

## 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.34
Date of interview:	21-Mar-03

#### Personal details pre 1953

Interviewee (complete separate form for co-interviewee if also resident in Radley pre 1953):	Dick Frearson
Date of birth:	1926
Date came to Radley (if different):	Born at Lower Farm. Mother born at Neat Home Farm.
Address in 1930s/1940s:	Lower Farm, Radley
Other family information:	2 siblings.

#### Education

Schools/colleges attended:	First few school years in house close to post office run by Mrs Pocock who took two or three children. Then St Swithuns in Kennington until 1937. His grandmother was a great friend of the headmistress. As a teenager, rural craft instructor came down from Reading to teach him thatching. A different instructor taught him to cut and lay a hedge.
Other information about education:	St Swithuns was a one room school at the time. Just one boiler for heat. Mother went to St Helen's but had to leave at 14 to help at home.

#### Work

Occupation and place of work of father:	Farmer from 1924 to 1950. Based at Lower Farm
Occupation and place of work of mother:	Mother worked at home from the age of 14; her mother was often ill. Very hard work.
Occupation and place of work of interviewee in 1930s/40s (if any):	Worked on father's farm
Information about farm work and farms:	Lower Farm employed about 5 people when Dick started. Employed 2 at time of interview. Pumney was a dairy farm. Mentioned Spinney the roadman who cut grooves to allow drainage and gravelled first thing in the morning in frost. Took pride in his work. Also mentions a farm manager, market gardener, Mrs Pocock who took in laundry, school caretaker (Bob Gooding) [Godding] Commented that working hours were much longer.

Other information about what jobs people were doing:	
<b>Travel</b>	
Mode of travel to school:	Remembers riding a tricycle to Mrs Pocock's. Later, cycled to school in Kennington every day (hills seemed very steep!). No traffic.
Mode of travel to work (interviewee and parents):	Lived on farm
Any comments about the station and use of the train:	There were four railway lines in Radley in the war. They were used to store armaments. There was a good little station. The Home Guard used to meet there. Porters and guards and signalmen.
Any other comments about travel including, including car use and ownership:	Only 2 cars in Lower Radley pre-war Bus delivered milk from Pumney Farm Spent most of his time as a child in Radley. Never had a holiday by the sea. Mother travelled from Neat Home farm to school in Abingdon by train every day (around 1910). Used ferry at boathouse very occasionally to get across the river. A great big punt. The ferryman was called Clark.
<b>Buildings - location and characteristics</b>	
Location of interviewee's home:	Lower Farm
Any comments on size, numbers of rooms, sharing, outside loos, source of water, electricity and telephone services etc of interviewee's home:	Went to bed with a candle until in his teens Their water was pumped which was a luxury, most people had to pull it from a well in a bucket.
Any comments on location and characteristics of other buildings in Radley including dwellings, shops, village hall, barns, laundries etc:	Dick commented on the buildings and features he passed on his way home from school in Kennington. Good avenue of trees running south from the school, possibly wychelm. Golf course on top of hill. Bill Drysdale's holiday camp. Park Farm (Mr Stone) and Park Farm Cottages. Church and Church Farm (occupied by Mr Greening). Two thatched cottages (now demolished) between Church Farm and T-junction, occupied by Shepherd family and Turner family. Rent of one was £6 pa in 1930, fairly typical. Farm buildings on right subsequently converted by Radley College. Cottage where car park now is occupied by Jack Portsmouth who managed Church Farm. Cemetery on right opened by Mrs Dockar Drysdale in 1930s. There was a small wood on the right with elms, and a rookery, running down to the council houses on the right around the post office. Remembers first house built on other side of the road opposite post office by a man called Helman, a market gardener who also built some green houses. There was a Y-shaped junction where the Lower Radley T-junction is now. Beech tree with hexagonal seat in Y. Remains of a building on left after bridge. Then thatched cottage occupied by Hadlands. Then following loop to the left round the outside. Thatched stable where 37 now is. Then Emily Pocock who took in laundry in a thatched cruck house divided into 2 (now no. 35). The allotments. Spinneys Cottage (now no. 51) was divided into 3

cottages occupied by Spinney Comley, the roadman, George Godding and an evacuee couple from London (Abletts). Tall house on left of track (now 57) divided into 2 occupied by the Villebois and James families. Round the back another cottage occupied by Bob Godding, school caretaker. Dawson's cottage opposite, occupied by Miss Dawson (now no. 65). Bungalow built in 30s where bigger house at top of causeway now is. Boathouse built in 1921. Ferryman's cottage opposite. Peacock Cottage was divided into 2. Grimes lived in one. No 87 was big old farmhouse split into three and occupied by Lower Farm workers. Then Lower Farm farmyard.

