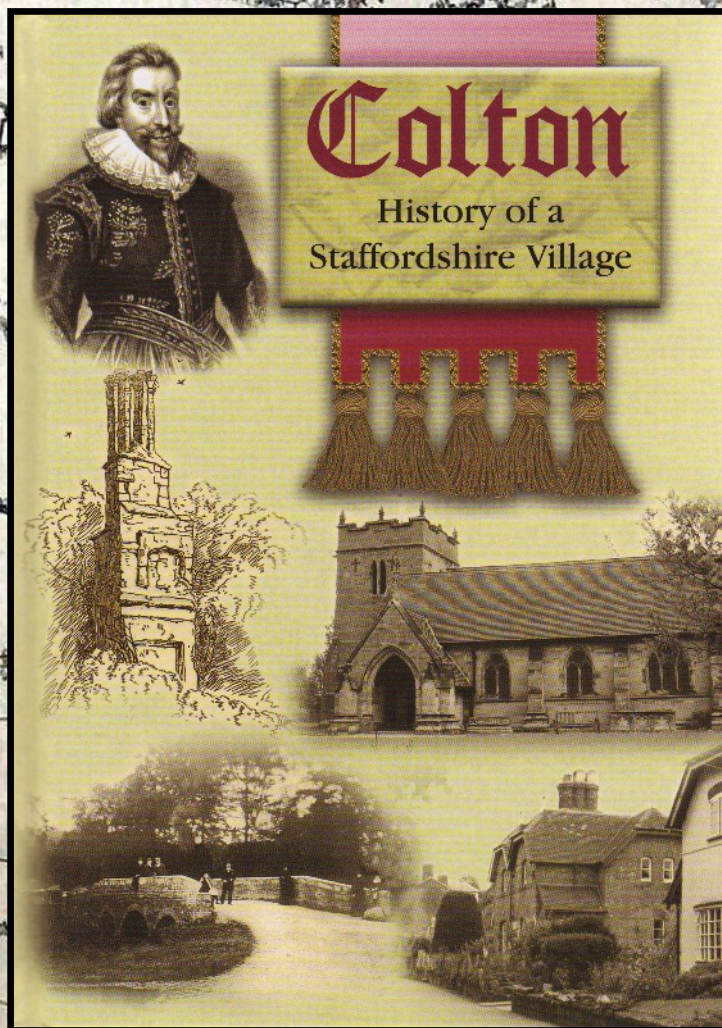


All Our Stories

Volume III

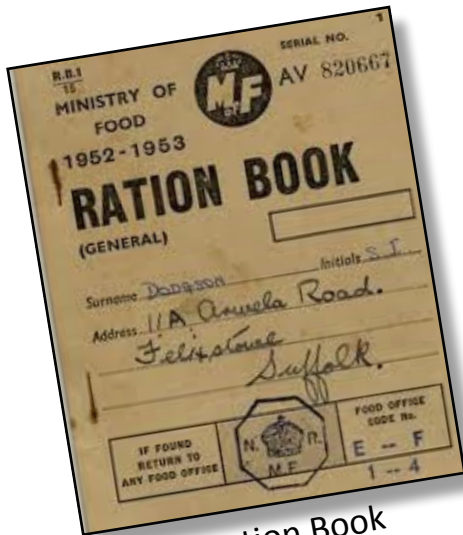
Ruth Williams & Gwen Johnson Lilian Redmond

Peggy Peat Peggy Banister



Heritage Lottery Fund
All Our Stories Project
Supporting
Colton History Society

LOTTERY FUNDED



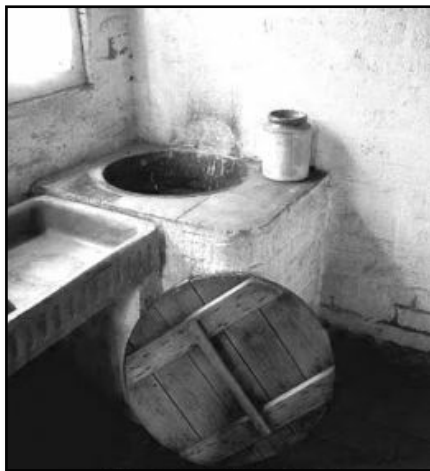
Ration Book



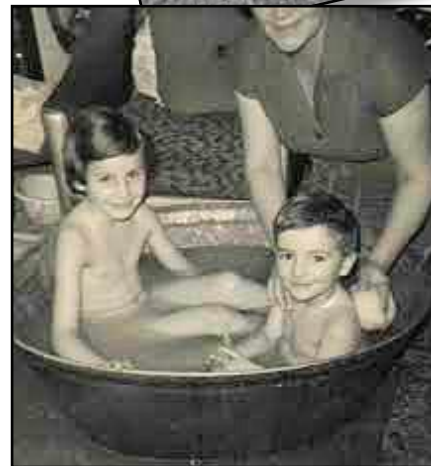
Land Army Girls



Potato Pickers



Wash House 'Copper' for boiling water



Bath Time in a Zinc Tub



Holiday by the sea at Rhyll



Water Pump for drawing water from the well



Kitchen Range for cooking & heating

Colton History Society

All Our Stories

Volume III

Ruth Williams & Gwen Johnson

Lilian Redmond

Peggy Peat

Peggy Banister

Colton History Society

All Our Stories



Ruth Williams & Gwen Johnson's Story

Ruth Williams & Gwen Johnson.

S1: Maureen Dix
S2: Ruth Williams
S3: Gwen Johnson
S4: Gill Sykes

S1: Now this recording is being made for Colton History Society. Maureen Dix, Gill Sykes are interviewing Ruth Williams and Gwen Johnson on Thursday, the 7th of March 2013.

Now I hope you're feeling quite comfortable and you could tell us about your family, where and when you were born. Let's start of with your maiden names, etcetera.

S2: Right. Well, I was born Ruth Blanche Ravenscroft on the 15th of June 1946. I was born at Stafford Infirmary but brought back home after a few days to Colton and to Holly Cottage, Colton, where my mother and father lived. And I was the eldest daughter.

S3: And my name is Gwendolyn Naomi Ravenscroft and I was born at Holly Cottage, which is now 45 High Street, Colton, on the 22nd of June 1951. I think that's ...

S1: That's it?

S3: Yep.

S1: What do you remember about your neighbours?

S2: Right. Well, I remember my neighbours. The people who lived next door were Mr and Mrs Norman and they lived there with ... I remember their youngest son, Colin Norman. I know that Walter Norman also lived there but I don't really remember him, but I do remember Colin. I was frightened of Colin because he was older and bigger and he was a boy, and I really didn't have anything ... I didn't know about boys. I didn't know how to—what shall I say?—cope with boys because they were like bossy and rough. So that's what I remember. After Mr and Mrs Norman left, which didn't seem to be that long, I wasn't very old, a couple came from Walsall: Mr and Mrs Taylor I didn't know very much about them and they didn't stay long. And then Mr and Mrs George Upton moved in from Birmingham with their two children: Christine, who was the same age as me, and David. And they remained there and I remember them quite well.

Mr Upton was a builder and worked for Vic Hardcastle, and Mrs Upton used to do work at home from a factory in Birmingham where she would travel every week on the train and get expanding bracelets, and she would work on a machine in the house and sometimes my sister and I would help finish these bracelets off. It was quite intricate work. And then she would take them on the train to Birmingham to the factory the following Friday.

So that was number 47 High Street. And in 49 lived Mr and Mrs Cooper, and I remember them as being very, very old. But they probably were not old at all. White haired, and Mr Cooper was little and bent, and I remember him pushing his bicycle up the pathway at the back of my house to his house. And I also remember he was a very good gardener. My father was as well, but he was a very good gardener because he grew strawberries and my father didn't. And so I occasionally did try a few of his strawberries. They had a golden wedding anniversary, I remember that, with a party. Although we didn't go we were invited in to the house where I'm now living, to see the presents on display in the front room. And those are the things I remember

S3: Well, I've nothing to say but Ruth said, said everything. There's nothing else for me to say.

S1 Living in Colton, do you think the winters were harder in your childhood than now?

S3: Yes. The winters did seem harder. And we were always on the Martlin Hill, down the bottom end of the village, with sledges. Mr Williscroft, of Forge House, made sledges and most of my friends had these beautiful sledges that he'd made. But I didn't have one. But what we had was a big ex-army sledge, a huge thing about six or seven foot in length, with wooden runners, and we used to take that down on to the Martlin Hill and everyone used to pile on it. And the more people that were on it, the faster it used to go. And so we had endless fun with that. And came down at such speed. The winter of 1962 was particularly bad and the schools were closed, and so we spent most of the time up on the Martlin Hill because there was really nothing else to do there. And in those days it wasn't divided up like it is now into separate fields now, so that you had a really good long run down the hill—you couldn't do that now. But it seemed as though we could guarantee every winter as being one for sledging and ice-skating, and I used to put my skates on.

I think there was only about three of us in Colton that had ice skates, and that was me that had a pair, Leslie Duval who used to live in Field Cottage, and my dad had an ancient pair that used to strap on to his ordinary shoes. And we used to go across the road from Holly Cottage into the Mellor's field on the pit hole there. And I used to go over there every morning, before I went to school, to skate. We also used to go down onto the Barcroft down by the stream and the church there, and there was a big, another big pool there which has now been filled in. But that was great for skating on. And also we used to go down to the canal and it obviously used to freeze really hard in those days because you could always skate up and down the canal. But always was warned never to go near the bridge, because of course that was protected a little and so it would be dangerous and you could quite easily go through. So that's what I remember about my winter.

S4: How come you had skates and nobody else did? How come Ruth didn't have any?

S3: Well, Leslie Duval took me to Birmingham ice rink, which was a wonderful thing because I very rarely went out of Colton. And my dad went. And I just enjoyed the day, and so my dad bought me a second-hand pair of these lovely white skates. They only sort of ... you only ever saw them in books. And people wrapped up with muffs and things with ice skates on which looked wonderful. So I, that's how I came to have a pair of skates and had them for years and years, and ...

S2: I didn't.

S2: I ... Well I don't actually remember. I can't say that I remember Gwen even having her own ice skates. But I went as well, with Leslie, to Birmingham so I don't ... just ... but I have no recollection of this: Gwen having skates and me not having skates. Nothing at all. But I didn't do as much skating as Gwen, that's probably why. I used to like the winters, the same as Gwen; we all did. We all liked being out in the snow.

When I got a bit older and had to travel to Stafford to work I didn't like it because I had to walk. I couldn't ride my bike to Wolseley Bridge to catch the bus in to Stafford and had to walk along the Bellamour Lane and I didn't like that. That wasn't nice and I remember doing that in the winters. But I think Gwen's kind of filled in a pretty good picture of what the winters were like.

S1: And what did you wear to keep you warm?

S2: Right. Well, my mother knitted woollen vests for us.

S3: That's what I've got written down too.

S2: Yes. To keep us warm. I wore a hat and I wore gloves and big socks, but I don't remember much else.

S3: I don't. No, I just put down woolly socks and jumpers

S2: Obviously wore more!

S3: And a scarf and a pom-pom hat.

S2: Oh yes.

S3: Because we used to make pom-poms. You remember making a pom-pom?

