

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.51
Date of interview:	27-Jan-04

Personal details pre 1953

Interviewee (complete separate form for co-interviewee if also resident in Radley pre 1953):	MAUREEN COOK , interviewed with Derek Cook - see separate summary
Date of birth:	1933
Date came to Radley (if different):	
Address in 1930s/1940s:	27 Lower Radley, now 90 LR or Lower Farm Cottage. Lived there until married.
Other family information:	Maureen had 2 sisters and a brother. Mother died in 1952 so she spent some time looking after them. Married Derek Cook in 1958. Maureen's family came from 'the Westons' as did her relatives the Smewins who lived next door in LR.

Education

Schools/colleges attended:	Radley primary school. Then the council school in Abingdon.
Other information about education:	Radley primary very primitive. Old coke boiler in middle which Bob Godding used to come and light. Fumes and smoke until after dinner time. Just two classes. Top classroom then sliding doors to another room. Later second room was divided with a curtain. Toilets outside round back of school. Remembers teacher Miss Middleton and then Miss Cross came after Maureen left. There was only the two secondary schools: Boxhill school or the council school.

Work

Occupation and place of work of father:	Worked for Oxford Telephone Company, started as electrician.
Occupation and place of work of mother:	In service originally, head laundry maid at Combe Abbey. Then worked in laundry up Little London.
Occupation and place of work of interviewee in 1930s/40s (if any):	Started work in Oxford at 15 in [Milward] shoe shop as invoice clerk and cashier, 6 days a week. Half day on Thursday.
Information about farm work and farms:	Lived next to a farm so always attached the season to the farming season. Ploughing always in spring, in summer haymaking, then looked forward to the thrashing machine coming down in the autumn [13.00]. In summer, tar barrels used to come. Used to put tar barrels where number 35 is now and then a steam roller would come down to do the roads.

Other information about what jobs people were doing:	
Travel	
Mode of travel to school:	Walked to primary school. Used to cycle to secondary school. Was allowed a school bicycle as was over the 3-mile limit. Used to walk sometimes. Or there was a bus. Or the bunk.
Mode of travel to work (interviewee and parents):	Mother used to cycle to work in Little London through College woods etc.
Any comments about the station and use of the train:	
Any other comments about travel including, including car use and ownership:	As a child, fare on bus was 3d to Abingdon; 6d for adults; 9d return to Oxford when she first started work. Was being paid £1. 10s. 0d a week at the time. Had to find 6 days bus fare out of that. Got bus from the other side of the railway bridge by the beech tree. Can remember someone's brother coming out from Oxford in an open top car. Gave everyone rides around the village. We thought that was wonderful.
Buildings - location and characteristics	
Location of interviewee's home:	Now 90 LR, Lower Farm Cottage
Any comments on size, numbers of rooms, sharing, outside loos, source of water, electricity and telephone services etc of interviewee's home:	Originally a single cottage but divided into 2 when they were there. Maureen's family lived in one half, six to one bedroom. Aunt and uncle - the Smewins - lived in the other half with a big family. Her father bought the whole of the cottage towards the end of the war and made it into one again. Toilet was at the bottom of the garden originally. Then built a cess pit. Use to go up the garden to pump water. Most places had a well but they didn't. Coal fire for heat with oven by the side. Done all the cooking on that. Copper out in the shed for washing.
Any comments on location and characteristics of other buildings in Radley including dwellings, shops, village hall, barns, laundries etc:	House wise, things haven't changed much 'down the village', though some of them have been added to and are more modern.
Services and pastimes (excluding education and travel covered above)	
Comments about shopping including retail deliveries:	Mr Nuttley came round with fish and fruit. Mr Slattern came with parazine [? kerosene], methylated spirits etc. Mr Cooper on his bicycle for shoes, took them off for repair. Milk from Mr Blackman on his pony and cart.
Comments on health and health services:	Mother died of leukaemia.

<p>Comments on play, pastimes and recreational activities - eg swimming in river, pub, clubs and societies, football, darts, guides:</p>	<p>All the children played in the road: skipping, hopscotch. Coach loads of people came from Birmingham and Coventry for the fishing, and parked on the village green (close to front of their house). Used to roam around everywhere. No-one gave a thought to where they were. Swum in the river in summer. Used to shoo the cows out first. Everyone used to go down there.</p>
<p>Comments on religion, church and choir:</p>	<p>Used to go to Sunday school regularly, Sunday afternoon. Taken by Rev [Pixel]. He took everything. Also used to run the boys youth club, a stickler for keeping boys separate. Used to go the Evensong when she got older. Helped father mix cement to build the house, liked to do the garden. What with that and working, not much time for anything else. Radio - remembers listening to Donald Piers, Babbling Brook.</p>
<p>Miscellaneous</p>	
<p>Any comments about Radley people not covered elsewhere:</p>	<p>Characters? Spinney Comley Bob Godding used to go up and do the school. Tommy [Gomme] - used to push his old pram about. Not doing anything in particular. Lived next door to Maureen.</p>
<p>Comments about Radley College, its way of operating and relations with the village:</p>	<p>College boys came down to LR to row at College boathouse. Used to swim down there in summer. College was quite separate. But she and sister did used to go to the dons' play every year - village was allowed to go for one evening. Thinks some of the masters' wives used to come down during the war and help with the baby clinics. Used to queue up for orange juice and rosehip syrup from the village hall.</p>
<p>Comments on Coronation and Jubilee events:</p>	<p>Big party in village hall and in field opposite, Mr Woodley's. Also celebrations at the College. Didn't make a big impact. Was at work most of the time.</p>
<p>Any information on impact of WW2 in Radley and about wartime activities:</p>	<p>War time didn't affect us a lot down the village. There were some manoeuvres on Frearson's farm. Came for a couple of days. Heard planes flying over at night and returning in the early hours. Father said they were going to Coventry. Built an air raid shelter in the garden. Everyone grew their own vegetables. They had an allotment. Had ration books. Always eggs. And Mr Blackman brought up rabbits. No great hardship. Tradesmen stopped coming round in the war - not sure why, may be petrol shortage. There were evacuees in Bigwood and in a lot of the houses, and at the primary school. No conflict. Eastbourne College was evacuated to Radley College. Prisoners of war. Mr Frearson had them working for his. Some worked on the railway.</p>
<p>Record here any other interesting items not covered above and general observations on life in those days:</p>	<p>Biggest change between then and now is the people. Everybody knew everybody. It was like a big family down there. Now, if you go down the village you don't know a soul. Don't see anybody. Everyone used to help each other. Everyone was far happier.</p>