

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.42
Date of interview:	15 July 2003

Personal details pre 1953

Interviewee (complete separate form for co-interviewee if also resident in Radley pre 1953):	JEAN DELLER
Date of birth:	1934
Date came to Radley (if different):	Lots of several-day visits to two great-aunts (Florrie (#110 Lower Radley) and Edie (#112)) and one great-uncle (Oliver, antique dealer, #112, husband of Edie) in Lower R.
Address in 1930s/1940s:	
Other family information:	Father was born in Lower Radley in 13 August 1894; went to sea (merchant navy) in 1908 when he was 14.

Education

Schools/colleges attended:	Grammar school in Stanford-le-Hope, Essex; left school at 16.
Other information about education:	

Work

Occupation and place of work of father:	Merchant navy until 1926, then Shell refinery in Essex. Father came back to Lower Radley in 1958, and, with wife, lived with Great-Aunt Edie.
Occupation and place of work of mother:	
Occupation and place of work of interviewee in 1930s/40s (if any):	1950 (when 16): three months as nursery maid at Cumnor.
Information about farm work and farms:	

Other information about what jobs people were doing:

Great-grandmother (stationmaster's wife) used to wash all the church linen.
Grandmother (née Smith, married name Deller) lived in Buckinghamshire; she became seamstress. Grandmother had two sisters, Edie and Florrie.
Great-Aunt Edie became governess to Sir John Millais's grandchildren in London, and then took job as chief steward on big ocean liner, and then went into Army during WW1; she was a Tartar; in her will she left cottages to the Church.
Great-Aunt Florrie taught in Radley School, but when she got married to Oliver Smith (next door), she stopped teaching (as was expected at the time), and after living in Oxford for a time lived in #110 for the rest of her life.
Great uncles (Tom and Fred) went to private school at Culham College. Fred fought in Boer War. Around 1908, Tom (dressed up in wig, etc.) used to act now and then as flunkey at Nuneham House for Harcourts during big country-house weekends, etc.; after undressing, he swam across the river holding his flunkey's costume above his head, then dressed again in his flunkey's costume on the far river bank. (Tom left Radley permanently after apparently getting Lord Harcourt's daughter 'into trouble'.)

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:

Station was focal point; much use made of Abingdon Bunk.
Great-grandfather (surname Ambridge) came to Radley in 1877 to be stationmaster (until retired in 1893 or 1894). He + wife + 5 children lived firstly in Nuneham Villas and then in rented cottage in LR, as stationmaster's house at station had not yet been built.
Station was moved to present location partly to service Radley College. Lovely waiting room on up platform (towards London) with long leather settles and roaring coal fire in winter. Footbridge was covered.
Abingdon Bunk ran frequently and was inexpensive. In 1950, buses ran every 15 minutes.

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 time of interview, 77 Curtis Avenue, Abingdon.
#110 and #112 Lower R in 1930s: no running water; wells; outside toilets; no electricity; oil lamps; coal fires. Front door straight into ~14-foot x ~14-foot-square room; tiny 'kitchen' off; two bedrooms upstairs (access to second bedroom through first bedroom).

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

'Uncle Oliver's' parents had lived in Bakers Close, where they had a bakery. But by ~1930s Bakers Close was a house. What is now drawing room in Bakers Close was a barn; a Mr (tutor at Radley College) & Mrs Wrinch [? spelling] converted barn into drawing room.

Also used to be in Bakers Close [~1910?]: shop, post office, place for shoeing horses, and place for selling coal. And on Sundays people took meat to be roasted using spare heat from bakery ovens.

A Miss Pocock lived in one of two cruck cottages where #33 and #35 now are; thatch came nearly to ground, and very low and dark inside.

Used to be thatched cottage beside Neat's Home; row of cottages opposite Bakers Close was all thatched; row of cottages (#40-#44) was thatched.

Used to be two cottages opposite Neat's Home cottage (to side of Neat's Home), but were pulled down and replaced by one house.

All hedges used to be low; you could see into everyone's garden.

In 18??, in bill of sale, there were 32 thatched cottages in (whole of) Radley. 'In (late) 1940s, Radley's shop was in bungalow nearly opposite Bowyer Arms (on the corner of New Road / Foxborough Road going south).

There was row of council houses on Church Road after the Post Office.

St. James's Road was all fields.

Mr Badcock's family owned Nuneham Villas (present #75 etc. Foxborough Road).

In 1930s, big sale of cottages in LR; Drysdales had suffered in the Stock Market Crash; #110+#112 bought from Drysdales then.

Used to be huge barn next to cottages where #33 and #35 now are, but [probably, although not clear in interview] on opposite side of road near Neat's Home.

Interviewee's father remembers thatched cottage behind where #15, #17, #19, etc., now are burning down.

#25 LR ('Mrs Hadland's cottage') was Post Office in 1930s and 1940s; had beam that was half of beam from ship; other half of beam in Abingdon Congregational Church.

In 1950 Post Office was where it was in Church Road until it closed down.

Most cottages have been greatly enlarged over time.

Peacock Cottage used to be two cottages; some owner was going to cut peacock down until persuaded otherwise by interviewee.

Used to be two thatched cottages on Church Road, one near St. James's Road, other opposite church.

Services and pastimes (excluding education and travel covered above)

Comments about shopping including retail deliveries:

Comments on health and health services:

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

Good community spirit; everyone visited each other's houses. Interviewee used to paddle in stream running down north side of LR loop.

Interviewee (when a child, and with other children from village) used to swim in river, in 'Sandy Bay', ~300 yards downstream from Radley College Boat House.

<p>Comments on religion, church and choir:</p>	<p>Great-aunt Florrie was one of the teachers at Radley School (until she got married). Three classes in only one room (the 'old bit' of the present school); one fire only; in cold weather pupils rotated places on 1-hour timescales to share the heat from the one coal fire. Toilets were 'earthen ones' across the playground. Many of the children went to school bare-footed. In 1950s and 1960s, used to be many Radley College boys at Radley Church on Sunday evenings.</p>
<p>Miscellaneous</p>	
<p>Any comments about Radley people not covered elsewhere:</p>	<p>Other families in LR: Mattingleys lived in row of cottages opposite #110; Shaws. Lord Harcourt wanted to build bridge across river from R C Boat House for his coach and horses to go to Radley Station; but didn't succeed; went to Culham Station instead. Harcourts left Nuneham House before WW2; RAF took over Nuneham House during WW2 (and caused quite a lot of damage); then after WW2 Oxford University bought it; then Culham College had it.</p>
<p>Comments about Radley College, its way of operating and relations with the village:</p>	<p>On Boxing Day, 'whole of Radley' was given meal in Radley College.</p>
<p>Comments on Coronation and Jubilee events:</p>	
<p>Any information on impact of WW2 in Radley and about wartime activities:</p>	<p>Compared with living in Essex during WW2, Radley was 'safe haven'.</p>
<p>Record here any other interesting items not covered above and general observations on life in those days:</p>	<p>in 1890s, there was a Glee Club. In early 1900s, dancing, picnics, etc. in LR village green during month of May.</p>