S2: Yes, that's right. Of course we did!

S3: We used to knit these hats and make pom-poms.

S2: Yes. That's right.

S3: And put them on. But I don't remember a coat or jacket.

S2: No, I don't.

S3: And I wore mittens as well.

S3: And I don't remember trousers.

S3: No.

S2: I don't remember.

S3: No, we didn't wear trousers.

S2: No. Just vests.

S3: We must have gone sledging in skirts.

S2: The vests were awful though weren't they? They were itchy.

S1: Did you have a liberty bodice?

S3: No.

S2: No.

S3: We didn't.

S3: No. Yet most at school did.

S2: They did.

S3: I remember my friends always wearing liberty ... But we never did.

S2: Yes. No.

S1: And how did you go about having baths and, you know, your general hygiene, etcetera?

S3: Well, we had a big tin bath. And a small one, didn't we?

S3: We did, yes.

S3: And mum used to heat the water up in ... we had a big copper in the kitchen, so she used to heat the water up in there or else on the black-leaded grate.

S3: The fire there, with the big black kettles hung over there.

S2: That's right.

S3: And boil them up and then the bath was filled in front of the fire or sometimes in the kitchen.

S2: Yes. In the living room. Yeah.

S3: And, yeah, the living room. And then we used to take it in turns.

S2: Yes. The same water wasn't it?

S3: Yeah.

S2: Yes.

S3: Oh yes.

S2: Yeah, that's just what I remember Gwen.

S3: And then we filled a bowl with warm water every day to wash didn't we?

S2: In the sink.

S3: Yeah.

S2: The brown sink.

S3: But my dad used to go and scoop the water out of the rain butt.

S2: Yes.

S3: We always had a rain butt by the back door and he used to go and scoop the water out there and heat it, and always washed his hair in it because he said it was beautiful soft water—and it was.

S2: Yes.

S1: And who did the washing and cleaning around the house and what did that entail?

S2: Mother did all the washing and the cleaning. And like Gwen said, she had a copper in the corner of the back kitchen where ... which she would light and use particularly on Mondays. And all the washing would be done on a Monday as far as I can remember, well, most of it. And I don't remember much about cleaning of the house except the quarry floors.

S3: That's what I remember.

S2: And she would mop them.

S3: And put newspaper down, which we had to tread on.

S2: Afterward. Yes.

S3: While it dried.

S2: But I don't remember ... I suppose we weren't interested in that sort of thing.

S3: I mean, after the ... there was a fire lit under the copper. Those people might not know what a copper is. It's a big, like, half a circle that, with a fire underneath that heated the water. I mean real hard work having to do like that. And then we had a dolly tub.

S2: We did, yes.

S3: She had a dolly tub which was a metal tub and then a big wooden structure, which was the dolly ...

S2: Yes.

S3: Which you used to have to pump up and down and then everything went through the mangle to dry, you know, to get most of the water out.

S2: Yes.

S3: And then hung out to dry, because everything was hung out to dry or on a clotheshorse.

S2: Yes, it was.

S3: Or in front of the fire.

S2: On the frame. Yes.

S1: And how did you celebrate Christmas?

S2: I loved Christmas. Did you?

S3: Yes I did.

S2: My aunty Emily, who was mum's sister from Morton Farm would give us a cockerel and make a Christmas pudding for us. Mother would make a cake and mince pies and father would buy a bottle of port and a bottle of sherry, for visitors only. And the port and sherry were from the wood, in that he took an empty bottle and it was filled from a big barrel with a pint of sherry and a pint of port usually—wasn't it Gwen? My sister and I each had one of Dad's big socks.

S3: Yeah.

S2: Yes. You agree?

S3: Yeah, I agree.

S2: And inside—we hung those up on Christmas Eve. And inside we'd perhaps have an apple and a tangerine, some nuts ...

S3: Some nuts and a box of dates.

S2: Oh yes!

S3: I remember a box of dates.

S2: Yes. Could be a pencil and other little gifts.

S3: Yeah. Well, I used to take a box to bed.

S2: Did you?

S3: And the box was filled with my presents.

S2: Right.

S3: But I'd got the sock as well but the box was for the presents.

S2: Yeah. How big was the box?

S3: Not very big.

S2: Well, I think we thought we were lucky because we'd got quite a lot of aunts and uncles who all gave us small gifts and I always look forward to receiving a Rupert annual from one aunt and one year I had a second-hand dolls pram and doll, which my aunt Anne had found for me, and the doll's face I remember, it was cracked and it had been varnished and I loved it although it was second hand and it was a green—do you remember the green pram?

S3: The green pram. I do, yes.

S2: Yes.

S3: We used to, later on as we got older, used to sit in it and someone would push us all around the garden.

S2: Yes.

S3: All over the place.

S2: Yes. Have you got any bits to add?

S3: Yeah, well, the Christmas tree was always came from Mr Sam Peak, up Heathway, and it was never put up until Christmas Eve. And then we had, as I remember, the most wonderful Christmas decorations.

S2: Yes.

S3: Didn't we? That ...

S2: Silvery glitter.

S3: Yeah, and they were all wrapped up in tissue paper or paper after Christmas and kept from one year to the next. And we used to light the, have little candles on the tree in little holders and light those. I mean, health and safety

S2: Yes!

S3: Yes! They were little, tiny twisted candles weren't they?

S2: Yes.

S3: And they used to fit in these candleholders on a real tree and were lit. Extremely dangerous really but they looked so pretty. And the one time ... do you remember the cat Timmy?

S2: Caught fire.

S3: Well, he did catch fire once, yes. Then the one year ...

S2: The cat. Yes.

S3: Timmy the cat tried to climb this tree, which was probably only about three feet high.

S2: Stood on top of a piano. On a sideboard.

S3: A sideboard. Yes.

S2: Yes.

S3: And he brought, fetched the lot down and everything, you know, things ...

S2: We got up Christmas morning, I think, to that.

S3: ... broke and there they were lying on the floor. And then Mum made silver-paper platted things to hang up.

S2: Yes.

S3: On the ceiling.

S2: Yes.

S3: And they came out year after year. I think, originally, didn't she make them during the war?

S2: I think so.

S3: And then later on we had the coloured streamers that twisted and hung up. We went to church, Christmas morning.

S2: No, afternoon.

S3: Oh, afternoon was it?

S2: It was for me.

S3: Yeah?

S2: But you see I'm a little older.

S3: Yeah.

S3: So what I remember is we were so excited at opening our presents in the morning and then we would have the dinner that Mum would prepare. Then we had to go down to church for the three o'clock carol service because Dad was the organist, you see.

S3: No, I don't remember that.

S2: And I was allowed to take one present with me to that service. And it was a carol service and then after that we came back home and a cousin of my mother's, Cousin Kathleen who lived at Wharf Cottage, Bellamour, with her mother and brother, she would come back with us and have Christmas tea with us. And then we'd all sing carols later on around the piano.

S3: That's right.

S2: And I remember the candlelight then as well. It was like magic.

S3: It was.

S2: Yes.

S3: Then on twelfth night we used to get another little present to signify the kings arriving with their gifts to baby Jesus. So we had just a tiny, little gift, a tiny, little book.

S2: Yes.

S3: I remember the one year having one of the Ladybird books.

S2: Oh yes.

S3: And that's all we had but it was a little gift. Do you not remember that?

S2: No I don't. I don't.

S4: Your father presumably played the piano here in the house.

S2: Yes, he did. He did, yes.

S4: Did your mother play as well?

S3: She could play couldn't she?

S2: Yes.

S3: Mum played the piano.

S2: Yes. She could sing quite nicely. But we loved Christmas.

S1: You had a special meal at Christmas, but what do you remember about meals for the rest of the year?

S3: Well, we spoke about this together and we both said the same thing at first.

S2: Yes.

S3: Liver, bacon, and onions.

S4: Why? Because she liked you particularly or didn't you like it?

S3: I don't know. Well, I did yeah.

S2: We did.

S3: The ... I sought of ... when I spoke to Ruth about it that's the first thing we both said. Stew, cottage pie.

S2: Yes. Well, we used to have a roast on a Sunday but I always remember it was tough. Dad always bought the meat from Sanders the butcher's in Upper Brooks Street, Rugeley, and his meat always seemed to be tough. I think he was known for that; I've got a feeling he was. And so the roast was not enjoyable. But we had, as Gwen said, liver and onions, stew, and fish cakes. Mum used to make fresh fish cakes, with the parsley sauce.

S3: Oh yes.

S2: Parsley, sorry, inside the fish cakes. And that was lovely.

S3: We had grated beetroot.

S2: Oh we did! Yes.

S3: Used to grate raw beetroot and then cook it with onions and thicken it with flour and milk and was served with mashed potatoes. That was ...

S2: It was lovely.

S3: ... particularly nice.

S2: Delicious.

S3: She made lovely fruitcakes but she was never very good at pastry.

S2: No.

S3: Really, was she?

S2: No.

S3: And dad grew the majority of vegetables in the garden. We had a big garden and so we grew that. And we had a cooking-apple tree didn't we? Which the apples were picked mid to late October, very carefully picked and then all stored on apple trays and they would keep right through to March.

S2: Yes.

S3: So we'd eat apple pies, crumble, stewed apple—a lot of stewed apple didn't we?

S2: Yeah, we did, with rice pudding.

S3: A lot of that sort of thing, yeah.

S2: Yes.

S3: And jelly cream. A dessert called jelly cream.

S2: Mum made?

S3: Yeah.

S2: With jelly and evaporated milk.

S3: Yeah.

S2: Oh that was ... loved that.

S2: And that was raspberry jelly wasn't it? Yes.

S2: Yes.

S3: And that was beautiful. And if we were lucky we'd have a tin of apricots or peaches on a Sunday.

S2: Yes. I also remember that when the butcher brought the meat on a Friday evening we also had a small amount of corned beef delivered, and I think when I was very little it was still rationed. I don't know when rationing finished.

S1: 1954.

S2: Oh well it was then. Yes. I seem to remember coupons and Mum having to hand these coupons over when he brought things and there would be like a quarter of corned beef or something like that, and so that was a bit special because, you know.

S1: And where did you have to travel into Rugeley to buy your food and other items? And how did you get there? How did you travel?

S3: Well, we hadn't got a car or anything. We used to rely on the bus to go into Rugeley. But food, it was delivered by Masons or Willis's. You remember those?

S2: Yeah. I've put that.

S3: Yeah.

S2: ... we bought bits and pieces from Miss Williscroft's shop ...

S3: That's right.

S2: ... down the road. But Mr Willis, who had a shop in Horse Fair and Margaret from Masons used to come round early in the week and collect our orders and then it would be delivered later on.

S4: She'd come to the house, didn't she.

