

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.53
Date of interview:	5 February 2004 [in bungalow on Foxborough Road between New Road and Catherine Close wherein had lived since 1966].

Personal details pre 1953

Interviewee (complete separate form for co-interviewee if also resident in Radley pre 1953):	JENNY DAVIE
Date of birth:	1942. Born in Radcliffe Infirmary, Oxford. (At time father had been reported missing, and didn't know he had daughter until August).
Date came to Radley (if different):	1946
Address in 1930s/1940s:	16 White's Lane, Radley.
Other family information:	Elder brother Brian, younger brother John. Grandparents lived next door at 18 White's Lane (since mid-1930s); grandfather, George Ford, was baker (originally from Wiltshire), but when came to Radley worked at car factory in Oxford; grandmother, Mabel. Married a Marcham lad', John Davie. Met him at dancing studio in Swinburne Road. Two daughters, Helen (now in Marsh Gibbon) and Julie (now in The Gower, Wales). Two grand-daughters, and one grand-son. Also in White's Lane: Uncle Albert (#24);

Education

Schools/colleges attended:	Radley Primary School (teachers Marie Cross (older children) who lived in the School House, Mrs ('Gabby') Haynes (intermediate class), Miss Middleton (nursery class)). Was very much a church school (e.g. history of church was taught). School essentially a single room heated by a single stove in the middle of the room. Toilets were 'very crude' — Victorian, and outside. Typical punishment for misbehaviour was to have to walk round the playing field several times in bare feet. Then Boxhill School, a secondary modern school, which closed ~1960.
Other information about education:	

Work

Occupation and place of work of father:	Commercial Traveller. Worked for Morse's [?spelling, @01:30] in Swindon.
Occupation and place of work of mother:	Mother worked in Radley College Tuck Shop for several years.

Occupation and place of work of interviewee in 1930s/40s (if any):	
Information about farm work and farms:	In 1940s, seemed to be lot of cows in the fields; not like nowadays. Farm workers (for Radley College) living in red-brick cottages on Foxborough Road: Alexanders, Warners, Streets.
Other information about what jobs people were doing:	
Travel	
Mode of travel to school:	Bicycle, along 'the cinder track', past St. Peter's Road, then past Cowley Concrete, then to Rush Common. White's Lane was just less than 3 miles from Boxhill School, so no entitlement to school bus, although for Stonhouse Crescent there was entitlement to school bus.
Mode of travel to work (interviewee and parents):	
Any comments about the station and use of the train:	Mother used to go into Abingdon on the train with the pram in the goods van.
Any other comments about travel including, including car use and ownership:	Cars 'very few and far between'.
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:	White's Lane houses looked over open fields to row of elms and then Rush Common ('lovely sunsets'). 'On the left hand was the sun trap' — [no explanation of what 'suntrap' was]. Interviewee's White's Lane house: hall, two reception rooms, very small kitchen, three bedrooms (one of which small), separate toilet and bathroom + coal shed and conservatory; really long garden.

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

Where Catherine Close now is, used to be open 'odd-shaped' little field, wherein was held a Run-Away Fair, and across which was a little footpath leading to Post Office.

At that time Post Office was run by Dick and Sylvia Broad.

Other houses and inhabitants in White's Lane: first (detached) house, Amos, then Lincolns; second (detached), Forders; next, Gaskells (Bruce and Margaret); next two houses rented out in ~1–2-year stretches; #14, Mr & Mrs Mouldsford (Mrs M's former married name was Taylor); #18, grandparents; #20, Phyllis (Mrs Mouldsford's daughter) & Mike Dalton; #22, George & Carrie Steptoe (who had ten children); #24, interviewee's father's sister Dorothy married to Albert Pooley; #26, Mr & Mrs Stanley Buckley; detached house at end, with family Stockwells.

Altogether, ~27 children. 'A wonderful carefree childhood'.

Helen and John Gowing lived at 'Braeside', near junction of White's Lane and Church Road.

At that time was a cottage essentially on the corner of White's Lane and Church Road.

Used to be football field where Selwyn Crescent was built.

