

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.158

Date of interview: 06-Mar-20

Personal details pre 1953

Interviewee (complete separate form for co-interviewee if also resident in Radley pre 1953):

DON MATTINGLEY

Date of birth:

1925

Date came to Radley (if different):

Address in 1930s/1940s:

Rose Cottages, Lower Radley (opposite the old bakery) for first 2/3 years. Then went to Weston Road Grandpont Oxford for a few years. Came back to Rose Cottages when about 5 years old.

Other family information:

Parents were Fred and Lillian. One brother and one sister.

Education

Schools/colleges attended:

Started in Oxford, then went to Kennington, then to Radley, then Boxhill. Left school at 14.

Other information about education:

Radley school was very basic. Only heating was coke fire stood in the room. All kids in the same room. Miss Middleton was there. Miss Cross came in a bit later. Can't remember name of head when he was first there. Boxhill was bigger, over 100 pupils, quite a good school, enjoyed it. Some Radley boys went there, others to the council school, one or two to the grammar school.

Work

Occupation and place of work of father:

Building labourer. Also worked in glove factory at Woodstock. Used to bike into Oxford to work but would be turned away if it was raining.

Occupation and place of work of mother:

Waitress at [Bules?] in Oxford

Occupation and place of work of interviewee in 1930s/40s (if any):

At 14 (1939), went to Pressed Steel in Cowley to work. Sprayed the bottom of cars (Hillman Minx) as they went from paint shop to trim shop. Then got promoted and went on to the trim line fitting door bumpers and carpets. So many people working there - over 50,000 between Pressed Steel and Morris. Like a madhouse. Flooded out at the end of the day. Couldn't go against them, filled the road. Did wings on Lancaster bombers. Then called up and was in the navy. Went to Newcastle to pick up a ship, an aircraft repair ship bound for the Far East. Got as far as the Suez Canal then war ended and they turned round and came back. Then went to Malta for two years. Maltese workers repaired the ship. They were close to starving. Went to John [Hollands?] in Cowley and worked in machine shop when left navy in 1947.

Information about farm work and farms:

Quite a few people worked on worked on the farms when he was young but that all petered out with mechanisation. Originally only horses, then tractors and combines came in.

Other information about what jobs people were doing:	A lot of people were employed on the railway - gangers on the railway. Used to knock wooden blocks in the side of the line with a big hammer. Quite a few also working in Radley College.
Travel	
Mode of travel to school:	Walked to school in Radley with mates.
Mode of travel to work (interviewee and parents):	Used to bike into Oxford to work but would be turned away if it was raining.
Any comments about the station and use of the train:	
Any other comments about travel including, including car use and ownership:	Everyone used to bike to work, girls and all. Girls from Drayton used to bike to work in Oxford, doing munitions. Don't remember anyone going on the bus, all cycling. But there was a bus service when he was a kid, a green single decker. Only about two people had cars when he was a boy. Old [Tombs] was the first one to have one. He lived in the big house before you get to the council houses where the shops are now. And there was a squadron leader in the RAF who had a Lagonda - his aunt worked for him. Got an Austin 7 himself in 1953.
Buildings - location and characteristics	
Location of interviewee's home:	Rose Cottages, Lower Radley, when he was a kid.
Any comments on size, numbers of rooms, sharing, outside loos, source of water, electricity and telephone services etc of interviewee's home:	It had a kitchen, a living room and two bedrooms. No inside toilet. Water from a well shared by the six houses. No electric. Oil lamps. Everything had to be cooked on primus or coal fire.
Any comments on location and characteristics of other buildings in Radley including dwellings, shops, village hall, barns, laundries etc:	Shaw had got some caravans by the railway bridge when he came out the navy (1947) at the back of his fishing pond. Don went and lived in one for about a year. New Road wasn't built in his childhood, it was where they used to hold the fete, Radley feast. When bungalows along Foxborough Road were built just before the war, they were £450 each. And had to put £10 down to reserve one. Mother's uncle was going to lend his Dad the £10
Services and pastimes (excluding education and travel covered above)	
Comments about shopping including retail deliveries:	Old Slatter used to bring the paraffin and sweets round. Pear drops and wine gums used to smell of paraffin! [Later? 1950s?] Fred Wheeler had a butchers shop in the terrace where the shop is now, Kit Broad had the Post Office, Mr Bayliss had the little shop opposite the pub, Japanese prisoner of war, Kitchen, had a general groceries shop there. Post Office was where the council houses are when he was a boy though it had been in Lower Radley before.
Comments on health and health services:	Doctor was in Abingdon. Got a boil on his arm and doctor came out and lanced it. There was a general hospital in Abingdon where his father-in-law went when he had his leg off. Mother dropped dead in the street in 1966.

<p>Comments on play, pastimes and recreational activities - eg swimming in river, pub, clubs and societies, football, darts, guides:</p>	<p>Used to grow veg in the garden. Emptied the bucket from the toilet in the garden, brussels as big as your head! Many people kept pigs and chickens, butchered them at home. Most people had an allotment as well down where the Lower Radley allotments are now. And there were more where the shops are now.</p> <p>There was football and cricket clubs. But not much time for anything in the war.</p>
<p>Comments on religion, church and choir:</p>	<p>As kids, used to go to Sunday school, and again at night.</p>
<p>Miscellaneous</p>	
<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>All held up at Wick Hall, only place with tables for food big enough for the village.</p>
<p>Any information on impact of WW2 in Radley and about wartime activities:</p>	<p>Had to do Home Guard. Had two bullets between 4 of them! Patrol used to go up and down the river. Used to see the planes going over to Birmingham and Coventry. Had rationing but could go out and get a rabbit occasionally. People used to keep chickens and all, had pigs as well in those cottages. Butchered them at home.</p>
<p>Record here any other interesting items not covered above and general observations on life in those days:</p>	<p>Thought everything was great when he was a kid. Now people don't mix as much. Television has blown conversation to pieces.</p>