- S2: Yes. Yes.
- S3: Then on a Thursday we used to have the mobile van.
- S2: We did. A greengrocer: Deacons the greengrocer's.
- S3: Yes, used to come round.
- S2: With vegetables and fruit and pop and that kind of thing. And then we had the baker of course, used to come round. I only remember—was it Garret's
- S3: Yes.
- S2: And Stantons used to deliver bread.
- S1: That's lovely. We'll go on to the school. Where did you go to school and were you happy at school?
- S2: Well, we both went to Colton school when we were five until we were 11 and then I went on to Rugeley Grammar School.
- S3: I went on to Broadacres Secondary Modern School in Hixon, where a bus used to pick us up at Colton school.
- S2: At ... Oh. Can I ...?
- S1: Yes.
- S2: At Colton school I liked Miss Awgil, my first teacher. She was lovely. But I found Mrs Shaw, in the middle class, to be very strict. And Mr Broughton in the top class wasn't a nice man and I was frightened of him. He would make us do handstands and acrobats that I didn't like. I had to cycle when I went to the grammar school, in all weathers. I found work there quite hard and didn't really enjoy it but I made lifelong friends there.
- S3: I too remember Miss Awgil; she was my first teacher. And then Mrs Shaw and then Mr Broughton retired just as I was about to go in his class, which was wonderful because I didn't like him. But Mr Waters, who then was the headmaster, was a really nice man. He came from Yorkshire and everyone liked him. I often had my hands and fingers slapped for not paying attention and a board rubber thrown at me.
- S2: Who by?
- S3: Well, I ...
- S2: Mrs Shaw?
- S3: I can't remember who it was but I don't think it was Mr Waters. But that certainly happened at the senior school to me. And, yeah, but I loved school.
- S4: You mean you had a board rubber thrown at you at the senior school?
- S3: Yeah. I didn't like having time off school. I'd go to school when I felt really ill. I just hated to have time off at all.
- S4: Was that the same for you Ruth?

S2: I didn't have a lot of time off school. No. I ... no. I found the grammar school hard, as I said, and I don't have a lot of very happy memories.

S4: Did you have joint friends? School friends?

S3: No.

S4: No.

S3: Well, there's five years between us.

S2: Five years.

S3: So we didn't

S4: No, you didn't. No.

S3: No, it was different. And at Colton school we tended to wear ordinary clothes but then about a year before I was due to leave they tried to introduce a school uniform as an experiment to see if it would take off. But I don't think it took off very well because then for a number of years there was no school uniform until my children went to school down there.

S1: But were there punishments if you misbehaved?

S2: I don't remember any punishments. I don't remember. Well, not for me.

S3: You don't remember standing in a corner?

S2: No.

S3: I remember having to stand in a corner. Perhaps you were never naughty. [Laughter] And I was the naughty one.

S2: I mean, I remember Mr Broughton caning the boys and he seemed to enjoy that. But I don't remember the girls having terrible punishments as you think of punishment. So I can't ...

S1: So you didn't have your arms slapped like a lot of pupils before you?

S2: I don't ... no.

S3: I had my fingers ...

S2: I honestly don't remember that.

S3: I did. I had my fingers slapped. And that was Mrs Shaw.

S2: I mean I couldn't of ...

S4: Were you a chatterer then Gwen?

S3: Yeah. I was. And sort of a day dreamer looking out the window. And the strange thing is, now, you know, my grandson's being told the same thing.

- S1: And what is your most vivid memory of your school days?
- S3: Well, I put mine, which isn't a nice vivid memory really, is when the Headmaster was Mr Broughton, made me do a handstand to say my seven times table while my sister watched me. And I just couldn't remember it, you know? My nerves took the better of me.
- S4: Too much pressure.
- S3: Yeah. And I couldn't do it and burst into tears and he then made me go away and recite it until I could remember. And that stuck with me.
- S2: I remember we once went on a trip to Dovedale, from Colton school on a green bus, and it seemed to take forever. And we went specifically to look for fossils and to bring back a fossil. And so we had to go onto Thorpe Cloud and get this fossil; and I think most of us did. And I remember that. We also had an outing, a school outing, to Rhyl. Coach full of children and parents and one boy, we hadn't gone very far, and he was drinking pop and he was sick—and that was horrible. I don't ... I suppose those are my most vivid memories. And the hard work, really, that Mr Broughton made us do in reciting our tables. When I say hard work it was for me as a little girl. Standing and reciting from our two times table to our twelve times table. I think those are my vivid memories. But singing lessons and that sort of thing I remember.
- S1: And do you remember what games you played at school?
- S3: I remember hopscotch, although I never really liked that but we used to do that and skipping—I enjoyed that. And then rounders, I liked playing rounders. And we had bean bags but I can't remember what we did with these bean bags except throw them back and forth. But that's all I remember.
- S2: Yes. I remember the bean bags but, as well, I can't remember what we did with them. I remember hopscotch at Colton school. We didn't sort of have games in the sense of lessons, did we?
- S3: No.
- S2: But when we went to the ... when I went to the senior school we did hockey and rounders and netball and tennis.
- S3: Yes, I did the same.
- S2: Yes.
- S3: And swimming; we went swimming.
- S2: I didn't go swimming but, yeah, I don't remember much else apart from that.
- S1: So what do you remember about your school holidays?
- S2: Right, well.
- S3: Well, we both remembered the same didn't we? Going ... making jam sandwiches and taking a drink and going off down the fields for the whole day. And especially playing in the brook and swimming.
- S2: Yes.

S3: There was one particular part of the brook, on a bend, where at that ... when I was that age seemed really deep, didn't it?

S2: Yes. Across there.

S3: But it's not deep now.

S2: No.

S3: You could quite paddle in it up to your ankles I think now.

S2: Yes.

S3: But we used to spend hours down there. Whole group of us.

S2: Yeah. Never rained, did it, when we were down there?

S3: No.

S2: Didn't seem to. But I also remember making fires down there.

S3: Ooh! I don't remember it.

S2: Well, yes, we had little fires. I do remember that. And no one seemed to worry about us. We were quite alright weren't we? And there was sort of like ... it was probably three fields away.

S3: Yeah.

S2: We would just set off and enjoy ourselves for the day.

S1: And how many of you were there to ... boys and girls?

S3: Yeah.

S2: It would vary really.

S3: It would, yes. But, most of us really.

S3: Yes. Three to about seven or eight would you say?

S3: Yeah, I would think so.

S2: And we'd also play in the garden as well. Because we'd got a big garden.

S3: Yeah, cowboys and Indians.

S2: Yes.

S3: Because we'd got trees and things to make bows and arrows.

S2: Yes. And we would also spend quite a lot of time at my aunt's farm at Morton, which is within walking distance over the fields; it's just outside Colton parish. Again, my mum's sister's farm and her family, and there we would play in the fields again but we'd also be expected to collect ... help with

the little jobs around the farm, like collecting the eggs and feeding the chickens and fetching the milk and that sort of things, from the dairy. Can you ...?

S3: Yeah, I remember doing that. And then we used to go potato picking in October half term.

S2: Oh yes, that's right.

S3: Up at Mellor's farm. We'd walk up to the Manor Farm and then all be taken off on the back of the trailer.

S2: Yes.

S3: And it was only up Finners Hill, really.

S2: Yes.

S3: That's the one place I remember most of the potato fields being.

S2: Yes.

S3: And we'd go up there and probably earn five shillings for the whole week.

S2: Yes, that's just what I put.

S3: Is it?

S2: And thought I must check with Gwen.

S3: Yeah.

S2: Yes.

S3: But we always looked forward to it didn't we?

S2: We did.

S3: Yes.

S2: We also used to go potato picking for Mr and Mrs Jones at Lee Hall Farm.

S3: No, I don't remember there.

S2: And Mr Lakin would bring ... come on his tractor and trailer and pick us up and we'd all go up to sort of halfway up Admaston bank where again we'd spend the day just picking potatoes. And we'd take our sandwiches with us.

S3: Oh yeah.

S2: Because we wouldn't come home at lunchtime. And all the children and a lot of the mums used to go as well. And the money that earned, which as Gwen said was five shillings a week, and that's what I'd written down, I would save—and I think you did as well—to buy Christmas presents for our friends.

S3: I can't remember what I did with mine. Yeah. Probably the same thing.

S2: So that must have always coincided with half term.

S3: It was always. They always did it in half term. Always.

S2: Yes.

S1: And did you go on holiday?

S3: No. We didn't really as a family. We'd have a day out ...

S2: Yeah.

S3: ... once a year. Usually on the train.

S2: Yes.

S3: Because my dad loved, you know, going on the train. And so we'd go down to the Trent Valley and catch the train off ...

S2: Yes.

S3: ... to places like Tamworth Castle, ...

S2: Yes.

S3: ... Northampton, ...

S2: Yes.

S3: ... and Warwick.

S2: Yes! Worcester!

S3: And Worcester. I forgot about Worcester.

S2: The bridge at Worcester.

S3: Because we'd got to stand on the centre of the bridge to say that you'd actually been there.

S2: Worcester.

S3: And I went but Ruth wouldn't go. Stand on the bridge.

S2: Yes.

S3: But those were the sort of things we did. And then I went to the Wirral a couple of times to stay with a family that used to live in Liz Nixon's house in High Street, number 51, and they moved to the Wirral and so they'd come down, Mr Brundle that was, who would come down and take me back with him. And we'd go there for a week and you came once as well didn't you but that's the only thing I can remember with that.

S2: Yeah, I remember I went to stay with my aunty Milly, that was mum's youngest sister, and because she lived in Stafford. And so that was my time away and my holiday. But I used to stay at Morton as well some nights.

- S3: And we used to go to Etwall, to our aunt Dorothy's.
- S2: Oh yes, and another sister of my mother's. Yes, Etwall near Derby, for a few days, but we never went on holiday to the seaside.
- S3: No, we didn't.
- S1: And what was the social life in the village like?
- S3: There were things like the Produce Guild, which is still going. And I was a child member and entered the children's classes in the annual show, which still takes place today. And one of the classes was ... it was usually a picture and then a jam jar of wild flowers—the most you could pick. I mean, you would never pick them now but I always used to win it because I loved the wildflowers and still do. So then there was ... they had things like barn dances didn't they in the school and beetle drive, I remember that, and Sunday school, I remember that very clearly and Miss Rotchel used to lead us. Miss Rotchel used to live in Lucy Berry Cottage in Bellamour Way, and she used to take us around Bellamour Park on a Sunday afternoon. And there was always the church fete, annually in August, and a fancy dress competition and we used to dress up for that didn't we?
- S4: So all around the village then, your social life?
- S3: Yeah. It was, wasn't it? Yeah.
- S2: We had a youth club and we had a church girls' brigade, and from the church girls' brigade we would put on plays in the Reading Room, as it was then. And we also had dances in the Reading Room to Ben Jackson's Band and I liked them. They were really fun.
- S3: Ben Jackson lived in Martlin lane.
- S2: He did. We were expected to go to Sunday school every Sunday, and like Gwen said we went to ... used to call for Miss Rotchel and she'd take us down to church and we were given stamps for attendance, for good attendance. And with my father being the church organist I was expected, when old enough, to attend church regularly. I think you were as well. So we joined the choir when the Reverend Tolson came and started a choir. We had an annual garden party, which we liked, and we used to make lavender bags to sell.
- S3: And buttonholes.
- S2: Yes, at the garden party. And we cut the lavender from the rectory garden. They'd got like a walk with lavender either side in the garden. It was beautiful.
- S3: Yeah, and then there was Christmas party and Sunday school parties as well.
- S2: Yes. And whist drives, but we didn't really get too involved with those because they were the older people.
- S1: Did your parents have paid employment?
- S2: My father did, yes. My mother didn't to start with because my father didn't like to think of his wife having to work. My father worked at Gardner Railton Solicitors in Rugeley for many years, then for the County Roads and Bridges Department at the county council in Stafford, and Mum, as I said, didn't work.

