

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.47
Date of interview:	30 October 2003

Personal details pre 1953

Interviewee (complete separate form for co-interviewee if also resident in Radley pre 1953):	RITA FORD
Date of birth:	1938. Born at home at 90 Lower Radley.
Date came to Radley (if different):	
Address in 1930s/1940s:	90 Lower Radley ('Lower Farm Cottage').
Other family information:	2 sisters, 1 brother. Large extended family; at one time 'every house in village had an aunt and uncle in it'. Interviewee moved to house in Cowley when got married. Second son lives in cottage at Wick Hall, and at time of interview had just taken over Nursery. Eldest sister kept family together when mother died.

Education

Schools/colleges attended:	Radley Primary School. Three teachers, Miss Cross ('top class'), Mrs [? name not clear, @12:15], Miss Middleton (youngest children). Thereafter went to Council school, Ock Street, Abingdon, since father couldn't afford another daughter at grammar school. Left school at age 15.
Other information about education:	Eldest sister attended Faringdon Grammar School; travelled there and back every day.

Work

Occupation and place of work of father:	Father was Post Office engineer; worked at Bletchley on Enigma during WW2; never spoke of it during his lifetime. Maternal grandfather came from near Swindon to work on railway at Radley as plate layer. Paternal grandfather had gents' outfitters shop in Hereford.
Occupation and place of work of mother:	Mother's forebears had all lived in Lower Radley since the 1700s. Most of mother's female forebears were married by men from outside the village; hence Westons, Smewins, Mattingleys, Grimes.

<p>Occupation and place of work of interviewee in 1930s/40s (if any):</p>	<p>Wanted to become nurse, but father couldn't afford to pay. Went to shorthand/typist college in Abingdon (small place in Conduit Road). Worked as secretary in plastics factory down Thrupp Lane which had formerly been steam bakery. Then worked as manager's secretary at Oxford United. Then after a few years, in 1969, bought (with husband Brian) Nursery on Radley Road in Abingdon from a Mr and Mrs English (nursery originally set up in 1930s or 1940s). Interviewee and husband ran Nursery for 32 or 33 years; expanded from 5 glasshouses to 10; very high winds and big hailstones caused severe damage to glasshouses.</p>
<p>Information about farm work and farms:</p>	
<p>Other information about what jobs people were doing:</p>	
<p>Travel</p>	
<p>Mode of travel to school:</p>	<p>When went to 'senior school' in Abingdon; was given 'school bicycle' by local authority since lived more than 3 miles from school.</p>
<p>Mode of travel to work (interviewee and parents):</p>	
<p>Any comments about the station and use of the train:</p>	<p>Went to Abingdon Fair on train ('the Bunk') because buses coming from Oxford were always full by the time they got to Radley.</p>
<p>Any other comments about travel including, including car use and ownership:</p>	<p>During childhood was very much based in Radley; although travelled into Abingdon on the train now and then, never ventured as far as the west end of Ock Street; and Oxford was essentially terra incognita.</p>
<p>Buildings - location and characteristics</p>	
<p>Location of interviewee's home:</p>	
<p>Any comments on size, numbers of rooms, sharing, outside loos, source of water, electricity and telephone services etc. of interviewee's home:</p>	<p>Home (90 Lower Radley) was semi-detached thatched cottage, one room downstairs, one room upstairs; father, mother and eventually four children; four children in one bed upstairs, father and mother in other bed, all in same room. Other half of 90 Lower R cottage lived in by Aunt Mary and Uncle Jack; when they died, interviewee's father bought their half of the cottage and made it into one house. Big garden, lots of fruit trees, pond, well, toilet 'up the garden'. Concrete underground air-raid shelter built by father during WW2. Previously, gravel dug out of garden. Size of house greatly increased by subsequent owners.</p>

Any comments on location and characteristics of other buildings in Radley including dwellings, shops, village hall, barns, laundries etc:

Mentioned 'Goosey', a lane running from Baker's Close to pond where geese and ducks kept.
 Although people had big gardens, almost everyone also had an allotment. Les and Elsie Grimes, and Miss Pocock lived in semi-detached tumbledown cruck cottage where 33 and 35 LR now are; ashes from fire on front path (common practice at the time).
 Back in 1940s no street lights, no electricity, no running water. Cooked on big range in winter, on primus stove in summer.
 Farm houses at the time: Lower Farm, Neat's Home, Pumney; 87 LR was at the time attached to Lower Farm.
 Cottage opposite terrace of five (105–115 LR) lived in by Mrs Smith who gave piano lessons.
 Formerly baker in Baker's Close used to cook large items (big joints of meat, Christmas dinners, etc.) for villagers.
 Three families (farm workers) lived in 87 LR ('Minchin's farm house'): the Haynes lived in front part; Mr and Mrs Churchill lived round the side; Mr and Mrs Salter lived round the back.
 Mattingleys lived in 'next cottage' [v. probably 75 LR at beginning of road to Radley College boathouse].
 Dawson's Cottage: Mrs Dawson (jocularly called 'the witch') used to chase children with carving knife.
 Three cottages next door to Dawson's Cottage, but now two.
 Opposite Spinney Cottage: Mr and Mrs Woodley and Harold.
 'Mrs Hadland's cottage' was present 25 LR (formerly Post Office).

Services and pastimes (excluding education and travel covered above)

Comments about shopping including retail deliveries:

Clothes bought in Abingdon. A Mrs Wadsworth [?? spelling, @40:20] in Foxborough Road was dress-maker; made clothes from material bought elsewhere.
 'Aunt Sylvia and Uncle Dick' ran Post Office.
 A Mr Nuttley, fishmonger, used to come round village on Thursday afternoons; a Mr Slatter came round with hardware van; milk from Pumney Farm; scissors grinder on bicycle.

Comments on health and health services:

Comments on play, pastimes and recreational activities - e.g. swimming in river, pub, clubs and societies, football, darts, games:

Summer holidays were largely spent in the river at Radley.
 In winter, ice skating on pond in field just north of road to boathouse just past bridge; quite safe, no depth to pond.
 Square-dancing in old village hall on Tuesday evenings.

Comments on religion, church and choir:

Attended Sunday School every Sunday, then Holy Communion and Evensong every Sunday. Rev. Pixell (from E. London) was very good vicar.
 Did bell-ringing, and sang in choir.
 Mrs Levetus (Neat's Home Cottage) wore enormous hats in church.

Miscellaneous

<p>Any comments about Radley people not covered elsewhere:</p>	
<p>Comments about Radley College, its way of operating and relations with the village:</p>	
<p>Comments on Coronation and Jubilee events:</p>	<p>Remembers seeing Coronation on television in Peacock Cottage ['Aunt Alice and Uncle ? @ 48:45'] (half the village crammed around small TV set). Also recalls seeing Trafalgar Day on headmistress's TV shortly before. Celebratory parades, etc. for Coronation at Radley College — 'quite a show'.</p>
<p>Any information on impact of WW2 in Radley and about wartime activities:</p>	<p>Garden + allotment + chickens provided food resource during WW2. (Allotments were in same place as they now are.) Remembers once (in summertime) seeing sky completely full of aeroplanes in formation. Mentioned a bomb falling near Black Bridge.</p>
<p>Record here any other interesting items not covered above and general observations on life in those days:</p>	<p>Spinney Comley did excellent job keeping the roads clean, including gritting in winter. His cap 'rotated' on his head as time went on throughout the day. Interviewee reckons children have much less freedom than they did 'in the old days'. Formerly everybody knew each other in village; nowadays much less so. Radley Parish boundary has changed several times; at one time boundary ran down St. Peter's Road in Abingdon.</p>