Village shop was run by Bayliss family (father a real gentleman', son and daughter Gilbert and Gladys).

New village hall was built in 1977. Interviewee was on new village hall committee for 27 years.

Bowyer Arms: publican was Walt Young; surname of 'bar lady' was Grimes; was very much a 'footballers' pub' at that time.

Where Turner's Close now is, used to be field with a couple of donkeys; original plan for that land was light industrial development.

Services and pastimes (excluding education and travel covered above)

Comments about shopping including retail deliveries:

Tradesmen delivered — Fred Wheeler from Wick Hall Nurseries, fish & chip van on Fridays, ice cream van (Mr Haynes) on Saturdays, groceries delivered by Joe Britnell from his shop on Radley Road (Abingdon). Also had Helman Nurseries in Radley (somewhere near where Spinney's Close was built).

Comments on health and health services:

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

At back of White's Lane houses, disused gravel pit (clear water, could see down to bottom, fed by three springs, two islands); much used by children for swimming, rafting, etc. (mother ensured that her children learned to swim when young); also used for skating in winter; provided a 'Lido-type' environment. 'Uncle Albert' (24 White's Lane) acted as unofficial lifeguard. Gravel pit was 'spoiled' in 1950s when it was partially filled in with earth; three springs 'kept going'.

Children also played around gravel pits on Thrupp Lane, often all day away from home, 'the older children looking after the younger ones'.

Hardly any traffic; used to play on White's Lane road.

Later in life played an important role locally in Guides.

<p>Comments on religion, church and choir:</p>	<p>Remembers Rev. Pixell very well. Became bell ringer at age of ~8 (had to stand on big wooden boxes (~2 feet high)). Access to bell tower then was simply up a ladder through a trap door from the vestry. Was in choir for at least six years.</p>
<p>Miscellaneous</p>	
<p>Any comments about Radley people not covered elsewhere:</p>	<p>Badcocks (brother and sister (largely bed-ridden)) lived in large Victorian house near station (now 75 Foxborough Road). Mr Greening in Church Farm (opposite church) was Churchwarden in Rev. Pixell's time. Names of people in Lower Radley: Florrie Hadland, Dunstans [Dunsdons], Shirleys, Stimsons [Stimpsons], Nora Mayall. Other Radley family names mentioned: Jeacock, Smewin, Cox, King, Cook, Gibbon, Portsmouth, Whittington, Faulkner, Hall, Saunders, Deller, Shaw, Drysdale, Levetus, Tombs.</p>
<p>Comments about Radley College, its way of operating and relations with the village:</p>	<p>Was more contact with Radley College then. Were always invited to the 'don's plays', and used to go ballroom dancing in Grand Hall (with big bands). Radley C. chaplains took more services in Radley Church. Remembers Radley C. boys walking hounds round the village. Radley C. had laundry in Foxborough Road (~halfway along road on south side). Thinks Radley College was 'very good for work'.</p>
<p>Comments on Coronation and Jubilee events:</p>	<p>Remembers celebrating Queen's coronation on Radley College fields; interviewee went dressed as Nell Gwynne.</p>
<p>Any information on impact of WW2 in Radley and about wartime activities:</p>	<p>Shortly after WW2 were some converted huts in 'The Shrubbery' (across road from church in Radley College grounds) housing displaced persons / refugees.</p>
<p>Record here any other interesting items not covered above and general observations on life in those days:</p>	<p>Road near railway bridge was altered in late 1960s. Lots of 'family continuity' in the past. St. Peter's Road 'was very much a part of Radley'. Families remembered in St. Peter's Road: Andrews, Barbers, Jones. Part of White's Lane north of the 'zig-zag bend' was a copse. Used to be lovely elms all along White's Lane. Remembers large chestnut tree with seat all round it at 'village bus stop' on 'station hill' on Foxborough Road — before road was altered (alteration took some of the front garden of interviewee's bungalow). Regrets that not more affordable housing was built in Radley; with the many large houses, villagers priced out of the market. Remembers open land between the 'arms' of Stonhouse Crescent. In childhood, interviewee felt secure with all her family around her. At that time everyone grew vegetables, and many kept chickens.</p>