Gwen mentioned that Mum and Gwen and myself went potato picking to earn a little bit of money.

Father would work from about nine o'clock to six o'clock and then he'd come home and go out and dig the garden. And he used to cycle to Rugeley to work and when he worked in Stafford he would get a lift with a neighbour or he would either take the bus or the train.

S3: Yes, because he'd regularly miss the last bus or the train home. If he missed the train home he'd catch the bus; if he missed the bus he had to walk from Stafford. But he worked a lot of overtime didn't he?

S2: Yes, he did.

S3: But in the summer, like Ruth said, he'd get home and go in the garden until well after dark. So he used the train and the bus and Mum was on a bicycle as the village post lady.

S2: Yes. She ... he didn't like that did he?

S3: No.

S2: When she first started, because the post used to be delivered by Miss Rotchel for many, many years and then she retired and then Mrs Gert Upton, from the shop, took it over and there were a few people who did it and then Mum had the chance to do it and she took it. And father was not pleased, but she had her independence and she liked that.

S1: When did you leave school and what did you do then?

S3: I left school when I was 17 and I went to work in a travel agency in Rugeley, which I enjoyed and had about three paid, you know, free holidays abroad. And I'd never been abroad before so that was really wonderful. And so I really enjoyed that. And then I got married and my family came along, my children, and I didn't work to begin with and then I went on to deliver groceries in the van for Liptons in Rugeley and did that for a while, and then after that I was very keen on flowers and flower arranging and went on into that really and started making things for people in the village, flower arrangements, and then I had a market stall and had that for a number of years.

S2: I left school when I was 16 and I went to Stafford College on a secretarial course and then I got a job in Stafford, met my husband, married, and moved. We married, we lived in Stafford for two years, then moved to Trentham for ten years, and then moved back to Colton in 1978. And I've been here ever since and done one or two different jobs.

S4: So you were only away from Colton for?

S2: For 12 years. Yes.

S4: What about you Gwen?

S3: I never moved from Colton. I, after we were married, lived with Mum and Dad for a year and then bought 1 Rose Villa Cottages in Bellamour Way and I've been there ever since.

S1: And where did most people find employment?

S2: I've put locally.

S3: So have I

S2: I don't know if that was referring to school people, but a lot of the pupils from the grammar school went off to college and university. But I think most people would work locally.

S3: 'locally'. Rugeley or Stafford.

S2: Yes. I think so.

S1: And what happened if they couldn't find any employment.

S3: They never seemed to be.

S2: I don't remember ...

S3: Everybody seemed to have a job didn't they?

S2: No one, I don't remember anyone not having employment.

S3: No one. I don't.

S2: I thought very hard about it.

S3: I did too and I couldn't think of anybody out of work.

S2: I couldn't. Everyone had a job.

S3: Yes.

S4: It is a sign of times isn't it? Then ...

S2: Yes.

S4: ... compared to now.

S2: Yes.

S3: And you could pick. You could pick and choose.

S2: Yes.

S1: Yes. Change from one job to another.

S2: Although I was classed as the wartime baby boom when it came to me looking for a job and so I had to make a lot of applications to try and get a job because there were, apparently, a lot of people born after the war and all looking for jobs. But we all eventually found jobs.

S1: Now, for health reasons, do you remember being ill yourself or other members of your family?

S3: Well, I remember having ringworms.

S2: Oh! Yes.

S3: You remember that?

S2: Yes.

S3: I had a patch on my face and a patch on my knee, and I had to have this stuff plastered on. That was, well, we knew where I'd caught it from because they kept cattle in the field next to Holly Cottage. It's now got bungalows built there but when I was a little girl it was just fields and the cows were in there and they used to come right up to the fence.

S2: Yes.

S3: And I used to touch them.

S2: Yes.

S3: And so I wasn't very old, about seven I would think, when I caught that.

S2: Was it iodine?

S3: Yes. They put that on me yeah.

S1: Was it iodine and gentian violet.

S2: Right.

S3: Yeah. That sort of thing.

S2: I remember ...

S3: Yeah.

S2: ... that you had yellow stuff..

S3: And I had just got this stuff on me. And I remember Mum going to the dentist and having all her teeth out. And coming back and being all really ... you know, I came home from school ...

S2: Oh yeah.

S3: ... and she was sat there with her head in her hands because she'd had all these teeth out.

S2: Yes. I remember having chicken pox and Mother put calamine lotion on the spots and you were sleeping in the same bed as me.

S3: Yeah.

S2: But you didn't get it.

S3: No. She did ... they put us together deliberately.

S2: Yes. But you didn't catch it.

S3: No.

S2: And I also remember having to have some pink medicine and not liking it and running ... deciding I was going to run away so I would never have to take it again. And running across the road and into the field, which would be Mellor's field where the pond is, so I didn't have to take it. And hiding behind the hedge so I couldn't be found.

S3: I'd climb up the nearest tree and get to the top because I knew they couldn't get at me then.

S2: Yes.

S3: Probably couldn't even see me. Do you remember having poultices? When to use poultices?

S2: Yes I do. I think I put that down somewhere. Yes. What was that for then?

S3: Oh I remember that. If you'd got a boil.

S2: Yes.

S4: I suppose it was to draw it wasn't it?

S2&3: Yes.

S3: I mean someone put a poultice on me once and really burnt my leg.

S3: Yes.

S4: Did your mum have any sort of old remedies at all.

S2: Now then ...

S3: I think that's where I'm probably thinking of poultices.

S3: Rosehip syrup. We used to have that didn't we?

S2: Yes.

S3: And cod liver oil.

S2: Yes. Cod liver oil, malted malt, and I also remember something that she used to buy called Bengers food as well, which we had.

S3: Don't remember that.

S2: I used to like that but I hated the cod liver oil. Didn't mind the milk. But I think the poultice is the thing I remember for homemade remedies. I don't really remember much else. Do you?

S3: No.

S1: Do you know how they made the poultice?

S3: Bread. Was bread used? Yeah.

S2: Right!

S4: Was it soaped? Or ...?

S1: Red hot bread soaked in hot water, like, and put between two pieces of flannel and put on to ...

S2: Oh! Well! I never actually ... I did that.

S3: No.

S2: But I remember Dad having one or two *bilious* turns, as they would call it. And mean we don't call anything that now.

S3: No.

S2: But once he ate a lot of field mushrooms and he was very, very ill.

S3: They must have been toadstools.

S2: Yes.

S4: He'd collected them, obviously.

S2: Yes.

S3: Well, he just ... yeah. He picked them. Found these and picked them and Mum cooked them. But they must have been toadstools.

S4: Wonder he didn't die!

S2: Yes! [Laughter] But Mum enjoyed good health in the main didn't she? I think.

S3: Yes.

S2: I remember her being ill once.

S3: Well, they both did.

S2: Yes.

S3: Really.

S2: And I had to light the fires and clean out the grate. I've put the only home remedy was poultice, that I remember.

S3: That's the only thing I've got down. Poultices, yeah.

S1: And did you see a doctor very often?

S2: No.

S3: No.

S2: No. he came to the house in his car a couple of times. It was Dr Abbot. Apart from that, if we ever had to see him we used to have to go to his surgery in Market Square.

S3: Which was a ...

S2: Horrible.

S3: ... dark, horrible place.

S2: Yes. Corridor. I remember the narrow corridor.

S3: I do. Awful.

S2: Darkness. But don't really remember seeing doctors a lot.

S3: No.

S1: No. And did you visit the dentist or did he come to the school?

S3: I remember going to the dentist for the first time when I was about 11.

S2: Yeah, I don't remember anything about a dentist until I was about 14,' when I went to one in Rugeley. I think we all had good teeth because Dad wouldn't allow us to have sweets and chocolate. So I don't remember a dentist at school. Do you?

S3: No, I don't.

S4: Your Dad was obviously quite strict with you wasn't he?

S2: He was very strict.

S4: Stricter than your mum?

S2: Yes. Oh yes. Yeah, Mum used to try and give us little treats didn't she? But dad was quite ... well, he was strict with me. I think he favoured you.

S3: As we were getting older and had nail polish, and he could smell this and was sure we'd got pear drops.

S2: Yes.

S3: But we hadn't. We had to prove we didn't by letting him smell this nail polish?

S2: Yes.

S1: And do you remember any health visitors coming to the house or to the school.

S2: No.

S3: I don't remember a health visitor coming to the house.

S2: No.

S3: But I remember at school and the school nurse.

S2: I don't.

S3: Because they used to check my hair for lice.

S?: Nit nurse.

- S3: And they came to give vaccinations at school.
- S2: Right, oh yes.
- S3: Which I was terrified. The needle was so huge. It was awful then. And that stuck with me all my life.
- S2: Yes.
- S3: I don't like needles because the first ones at school were so big and really punctured, you know, really pressed before they went. Oh they were awful. And that stuck with me.
- S2: I think, now you say, I remember a diphtheria jab or something but I don't have any clear recollection of the nurse at all.
- S1: Lovely. Well, that's very nice and we've enjoyed this interview. And you've obviously been talking about it for a long while.
- S2: Thank you.



Ruth & Gwen
Picnic on Cannock Chase 1953



Ruth at fancy dress party 1951



Life on the land
Norman Baker's family



Harry Webb at Boughey Hall



Colton Garden Competition 1961



Colton Village Produce Guild
Versus
Colwich Village Produce Guild
1962

Colton 43 points - Colwich 37 points



St Mary's School



Children with no absence
In the year 1894



Children in class with their
teacher 1898

Colton History Society

All Our Stories



Lillian Redmond's story

Lillian Redmond nee Jones .

S1: Marion Vernon
S2: Lillian Redmond
S3: 'Paul'
S4: George Vernon

S1: This recording is being made for Colton History Society. George and Marion Vernon are interviewing Mrs Lillian Redmond, nee Jones on Tuesday 26 May, 2009.

Right, would you like to start by telling us a little bit about your family, where you were born and when you were born.

S2: I was born at Bleak Cottage, Stockwell Heath.

S1: Yes. Did you have some brothers and sisters?

S2: I've four brothers and I was the middle one.

S1: Right. So two brothers are older than you?

S2: Yes, and two younger.

S1: And no sisters?

S2: And I was ... No. Me dad was disappointed I think. .. of someone, you know, a friend for me.

S1: Yes. Which year were you born in?

S2: I was born April 8, 1914.

S1: Right. Yes. And your parents? Did they work or ...

S2: Mum never worked.

S1: No. Well, I think she probably did with five children, do you.

S2: Yes. I'm sure she'd enough to do.

S1: Yes, absolutely. She didn't go out to work but ...

S2: No, she didn't go out to work at all.

S1: And your father?

S2: Yes, he ... Paul can tell you better.

S3: He was a carpenter and joiner.

S1: Carpenter joiner? Yes.

S3: And some of the time he was self-employed ...

S1: Yes.

S3: ... between jobs ...

S1: Yes. Self-employed.

S3: But he actually worked for the War Office on the Chase.

S2: That's right.

