics by the river. Played in little sandy inlets in river bank; recalls water being 'quite clear'.
Comments on religion, church and choir:	Remembers Rev. Pixell.
<b>Miscellaneous</b>	
Any comments about Radley people not covered elsewhere:	Recalls cottage near church car park inhabited by family called Portsmouth; prob. demolished (or collapsed) ~end 1950s. Workers on Peachcroft farm: Sidney Alexander (worked on Peachcroft Farm from age 14 all his working life — very versatile, 'he could do anything'); Bert Blackman (ex-Pumney Farm, stockman); Freddy Warner; Bill Street.
Comments about Radley College, its way of operating and relations with the village:	
Comments on Coronation and Jubilee events:	

<p>Any information on impact of WW2 in Radley and about wartime activities:</p>	<p>Working on farm: during WW2 some Italian POWs ('used to sing a lot') brought daily from camp in Kidlington; just after WW2 a German POW (Hans Klingberg, a 'very good hard-working man') who chose to stay in England and married local girl; during WW2, a few Land Girls; and, at harvest time, a few boys from Abingdon School.</p> <p>Remembers seeing sky red over Nuneham during London Blitz; 'we really thought that we would be invaded'; 'just the {English} Channel between us and France'. Peachcroft Farm had 'outer marker beacon' for Abingdon Aerodrome (mostly Whitley bombers); beacon needed electricity, so P. Farm got electricity.</p> <p>Since a farm, no real shortage of food during WW2; mother used to swap eggs for clothing coupons; father gave away produce to anyone in need.</p> <p>Remembers seeing directly over farm formations of German bombers going to bomb Birmingham, and returning ~3 hours later.</p>
<p>Record here any other interesting items not covered above and general observations on life in those days:</p>	<p>Parish boundary used to go down St. Peter's Road in Abingdon.</p> <p>Interviewee farmed the fields that Peachcroft housing estate was built on.</p> <p>Biggest changes since 1930s: increase in traffic noise (in 1930s 'was almost breathtakingly quiet'); loss of elm trees (they grew along most of the hedgerows, although they were liable to drop their branches when in full leaf ('you didn't park a cart or a car under an elm tree unless there was someone with it')).</p>