Pumney is the oldest farmhouse in Radley, used to link direct to Abingdon, at that time a dairy Farm. Run by Blackman and 2 sons.

Six cottages (now ? - 115) shared an open well at the back. Tubbs, Westons, Dunsdons, Mattingleys, Gibbons.

Next Neat Home Farm, cottage before that occupied by manager of the farm. Tall fir tree about to fall down. Still there at time of interview.

Going back round loop looking at houses on the right, row of cottages. Then thatched house divided into two (nos 46-48); Bargus [?] and Stimpson occupied those. Then prefab on corner occupied by George Woodley and wife. Then Peacock Cottage. Then thatched semi occupied by Smewins and Mrs Foster plus daughter and family, the Wilsons, the youngest of whom is Rita. Then a stable (now converted). Then a lovely old barn which was pulled down. Then Lower Farm. Then what is now Bakers Close. It was the centre of the village. Bakery, sweetshop, coalyard. And had been post office before his time. Then thatched cottage occupied by Oliver Smith and family, antique dealer. (Now 110). Next house occupied by Bennetts and Miss Ambridge. And the next one is where the Jeacocks lived, also the Grimes, eleven people in total. Then one house occupied by George Cumney.

Going back up towards the railway bridge, there was a garden before the old forge. Then the old forge which was not used as a forge even then. Only one dwelling between there and the top of the railway bridge a gable ended bungalow occupied by the Allisons. Then old village hall. Then, where the entrance to the mobile home park now is, a woodworks opened by Gary Shaw in the early 30s.

Dick also commented on the relatively poor standard of life. No electricity prior to 1938, no piped water, no television.

### Services and pastimes (excluding education and travel covered above)

Comments about shopping including retail deliveries:

Milk from Pumney's Farm brought by owner's son Jack Blackman in two or three churns by horse and cart to bus stop, and taken to Kennington by bus, where it was distributed by Jack Gibbons with a motorbike and sidecar. Milk from their farm was taken to Abingdon in a horse and trap. Granny Garing pushed the churns round Abingdon with the milk (45.49).

Comments on health and health services:

Mentions two people who died of TB

Comments on play, pastimes and recreational activities - eg swimming in river, pub, clubs and societies, football, darts, guides:

The Lower Radley allotments were much bigger than they are now. Everyone had one. No money so grew their own veg.

Comments on religion,  
church and choir:

### Miscellaneous

Any comments about Radley  
people not covered  
elsewhere:

Comments about Radley  
College, its way of operating  
and relations with the  
village:

Comments on Coronation  
and Jubilee events:

Any information on impact  
of WW2 in Radley and about  
wartime activities:

Record here any other  
interesting items not  
covered above and general  
observations on life in those  
days:

Grimes was the name of the ferryman's wife. She died of TB.

Had evacuees in the war like everyone else. 11 in the house then including his grandmother and evacuees. A bit crowded with one bathroom. But others suffered more.

Water used to come over the Lower Radley causeway every year.  
1972 Dutch Elm disease. Lost all the elms common in the area (as elsewhere in Thames valley) and the rooks with it (now overrun with crows).  
Road always flooded outside no. 37 Lower Radley.  
Comments on farm yard, farm buildings, 9 shire horses instead of tractors (31.06).  
Every farm had a dairy herd. (36.30) All farms were mixed.  
Story about Home Guard/ Local Defence Volunteers. Tales about what they did (52.00). And royal connection to station (53.00)  
Story about Charles and Diana in railway carriage. (56.00)  
Biggest difference between then and now is affluence.