S1: What, on the Chase.

S2: Yes, he did.

S1: Was that during the war did you say?

S3: Yes ...

S1: At the camps? Yes.

S3: ... outside the Kent theatre.

S1: So he used to go on his motorbike up to the Chase?

S3: Yeah.

S1: So did he always use a motorbike?

S2: He had a pushbike at first.

S1: Yes.

S2: Then he had a motorbike.

S1: Right. Did he used to do lots of walking as well?

S2: Who?

S1: Your dad and you. Did you go out with him sometimes walking?

S2: Me dad never walked; we always went either on the sidecar—he had a side car.

S1: Right.

S2: ... a motorbike and sidecar ...

S1: Yes. How many of you fitted in the sidecar?

S2: Well, could get two in.

S1: Yes.

S2: Yes.

S1: He didn't like walking at all?

S2: No he didn't. He'd always have me on his motorbike or his pushbike.

S1: Right.

S2: Yes. And I know he'd a big garden.

S1: Big garden.

S2: Yes.

S1: Did a lot of gardening?

S2: Yes.

S1: Did your mum do that as well or just your dad?

S2: No, just me dad.

S1: Just your dad.

S2: Yes.

S1: Yes. And what did he grow?

S2: Potatoes; they never bought a bag of potatoes you know, all the winter.

S1: No. Right.

S2: He'd plant it from the top of the garden to the bottom.

S1: Did he! And other vegetables as well?

S2: Oh yes! We never had to buy any vegetables.

S1: What do you remember picking from the garden?

S2: Peas, beans...

S1: Yeah.

S2: Runner beans, you know?

S1: Yeah.

S2: Peas and carrots, all sorts. Parsnips.

S1: Yes. Sprouts and things like that?

S1: Did he keep any livestock at all?

S2: Yes. But that was me mothers.

S1: Your mum. What did she keep?

S2: Oh she had chickens and little ducks.

S1: Did she?

S2: She had, yes. They were beautiful. And ...

S1: Did you have a little pond or anything

S2: But she'd ... they'd go down the brook, you know?

S1: Yes. That's just below your house was it?

S2: Yes.

S1: Yes.

S2: Me father had a field in front of the house. And we had a pony.

S1: Right.

S2: Yeah.

S1: Did you ride?

S2: No. Don't remember riding it.

S1: No. Did anyone ride it?

S2: I suppose so, yeah.

S1: Yeah?

S2: But I think he had a trap as well, you know, at one time. Yeah.

S1: Did you go in that?

S2: Yes. I suppose I would. I can't remember the trap.

S1: You don't remember that? No?

S2: No. I don't remember that.

S1: And do you remember your neighbours up there?

S2: Yea

S1: There were a lot more houses at the time that you were born were there, up at Stockwell Heath?
Was there a row of cottages?

S3: Oh yes.

S2: Oh yes. There was what they call the Barracks.

S3: Barracks.

S1: The Barracks. Yes.

S2: Yes.

S1: Yeah.

S2: There was a few houses there for the older people. And they were, I think, for the older people in Colton.

S1: Right.

S2: So they used to be there.

S1: So the people used to move up there when they were older.

S2: Yeah. I think so.

S1: Yes.

S2: There was quite a few.

S1: Yes. So what about school? Where did you go to school?

S2: Went to school at Colton.

S1: In Colton?

S2: Yes.

S1: Yes.

S2: Till I was 15.

S1: Till your ... right till you're 15.

S2: Yes.

S1: Yes. And how did you get there?

S2: Walked it!

S1: You walked. All weathers?

S2: Except during the last year; I think I had a bike.

S1: Right.

S2: And I used to ...

S1: To bike to school.

S2: Yes.

S1: Yes.

S2: I used to bike to school.

S1: What did you used to wear for school in those days? Do you remember?

S2: Gym slips.

S1: Yes.

S2: Yes.

S1: What colour was that? What ...

S2: Navy

S1: Navy gym slip. Yeah.

S2: Yeah.

S1: And did you wear ... did you just wear that at school and when you get home change out of it?

S2: Yes we did. So we could ...

S1: So you got ... you keep it clean for the next day.

S2: Oh good gracious yes!

S1: Yes. What are your memories of school like? Were they happy days?

S2: Yes. Yes they were. Yeah.

S1: What do you remember about what you learned? Did you have lots of ...

S2: No, we did very well really.

S1: Yes. Did you have a lot of interesting lessons or was it a little bit 'sit down and learn your tables' and ... What was it like in class? Do you remember?

S2: I can't remember.

S1: Not really, no. What sort of desks did you have? Can you picture yourself in your classroom?

S2: Yeah. I can.

S1: Yeah?

S2: But I don't know what the desk was like.

S1: No. I always remember my pick-up desk where you could put things inside.

S2: No, we hadn't that.

S1: No?

S2: No. There was no ... No.

S1: And inkwells that we had to pour the ink into?

S2: I think there was inkwells.

S4: Did you have slates to write on?

S2: No.

S2: No we had proper books.

S1: Yes?

S2: Yes. Exercise books ...

S1: Yes. And what do you remember about the school holidays?

S2: Oh, they were happy days. Carefree!

S1: Yes.

S2: Carefree.

S1: What did you used to do?

S2: All sorts. Lads used to go off fishing and I were used to be a bit annoyed because they went fishing and I weren't allowed to go with them fishing.

S1: Where would they have fished?

S2: Oh they'd go up to the pond.

S1: Okay, yeah.

S2: And I can remember me mother saying to them: 'You be careful what you're doing in them ponds! If you get in, nobody will get you out you know'.

S1: Rescue, yeah.

S3: There were a whole series of ponds up Sherra Cop.

S2: That's where they used to go.

S3: It's now been filled in.

S1: Been filled in.

S3: I can remember fishing at the Cop.

S1: Really? You can remember that.

S2: Yes.

S1: Yes. Did they catch many fish?

S3: Nothing much.

S1: Just small ones. Yes. So what did you do? You got left behind at home.

S2: Always.

S1: Did you have some friends nearby?

S2: Yes, I had cousins.

S1: Yes.

S2: Yes.

S1: Did you used to play with them?

S2: Yes I did.

S1: Yes.

S2: Yes.

S1: And you left school you were 15, did you?

S2: Yeah.

S1: That's when you left. Did you learn cooking or anything like that when you were at school?

S2: No.

S1: No practical skills.

S2: No.

S1: Did you do many sports or games?

S2: Don't remember much about that.

S1: No.

S2: No.

S1: What games did you used to play in the playtime or lunchtime, or ...?

S2: Skipping!

S1: Do you remember some of the rhymes that you used to sing?

S2: Yeah.

S1: We used to play with two balls and skipping.

S2: Yes.

S1: Yeah. Yes, happy days.

S2: Top and whip, and ...

S1: Did you? Yes.

S2: Yeah.

S1: Were you good with it?

S2: Pretty good, yes.

S4: Did you have a hoop?

S2: No, I don't remember having one of those.

S4: No.

S1: Did they come in the seasons? Did you have like a skipping season and a ...?

S2: Yeah, like a ...

S1: Whip and top.

S2: That's right.

S1: Did you play marbles as well?

S2: The lads played marbles

S1: Lads did.

S2: Yes.

S1: Not the girls.

S2: No.

S1: And what about hopscotch?

S2: Yes we used to have hopscotch. Yes.

S1: Did you play in the same playground when you were a child? Or did you have boys in one and girls in the other?

S2: Yes.

S1: Separate.

S2: Boys ... they were separate.

S1: Yes.

S2: Yes. I remember the first day I went to school and me brothers was in the other school, other playground, you know, and I was there looking through ... for them.

S1: Yes.

S2: Looking through the gateway, you know.

S1: Yes. And what about at home? You had quite a big family. How many bedrooms did you have?

S2: Two big ones.

S1: Yes.

S2: Yes.

S1: So were all you children in one room?

S2: Yes, pretty well.

S1: You managed. Yes.

S2: We had to manage.

S1: And how did the house keep warm? Did you have ...?

S2: Oh, coal fires.

S1: Yes.

S2: Yes. Coal fires.

S1: Did you have them upstairs as well as downstairs?

S2: Yes.

S1: Oh yes.

S2: We had them in the winter time—very cold.

S1: Yes.

S2: We always had fires upstairs.

S1: Up in your bedroom?

S2: Yeah. Yes we did.

S1: Yes. And how did your mum do the cooking?

S2: On the fire: a range.

S1: A range.

S2: Yeah. Yes.

S1: So some water would be boiling on with the kettle most of the day?

S2: Oh yes, all the day.

S1: And what sorts of meals do you remember her preparing for you?

S2: Oh ...

S1: Which were you favourite? Do you remember?

S2: Well, ...

S1: More like stews and things or would it be ...?

S2: We had, often had a ... we often had a chicken.

S1: Yes. Of course, she kept chickens.

S3: And duck.

S2: Yeah.

S1: Or duck.

S2: Yes we did. And lamb chops. Yes, we had stews as well.

S1: Where would she buy the lamb and other things from that you didn't grow?

S2: She got them from Rugeley.

S1: Is that where you did all the shopping?

S2: Yes. She used to have an order with the Co-op.

S1: Right.

S2: And they used to deliver it on a Saturday.

S1: Right.

S2: And on Saturday night me mother used to go down, if we wanted any clothes, or shoes, anything like that.

S1: Me dad would take her.

S1: On the motorbike?

S2: That's right. And he'd ... they'd get what we wanted, you know.

S1: In Rugeley?

S2: In Rugeley.

S1: Because there were shops here in Colton weren't there? Did you shop in the village?

S2: There was the one in Colton, as far as ... Two in Colton as far as I can remember.

S1: Yes.

S2: There was the little one ... No, there was two down at the bottom! In that big house.

S1: Yes. The High House?

S2: And then there was ... yeah, and then there was a little house next to that.

S1: Yes.

S2: And, she ... Nelly Williscroft she was called.

S1: Yes.

S2: And she had a little business there.

S1: As well, yes.

S2: Yes.

S1: Did you sometimes come down to the shops to buy some sweets or something?

S2: Yes, many a time.

S1: Yes.

S2: Yes.

S1: Or pop in on the way back ...

S2: Yes.

S1: ... from school perhaps?

S2: School. Yeah.

S1: Yes.

S2: That's more like it. [Laughter]

S1: Yes.

S2: Oh, we had happy times.

S1: Yes.

S4: Did you get pocket money?

S2: Pocket money? Very little! Very little.

S1: So, your mum cooked on the ...

S1: ... the range

S2: Yes she cooked on the range.

S1: On the range. And did you have a school ... a meal at lunchtime? Or did you come home for lunch?

S2: No.

S1: Or did you have sandwiches?

S2: We had to take sandwiches ...

S1: Right.

S2: ... for our lunch.

S1: Yeah. Who used to pack those?

S2: My mother.

S1: Yeah.

S2: Every morning.

S1: For five of you.

S2: Yes. And then when we come home at four o'clock we just had a sandwich.

S1: Yes.

S2: Or some bread and jam—homemade bread and jam.

S1: Yeah.

S2: And we'd go out playing with that.

S1: Yes.

S2: And then we'd have a meal about six o'clock. A cooked meal.

S1: Was that when your dad came home?

