

## 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.52 **Recording is restricted to Club use only**

Date of interview:

3 February 2004 (at Station House [old people's home], Abingdon).

### Personal details pre 1953

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

**ETHYL LAY** [interviewer's aunt]

Date of birth:

1908 (at 41 Radley [before house re-numbering]).

Date came to Radley (if different):

Address in 1930s/1940s:

After got married, lived for nine years above bakery shop in the Vineyard, Abingdon.

Other family information:

Interviewee had three brothers (Fred [father of interviewer], Ernest, Jack) and six sisters (Kate (K[C?]atherine), Mabel, Elsie, Ellen, Lilian, Dorothy), i.e. there were ten children altogether (interviewee was one of the youngest).  
All in cottage with three rooms (two up, one down).  
Elder girls (Mabel, Elsie) went into service in London (Kensington). Lilian worked for vicar of Radley who moved to Aston Tirrold, then to London (to work for 'Lady Gamble' [?spelling, @04:55]. Kate married signalman in Hungerford.  
Fred worked on railway, Jack worked first of all in Post Office in Abingdon then on railway, Ernest worked for Mr Betteridge, the farmer, then on railway.  
Fred was soldier in WW1 (France then Italy).  
Interviewee married Jack Lay (from Radley Road (between St. John's and Swinburne Roads), Abingdon), a baker and rounds-man (bakery was up opening between St. John's and Swinburne Roads). Married by Rev. Jackson; celebration afterwards in old Radley village hall. After bakery closed, Jack worked for Cowley Concrete [presumably off St. Peter's Rd., Abingdon].  
Interviewee had two children: Peter and Richard.  
Interviewee's grandfather lived in Ock Street, Abingdon.

### Education

Schools/colleges attended:

Started at Radley Primary School just before age 5; 'loved school'. Essentially three classes: infants (behind 'big doors'), younger children, older children.  
Heating by coke stove in middle of room. Used slates and crayons.  
Three teachers, one for infants, one for younger children, and 'The Governess' (Miss Welsh); mentioned a Mrs Gardiner, and a Miss Moss.

Other information about education:

### Work

Occupation and place of work of father:	Frank Stimpson. Railway porter. He had one sister, Mary.
Occupation and place of work of mother:	Martha Stimpson.
Occupation and place of work of interviewee in 1930s/40s (if any):	When left school worked as nursemaid in Abingdon for ~1 year, earned 5/- a week, lived in, half days Wednesday and Sunday; had double bed and whole room to herself, 'heaven' after sleeping three to a bed. Then worked as general maid 'with the Mobliss [?spelling, @27:10] shoe people' until got married aged 21 in Radley Church.
Information about farm work and farms:	Neats Home Farm known then as Walker's Farm (where cowman was Daniel Weston (from where milk was mostly sent to London).
Other information about what jobs people were doing:	

### Travel

Mode of travel to school:	
Mode of travel to work (interviewee and parents):	
Any comments about the station and use of the train:	
Any other comments about travel including, including car use and ownership:	River steamers used to pull in at a landing stage ('Nuneham') near Black Bridge between Sandford and Abingdon.

### Buildings - location and characteristics

Location of interviewee's home:	41 (as it was then) Lower Radley [prob. quite close to present row 105–115 LR, 'the farm cottages'].
Any comments on size, numbers of rooms, sharing, outside loos, source of water, electricity and telephone services etc. of interviewee's home:	Girls slept three in a bed. Mother cooked on open coal fire with oven at the side. No running water, water (with frogs and frog spawn!) got from well (bucket and long pole (dog and cat shared family water)), no drainage, toilet was wooden seat with hole and bucket beneath (bucket subsequently emptied into hole in the garden — 'the rhubarb grew well!').
Any comments on location and characteristics of other buildings in Radley including dwellings, shops, village hall, barns, laundries etc:	Mentioned 'an old Co-op' 'just opposite the station'.

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

Comments about shopping including retail deliveries:	Mother shopped in Abingdon (via train) on Friday (since pay day was Thursday). Shops in Abingdon mentioned: Cottles (butcher, who also delivered by horse and cart), Cullens (grocer) [?spelling, @08:55]. Bread obtained from local baker (Mr Bannister) who also did a coal round (and baked cakes for villagers). Interviewee wore elder sisters' cast-offs, and wore boots (not shoes). Milk obtained from Park Farm Cottage.
Comments on health and health services:	Family was well fed because they had a big garden and an allotment near the station (rhubarb, blackcurrants, gooseberries, three apple trees, plum tree and greengage tree).
Comments on play, pastimes and recreational activities - e.g. swimming in river, pub, clubs and societies, football, darts, guides:	Used to paddle in river (not swim, because 'nowhere to undress'); used to walk to Sandford. Before married, holidays with sisters in London and Hungerford.
Comments on religion, church and choir:	Attended church three times on Sunday: morning service, afternoon Sunday School, evening service — 'nothing much else to do'. Vicars: Longland, Phillips, Hibbert. Hibbert used to raise eyebrows by taking off his dog collar and playing golf on Sundays.
<b>Miscellaneous</b>	
Any comments about Radley people not covered elsewhere:	Families in LR mentioned: Bennets, Ambridges, Batemans, Villebois, Dellers, Westons, Grahams, Gibbons, Willetts, Fosters, Smewins, Dawsons (husband killed on railway), Graces.
Comments about Radley College, its way of operating and relations with the village:	
Comments on Coronation and Jubilee events:	Last May Day celebration in 1940 in central field [enclosed by LR loop]. 'Radley Feast' (a sort of small fair) held in field opposite pub [before houses built].
Any information on impact of WW2 in Radley and about wartime activities:	WW1: remembers being terrified of searchlights; remembers French plane landing in field (used [owned?] by a Mr Silvester to keep geese) where Catherine Close, etc. now is. George V's Jubilee: flags across road, etc; also celebration in Abbey grounds in Abingdon.

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

Characters remembered: Bob Godding, school caretaker/cleaner, lived in cottage (now demolished) near pond on same side of road as school; slightly further down road lived a Mrs Leach who worked at Radley College; Spinney Comley, clay pipe smoker, road-mender (roads weren't tarmac-ed then); Radley College coachman who used to discourage people hitching lifts 'behind' with his whip.  
Radley then: 'a happy place to live in'; no-one ever stole anything; anyone could go out and leave doors and windows open.  
'The Dip' at Catherine Close and Spinneys Close was ballast pit for railway where gravel was / had been dug out, subsequently water-filled.  
Snake's head fritillary grew somewhere in field down lane across road from Baker's Close.  
Remembers home-made wine as thick as pea soup, but popular nonetheless.