S2: Yes.

S1: Yeah.

S2: There was always a cooked meal...

S1: Yes.

S2: ...at night.

S1: Yeah. So would you all sit round a table together and have that?

S2: Yes, we did.

S1: Yes.

S2: Yes we did.

S1: Yes. So you had two bedrooms. You didn't have running water, I bet, when you were ...

S2: We hadn't. We had a pump outside.

S1: Right.

S2: It isn't there now.

S1: No. At the back.

S2: The well's there.

S1: Yeah.

S2: I bet know if the people who live there know all about that.

S1: And was it nice water? Lovely ...

S2: It was.

S1: Yeah.

S2: It was beautiful water.

S1: Yes. Was it clean when you fetched it up?

S2: Clean, beautiful.

S1: Was it?

S2: Yes.

S1: Yes.

S2: Lovely. And then me dad had it piped into the house.

S1: Oh right. From the well?

S2: From the well into the house. He had it piped and we had water for the sink then.

S1: Oh right. So you had a lounge did you? A living room and a kitchen separate?

S2: We had a little front room ...

S1: Yeah.

S2: ... and a fairly big lounge.

S1: Right.

S2: Big kitchen.

S1: Right.

S2: Yes.

S1: Yes. So did you eat in the kitchen?

S2: And then we had ... there was like another place we used to do the washing in.

S1: A washroom.

S2: And there was a boiler there to boil water.

S1: Yeah?

S2: Yeah.

S1: Right.

S2: She used to put her Christmas puddings in that. About six at a time.

S1: Did she?

S2: She worked hard really.

S1: So, yeah, so she boiled the water in there. So what about baths and washing?

S2: Oh well, ...

S1: That would all be bucketed ...

S2: Yes.

S1: ... from there would it?

S2: Yes. Yes it was.

S1: Yeah.

S2: Yes. And we had a big tin bath.

S1: Yeah. In front of the range?

S2: In front of the fire. Yes.

S1: Did you all go in the same water?

S2: Pretty well.

S1: Yeah. One after the other.

S2: That's it.

S1: Youngest first I bet. Or was it oldest first? Which way round did you do it?

S2: I used to bath the two young ones whilst me mother went to Rugeley to do the shopping.

S1: Oh did you?

S2: On the Saturdays.

S1: Yes.

S2: I bathed ... yes, the two younger ones I bathed.

S4: Saturday was bath night was it?

S2: Yes it was.

S1: And what about washday?

S2: Washday? Monday ... with a posser

S1: Yes. Hard work wasn't it?

S2: Hard, I'll say! They don't know they're born today do they?

S1: [Laughs]

S2: They don't really.

S1: So would your mum have changed all the beds all ...

S2: Yeah.

S1: Every week and ...

S2: Oh yes.

S1: And all sheets and everything else?

S2: Yeah, top sheet to bottom sheet.

S1: Yes. Top to bottom

S2: That's it. Not all of them, you see. Not top and bottom.

S1: And a clean pillowcase.

S2: Yes.

S1: Yes.

S4: Which day did she do her washing then?

S1: Monday. Oh, Monday was washday.

S1: Yes. And what happened if it was raining?

S2: Well ...

S1: Where did she dry? Around the range?

S2: Well, yes. She'd have ... we had a guard as covered the ... and she used to have the other things over there to ...

S1: To dry.

S2: ... to dry.

S1: Yes.

S2: And then we had a line in the outer rooms, outer kitchens, you know.

S1: Oh right.

S2: Yeah. It was a big place really at the back.

S1: Was it? Yes.

S2: Yeah. It was, wasn't it Paul?

S1: That was handy wasn't it? Yes.

S2: Wash house.

S1: Yes.

S2: Those days will never come again; I don't think, will they. People wouldn't put up with it would they today?

S1: I think things have changed a lot haven't they?

S2: Yes.

S1: So, your dad did the gardening, your mum did all the washing and the cooking and the cleaning and all those jobs.

S2: Yes.

S1: Sewing? Did she make clothes for you too?

S2: Not a lot.

S1: No.

S2: She hadn't a lot of time.

S1: No.

S2: Did a lot of mending.

S1: Mending.

S2: Yes.

S1: Yeah, I was just going to say that.

S2: Yes.

S1: Or knitting?

S2: Yes, she did all our socks.

S1: Yes.

S2: Yes, she knitted all the socks.

S1: With three pins? Yeah.

S2: Yeah.

S1: Knitting needles? Yeah.

S2: Yeah. And for many, you know, she did right up to me knees.

S1: Yes. Because of course clothes: we didn't wear jeans and trousers in those days.

S2: No.

S1: The girls always just had to wear socks and skirts.

S2: That's it.

S1: Do you remember being cold at all or ...?

S2: It was cold. It was cold in Colton, you know? At time when I was ...

S1: In the winter?

S2: Oh yes.

S1: A lot of snow? Do you remember?

S2: I didn't remember a lot of snow.

S1: No.

S2: But of course we always had to walk to school you know.

S1: Yes.

S2: And it was bitterly cold. Yes it was.

S1: The pond frozen?

S2: Frozen over! We used to slide and skate on the ...

S1: With proper skates or just sliding on the ...?

S2: Well, the lads had proper skates.

S1: Did they? Yes. Bet that was fun wasn't it?

S2: Yeah it was.

S1: Yah.

S2: We had a lovely time you know.

S1: Did you get involved in any little part-time jobs on the farms or anything like that? Did you?

S2: No.

S1: No. Did you brothers?

S2: Well, me uncle had the smallholding, you know.

S1: Oh right. Which uncle was that?

S2: Me uncle ... Tom wasn't it?

S3: Tom. That is where the Indians live.

S2: Oh yes.

S1: Yes.

S3: That is the old farm.

S1: Yes. And that was your uncle's farm?

S2: Yes. But they had, before they bought that, they had the one in the bottom.

S1: Right.

S2: The house in the bottom.

S1: Yes.

S2: Yes.

S1: Down the little lane you mean? Yes?

S2: That's ... yeah.

S1: Yes. So the boys would go ...

S2: They owned that. They owned that little cottage for a long time.

S1: So did the boys go and help out with the farm?

S2: Me dad used to help them out ...

S1: Your dad did.

S2: ... a lot.

S2: No pay, you know, for that.

S1: No. Just, just ... yeah. Just to help.

S2: Yeah. He worked really hard for them.

S3: Had his thumb chopped off, I think.

S1: Oh dear.

S2: Who?

S1: In the machinery?

S3: Tom. Had his thumb chopped off didn't he?

S1: Was that her father?

S2: The lads were playing.

S3: They were playing with that ...

S2: With the feeder.

S3: ... chopper.

S2: A chopper.

S3: Chop.

S2: Chopping hay.

S1: Your brothers were?

S2: And he was feeding it. Feeding ...

S1: And it chopped his thumb off.

S2: They were my mother's cousins.

S1: Right.

S2: And they used to go playing a lot up there. In fact I did as well, but I wasn't with them this day. And they brought him down ...

S1: Oh dear.

S2: ... with his finger hanging with a bit of skin. And me mother never bothered, you know? She never asked had he cried and she was very cross with me.

S1: Yes.

S2: I remember that. And she put it back, the little bit of skin, and she put the finger back and wrapped it up, put a coat on and they went to Rugeley in the trap.

S1: In the trap, yes.

S2: To the hospital.

S1: Yes.

S2: And they sewed it back on again.

S1: And it was alright?

S2: And they gave him sixpence because he was a good lad.

S3: In fact, you could never tell it had been chopped off ...

S2: No.

S1: No.

S2: It was a little bit ...

S1: This was a cousin was it? Not your brother?

S3: No ...

S2: No it was me brother.

S1: Your brother!

S2: Yes.

S1: Oh, your uncle. Yes, I understand now, yes.

S2: And his fingers always was ...

S1: That's wonderful isn't it? Yes.

S4: That's amazing.

S1: Your mum was very good at first aid was she? Was she good at ...?

S2: She didn't get ... she didn't panic.

S1: No.

S2: No.

S1: Did you get, if you were ill, did the doctor come out to you? Or what happened then?

S2: They only used to have the doctor if it was absolutely necessary.

S1: Did you have to pay to have the doctor?

S2: Yes.

S1: Yes.

S2: Yes. We had to pay.

S1: So I expect your mum got good at natural remedies ...

S2: Yes.

S1: ... didn't she?

S2: Yes. It was hard work in those days you know. I often think back, and I wonder how we managed, you know.

S1: Yes.

S2: Yes.

S1: So if you had a cold or something, what would she give you?

S2: Oh now then ...

S1: Did ...

S2: Aspirins. It used to be Aspirins at one time.

S1: Aspirin. Yeah.

S2: Yes.

S1: Did they used to rub your chest with ...

S2: Yes.

S1: Goose grease.

S2: Goose grease.

S1: Do you think it works?

S2: I think it did in fact.

S1: Yes.

S2: She used to put brown paper over it.

S1: Yes.

S2: I remember that.

S1: Yes.

S2: Yeah.

S1: Well, they used to use brown paper a lot didn't they? Even in the nursery rhyme they've got mending people's head with brown paper haven't they?

S2: Yes.

S1: Vinegar and brown paper.

S2: Yeah.

S1: And vinegar.

S2: Vinegar and brown paper, yeah.

S1: Very good isn't it for bruising and things.

S2: Yes.

S4: Was Tom your younger brother, then?

S2: Yeah. He was the next to me.

S1: Next down?

S2: Lower down.

S1: Yes.

S2: And then there was Alfred.

S4: Yeah.

S2: Now, he got killed you know.

S1: Did he?

S2: Yes, he got killed going to work with Sam.

S1: Really?

S1: On the railway?

S2: No.

S3: You know when you go to Stafford, you go past the police headquarters, you go down there.

S1: Yes.

S3: It was somewhere on that hill coming ...

S1: Yeah. By there.

S3: He was knocked off his bike by a lorry.

S1: Oh, on his bike.

S2: Yeah.

S1: Oh dear.

S4: They used to bike to Stafford then?

S2: Used to bike to Stafford.

S1: Yes.

S2: Pushbike to Stafford. Yeah. And I don't know what happened to the bikes but I know Sam said he held him in his arms all the way to Stafford.

S1: Right.

S2: And he ... it was his stomach, you see. He died.

S1: Died. That's sad.

S4: Where were they working then?

S2: They were working. Going to work. But I don't know what ...

S1: You don't know what they were doing. No.

S2: Where were ...?

S3: I don't know where they were working but they were both bricklayers.

S2: Yeah, bricklayers, yes.

S4: Okay.

S1: So what do you remember about Christmas? What sort of ...

S2: Oh, happy time Christmas!

S1: What was it like at Christmas? Did you decorate the house? What did you do?

S2: Yes we did.

S1: What did ...

S2: Holly and all sorts.

S1: All sorts.

S2: Yes.

S1: Did you make decorations as well?

S2: I don't remember ...

S1: Christmas tree?

S2: Yes. And I also remember I always had a new dress for Christmas.

S1: Did you? Yes.

S2: Yes. When I got up, Christmas morning, there was always a new dress on a hangar.

S1: How nice! And did you hang up a stocking or ...?

S2: Yes we did.

S1: Yes.

S2: That was full of nuts and oranges and ...

S1: Yeah.

S2: ... apples and all sorts.

S1: And a toy of some kind?

S2: Yes.

S1: What do you remember as your favourite toy that you had at Christmas? Do you have a one that ...

S2: Oh, a doll.

S1: ... you particularly ... A doll. Yeah.

S2: Yes.

S1: Yes.

S4: What did you call the doll?

S2: I can't remember.

S1: You don't remember your doll. No. And what would you have had for Christmas dinner then? Your mum would have ...

S2: Ooh ... Couple of chickens or a turkey.

S1: Yeah. Did she have turkeys as well, your mum?

S2: Yes.

S1: Did she raise them? For Christmas time?

S2: Yes.

S1: Yes.

S2: But I don't think she had many turkeys.

S1: No.

S2: It was mostly geese and ducks and ...

S1: Yeah.

S2: ... chickens.

S1: You said she used to make Christmas puddings.

S2: Ooh yes.

S1: She made six. So did she make them for other people as well?

S2: No.

S1: Just for the family?

S2: Yeah. We used to have one at Easter.

S1: Did you! Yeah.

S2: Yeah.

S1: Yeah. She got ... once she was making them she made a nice big lot.

S2: Yes.

S1: Yes.

S2: And cake. Used to make cake too.

S1: Yes.

S2: Yeah.

S4: Did you get a lucky coin in your Christmas pudding?

S1: Did you have a little sixpence or something in ...

S2: No.

S1: No, you didn't.

S2: No I don't remember that.

S1: No.

S2: No.

S1: No. Some people did and some didn't.

S2: Yeah.

S1: Did you have any holidays? Did you go away or did you ...?

S2: No.

S1: No.

S2: Me mother said there was nothing better for them not round here.

S1: Yes.

S2: She used to say.

S1: So you never got on a train or went anywhere?

S2: No.

S1: No?

S2: No. We were happy enough at home.

S1: Did you have day trips from school sometimes?

S2: We did at school.

S1: Yes.

S2: We once went to Rhyl. I can remember that.

S1: Yes.

S2: Yes.

S1: On the train?

S2: Yes.

S1: Yes.

S2: On the train. Yes.

S1: I bet that was exciting!

S2: Mr Broughton

S1: With Mr Broughton.

S1: ... what sort of memories do you have of ...

S2: Enough said!

S1: ... Mr Broughton?

S2: Enough said! [Laughs]

S3: Think!

S2: He was a devil.

S1: Was he? Oh dear. Was he very strict?

S2: Ooh!

S1: Were you frightened of him?

S2: No. I wasn't. Not really.

S1: No.

S2: No.

S1: Did you actually go into his class? Was he your teacher?

S2: Oh yes. Yes.

S1: Yes. Did he teach the older ones or the ...

S2: Yes. Older ones, yes.

S1: I think everybody has heard of him.

S2: I bet you've heard some tales haven't you?

S1: So what do you remember of the war years?

S2: But he was very good in some things. I remember we didn't take any sandwiches one day—we forgot. Mother had forgot to give them to us.

S1: Ah, yes.

S2: And we didn't have time to go to Stockwell Heath you know.

S1: No.

S2: And so Mr Broughton got his wife to make us some sandwiches; they were marmalade sandwiches—I remember what they were—and I thought, 'how kind', you know.

S1: Yes.

S2: I mean he had a good ...

S1: Good heart.

S2: Yes, in some things.

S1: Yeah.

S2: Yes he had.

S1: And where did he live?

S2: He lived at the school at ... at the School House isn't it?

S3: At the School House.

S1: The one that looks over to the school sideways on?

S3: Yeah, sideways on.

S1: Yes.

S2: Yes. He always lived there.

S2: I think he had seven children.

S1: Did he?

S2: Yeah.

S1: And did they all go to Colton School as well?

S2: They ... yes. A lot of them. Yes, they went to Colton School. They started there anyway, I don't know ...

S1: Was it... his wife wasn't a teacher? Was she or was she?

S2: No.

S1: No.

S2: No.

S1: She had plenty to do at home with seven children.

S2: I should think she had!

S1: Did you have any memories of the ... how did the war affect you, up at Stockwell Heath?

S2: Well.

S1: Do you have any memories of the war?

S2: You mean the last ...

S3: First war or second war?

S2: Second World War?

S1: Any. Yeah, whichever. Where were you in the Second World War?

S3: Well I was in Lancashire but you always tell me that you actually saw Coventry being bombed.

S2: Oh yeah, yes I did.

S3: Coventry.

S2: No, we was on holiday then.

S3: Me grandfather stood outside and watched it.

S1: Really.

S2: Yes, he did.

S1: ... so you stood outside and watched the bombing.

S2: And he didn't like us outside to watch it.

S1: No.

S2: He said, 'Go inside! You never know what happens.' But yes, they caught it you know, Coventry.

S1: They did, didn't they?

S2: And we could see such a lot from Stockwell Heath.

S1: What happened on Sundays? Did your dad have a day off work?

S2: Oh yes. He didn't work Sundays.

S1: No?

S2: No!

S1: So, did you go to church? Did you just have a family day or did you just ...?

S2: We went to church.

S1: You used to go to church.

S2: Yes.

S1: Yes.

S2: I don't say every week, but we used to go to church.

S1: Sometimes. Yeah? In the morning?

S2: We all used to go. No, afternoon. Mid-evening.

S1: Evening. Yes.

S2: Yes.

S1: Was there a Sunday School as well? Did you go to the Sunday School?

S2: I think there was a Sunday School but I didn't ...

S1: You didn't go there.

S2: ... go to the Sunday School.

S1: So, would you have your Sunday dinner at lunchtime on a Sunday?

S2: Yes.

S1: Yes.

S2: We did.

S1: That would be different to the rest of the week.

S2: Yes.

S1: Wouldn't it?

S2: Yes. Yes we did. And working days it was six o'clock but Saturdays and Sundays was ...

S1: Saturdays ... lunchtime.

S2: Lunchtime.

S1: Yeah. Did you have separate clothes for ... like your Sunday best? You talked about a new dress ...

S2: Yes.

S1: ... for Christmas.

S2: Yes.

S1: Would that be kept then for Sunday best?

S2: Yes.

S1: Or for going ... doing anything special? Yes.

S2: Yeah.

S1: They didn't used to get worn out did they? Did they eventually get used for playing in, as a play dress?

S2: I suppose so, yes. Yes, well, we were ... Yes. And then you'd have to have your other, best, ones.

S1: Yes.

S4: Were you allowed to go and play out on a Sunday?

S2: Allowed to play out?

S4: On a Sunday.

S2: Oh me mother never used to bother us if we used to play out ...

S1: All the time.

S2: ... at the back, you know.

S4: With your best dress on?

S1: Did you?

S2: No we didn't.

S1: You just put that on to go to church?

S2: Yeah.

S1: Or wherever.

S2: Yeah.

S1: Yeah.

S2: No. You know, we hadn't a right lot at ... like people think you was well off, but, you know, we hadn't a lot of things to have like.

S1: No, I know.

S2: Not a lot of chocolate or sweets or anything like that.

S1: No.

S2: No, we hadn't.

S1: No.

S2: Christmas time: yes.

S1: Yes. So, coming back to church, what do you remember of any special days here in Colton? You know, was there a special garden fete? Or special ...

S1: You know, things, festivities and things on. Anything that you particularly remember? Any carnivals or May Day queens or anything at all like that that you remember?

S2: There weren't many.

S1: No?

S2: No. I bet the other people said that.

S1: What about in the village hall? Did they used to ... it used to be the reading room of course in those days.

S2: Yes. No they had parties down there.

S1: They did?

S2: Yes.

S1: Yes.

S2: In fact I can remember going once or twice to some parties which was there.

S1: Yes.

S2: Yeah.

S1: Do you have any memories of any local characters at all?

S2: No.

S1: Not really. You don't remember. Anybody stand out in your memory?

S2: No.

S1: No?

S2: I don't think so.

S1: People? Anybody you were frightened of or used to ...

S2: No!

S1: No? I just get the feeling from you it was just a lovely childhood.

S2: Yes.

S1: Yes.

S2: No, we never were frightened of anybody.

S1: No?

S2: Me mother used to say 'If ...' We used to have dancing lessons down at the school.

S1: Oh did you?

S2: Yes.

S1: Yeah.

S2: And I used to go to them and bike back on me bike, you know. And me mother says ... used to say to me, 'You'll never see anybody any worse than yourself.' You know, she knew I were a bit frightened.

S1: How did you get on with it? Did you master it in the end, the dancing?

S2: Yes.

S1: What sort of dancing would that be?

S2: Well, it was ...

S1: Country dancing?

S2: ... ballroom dancing.

S1: Oh, Ballroom! Yeah?

S2: Yes. It was nice.

S1: Yes. Did you do any ... go to any dances to practise it?

S2: I can't remember.

S1: No?

S2: I remember going to the dancing lessons, but whether I went ...

S1: Who used to do that? Mr Broughton?

S2: No!

S1: Who did the dancing lessons? Do you remember?

S2: I don't ... Oh I do remember! Miss Jones.

S1: Right.

S2: Down at the bottom.

S1: Yeah. Miss Jones.

S2: The bottom cottages.

S1: Bottom cottages, yeah.

S2: Yes.

S1: So she ... But she didn't teach in your school did she?

S2: No.

S1: No. But she used to come and do dancing lessons?

S2: Well, it was ... I think it was private, more or less.

S1: Right.

S2: Yeah.

S1: After school was that then?

S2: No. It was more weekends I think.

S1: Oh I see!

S2: Yeah.

S1: And that was in the school, not the reading room?

S2: Oh no. Not in the ... No. In the reading room... in the ... yes.

S1: In the reading room.

S2: Not in the school.

S1: Not in the school.

S2: No.

S1: No.

S2: Wouldn't allow that, you know.

S1: Oh, I see. No.

S4: Did Miss Jones used to play the piano for the dancing?

S2: Yes, she did.

S4: Did she?

S2: Yes, she did.

S1: She was good wasn't she, at the piano?

S4: That's nice.

S2: Yeah.

S1: Yeah.

S2: You know about Miss Jones then do you?

S1: Oh yes. I remember Miss Jones very well.

S2: There you are.

S1: Yes. So is there anything else that you would like to tell us about? At all? I think we're almost there aren't we? Is there anything else that you would like to tell us about?

S2: I can't think of anything else.

S1: No

S2: You haven't done so bad.

S1: You've remembered lots haven't you? Yes. Just, you look back with very ... you know, as if they were very happy memories that you've got ...

S2: Yes.

S1: ... of you growing up. You left here at the age of 15?

S2: Fifteen. And after ...

S1: You left school.

S2: Yes. I had a few weeks at home and then me auntie came ...

S1: Yes.

S2: ...and her husband had died. Well, he was very ill when I took ... when I went with them, and I went to help her out.

S1: Right.

S2: And then I ...

S1: And where was that?

S2: That was in Bury.

S1: Near Bury.

S2: In Lancashire. Near Bury.

S1: Yes.

S2: Yes. A little place called Stubbins, near Ramsbottom.

S1: Near Bury?

S2: Near Bury, yes. And I stayed there until I got married.

S1: Yes. You met your husband up there?

S2: Yes.

S1: Your future husband.

S2: Yes.

S1: And lived there when you were married as well?

S2: Yes, I did.

S1: And so you returned here about 14 years ago, did you, to Colton?

S2: Yes.

S1: It's very different now.

S2: Yes. Very. Me husband would have loved it here if he'd have lived ...

S1: Yeah.

S1: You're glad you came though.

S2: Yeah. Oh I was glad I come, yes.

S1: Yes.

S2: It's more peaceful

S1: Still peaceful, yes. Well, thank you ever so much.



May Day - Dancing around the May Pole



Colton History Society

All Our Stories



Peggy Peat's story

Peggy (Margaret) Peat.

S1: Marion Vernon
S2: Peggy (Margaret) Peat
S3: George Vernon

S1: This recording is being made for Colton History Society. George and Marion Vernon are interviewing Peggy Peet on Friday 13th March 2009.

S2: Do call me... Peggy Peet sounds like mother said] sounds like a comic strip. My name is Margaret really.

S1: Really?

S2: Yeah.

S1: Margaret? Yes. Does everyone call you Peggy then?

S2: Yeah.

S1: Yes. Is your name Peggy at all?

S2: Well, Peggy

S1: Second name.

S2: ... for Margaret isn't it?

S1: Well I didn't know that. Is that ... Peggy is a shortened form for Margaret?

S2: What do you call, I can't think of...

S1: Yeah. An endearing sort of ...

S2: In Scotland they're called Peggy.

S1: Really?

S2: Yeah. And Ireland I think.

S2: Right. I didn't know that. Can you tell us a little bit then about your family and where you were born and ...?

S2: I was born in Sutton Coldfield and my parents were—what do I say their name now?

S1: Yes. If you'd like to. Whatever.

S2: Gwendolyn Grace.

S1: Yes.

S2: And my father was Randolph Norman McGregor.

S1: McGregor.

S2: Yeah. Her name was Clarkson. Nothing to do with Jeremy! We came to Colton in 1939.

S1: Where were you born?

S2: I was born in Sutton Coldfield.

S1: Yeah. And you lived there for how many years?

S2: Nineteen. Just eighteen.

S1: Nineteen.

S2: No, eighteen, eighteen.

S1: Eighteen. And you went to school there then obviously.

S2: I went to school at Four Oaks, yes.

S1: Yes. Did you have a happy childhood there?

S2: Yes.

S1: Yes. And then you came to Colton when you were ...

S2: I came to Colton when I was just short of nineteen.

S1: Yes.

S2: Just before the war actually.

S1: Right. And how ... why did you move?

S2: My father got a job as stipendiary magistrate, which they call area judges or something. And, in the Potteries. But my mother wanted to be near her family so this was just sort of halfway.

S1: Right.

S2: Colton was halfway.

S1: And did her family live in Sutton Coldfield?

S2: Yes.

S1: Right. Yes.

S2: And then my parents saw somewhere with the estate agents that Colton House was for sale. And Colton House ... we came to see it ...

S1: Yes.

S2: And I think the woman wouldn't sell it or something.

S2: And then the estate agent said, well there's a house further up the road ...

S1: Right.

S2: ... which was Colton Lodge. So they came to Colton Lodge and lived there till nineteen fifty...

S1: Whatever. In the 50s.

S2: Fifty-six.

S1: Fifty-six?

S2: About '56.

S1: Yes. Around there. And ...

S2: No it wasn't. It was before that, sorry. Oh is this all getting muddled up.

S1: That's fine. Don't worry about it.

S2: Yes. And my two children were born at Colton Lodge.

S1: Right.

S2: David was born on the night of one of the worst floods we've ever had in Colton.

S1: Really?

S2: And the midwife came by boat.

S1: Really! Where was ... how far was the flood up there?

S2: Oh it was up past Colton House and ... but it was under the railway bridge as well at ... near the railway.

S1: Yes. Gosh! So she really came by boat?

S2: The doctor was too late.

S1: He'd already been born. Yes.

S1: Yes. [Laughs] So what year was that flood?

S2: It was 1946.

S1: And what month was he born in?

S2: February.

S1: February! February flood.

S2: Yes, that's right.

S1: Yes.

S2: And how long did that last?

S1: Quite a time, yes.

S2: Yes. I mean more days than hours.

S1: Yes.

S2: Then we had another terrible flood; I forget which year that was.

S1: Right.

S2: The doctor left his car up—nothing to do with me—left his car over the other side of the bridge and somebody pinched his engine. I remember it was Dr Crawford.

S1: Oh gosh! Oh gosh! So how did you find Colton when you moved in? It must have been very different to Sutton Coldfield.

S2: Oh very different. There were only five cars in the whole place. Bill Leek and the vicar didn't have one, the people at Bellamore Lodge, they had one—Riley their name was, I remember.

S1: Yeah.

S2: And Miss Williscroft who had the shop, which is now Cypress Cottage.

S1: Yes.

S2: She had a car as well to go and get the papers everyday at the station.

S1: Oh right! She went and picked them up from the station.

S2: Yeah.

S1: Yes. So how many shops were there here when you moved in?

S2: Two.

S1: Two.

S2: One's where the tall house is: Mr ...

S1: High House.

S2: Mr Upton. High House.

S1: Yes.

S2: Mr Upton! He was so ... We called him Spider because he sort of always sat by ... there was a fire then, and he'd come out and it was all dark and he'd come so the children used to call him The Spider.

S1: Was there a fire in the shop?

S2: Yeah.

S2: Was there!

S2: Like a stove-y thing at the ...

S1: Yes.

S2: Underneath.

S1: Yeah. At road level?

S2: Yeah.

S1: Yes.

S2: Then Mrs Upton took over and she was ever so nice.

S1: So he ran it first and then she took over afterwards.

S2: Yes.

S1: Yes.

S2: It was her father. Her father-in-law I should say.

S1: Her father-in-law!

S2: Claudius. Claude Upton was her husband.

S1: Husband.

S2: She was very nice.

S1: Right. You're talking about the older Mr Upton.

S2: Yeah.

S1: Yes. Right.

S2: Yes. And Miss Williscroft was sweet but she went blind.

S1: Yes.

S2: Right.

S1: So did you do your shopping here in the village? Would your parents have gone ...?

S2: Yes, quite a bit. Quite a bit. We went into Rugeley as well of course.

S1: Yeah.

S2: And my father going out to Hanley or Stoke, whichever it was, because he's one at Stoke one day, Burslem the next, you know, the whole five towns, so ...

S1: Yes.

S2: ... a different one every day.

S1: Yes.

S2: And so we did a lot of shopping in Hanley as well, and Rugeley of course.

S1: Yeah.

S2: You had got ration books.

S1: Yes. Ration books! Tell me about ration books. Do you remember much about ration books?

S2: Oh yes. I had a ration book for the First World War.

S1: Really?

S2: Yes. But I ... The war was over—just. But I'd got on my birth certificate I saw the other ... not long ago: 'Ration book issued on July 20th or whatever it was.

S1: Right.

S2: 1920.

S1: Yes.

S2: So I had two ration books.

S1: So what was on ration? Do you remember?

S2: Oh, butter of course, margarine, tea, meat, bacon ...

S1: You've got a good memory.

S2: I know. I don't know its going. I can't think of anything else.

S1: No. But other things ...

S2: Those were the main things.

S1: Yes.

S2: Yes. Biddles, which is now a sort of fancy shop for girls with brooches in their hair and ... the one at the corner going into the indoor market on the right-hand side. That was the grocers: Biddles.

S1: Was it? Yes. Oh right. Into the indoor market?

S2: Into the indoor, yes.

S1: Yes. How interesting! Yeah. So you moved into Colton Lodge.

S2: Yeah.

S1: ... have vegetables growing there as well or ...?

S2: Oh yes. I grew the vegetables.

S1: You did.

S2: And had the cow, of course. I was ... I don't know if you know the awful thing about me. I was a conscientious objector.

S1: Right.

S2: And I went for my interview. Of course I was the first lot of women to be ...

S1: Called up?

S2: Called up.

S1: Yeah.

S2: And I went and I said: 'I am a conscientious objector.' And the woman says: 'There aren't such things for women, it's only for men.' I said, 'Well, I am one.' And she said, 'what?' Conscientious objector, I said. And she said there aren't such things.

... walked right into the Japanese. Wasn't Burma, no.

I think it was Singapore. Anyway and so he was a prisoner of war, Major, I forgot his name. He was ... and she came to stay. My father said 'of course you can'. So she came to stay and she stayed with us all the time up to ?

S1: Really.

S2: She got very friendly. She used to sing on the radio for Scotland. She had a lovely voice.

S1: Really?

S2: Scottish.

S1: And did she stay here? Did she sing here?

S2: Sorry?

S1: Did she sometimes give concerts in the Reading Room or anything? Sing for people here?

S2: No. I don't think so.

S1: No.

S2: I'm glad you said the Reading Room. I still call it that and say, no, must say village hall.

S1: Did you go down to the Reading Room very often?

S2: Oh yes! All the do's were held at the Reading Room

S1: What do you remember of those?

S2: They had dances and people came to give talks sometimes. The soldiers used to go dancing there. Think that's where Liz met her husband.

S1: Right. How did you meet your husband?

S2: Oh. It was a friend. I had a friend who, well, he fell in love with me. He was only a boy and he asked his parents if he could have a party because we met at a party and so he asked and his parents arranged a party for him and he asked me and we went ... I went into the room and facing me was a boy with his back to the window, the curtain was on the left-hand side, when I saw him just the world changed.

S1: Really? Just like that.

S2: As instant as that.

S1: Yes.

S2: And Roy said, 'This is my best friend Geoff.' And there we were.

S1: And he felt the same?

S2: Oh, I hope so.

S1: Straight the way

S2: I don't know whether he did straightaway. I don't know? He did, but he wouldn't because he was his best friend.

S1: Best friend!

S2: Friends.

S1: So how did that work out?

S2: Very sadly. Very sadly. I got some letters from Roy now, when he was in the war. It went on for ages.

S1: So how old were you when you got married?

S2: When I got married I were 24. I was 24.

S1: Twenty-four. Did you get married here in Colton church?

S2: No. I got married in the registry office in Lichfield.

S1: In Lichfield? Yes.

S2: I didn't want to get married until the war was over. I didn't want a happy day to be when everybody ... you know what I mean? So I didn't. So, and got married.

S1: Yes.

S2: Two years later.

S1: And your first son, yeah.

S2: Eight years after that I had my lovely, gorgeous daughter.

S1: Yes. Yes. So you've lived in Colton a very long time.

S2: Yes, 1939.

S1: Yeah.

S2: But about the bridge: I must tell you that because ...

S1: Yes.

S2: ... there's a mistake about that. And the bomb.

S1: Please do.

S2: Tell you about the ... All the soldiers that ... When the soldiers were there and I took my cow, they had another field round ... where that, you know that yellow cottage on Uttoxeter Road? Used to be a garage at some time.

S1: Oh yes.

S2: There was a field there that we owned and I took, I used to take the cows there very often and ...

S1: Did you just have the three cows?

S2: Yes.

S1: Yes.

S2: Well, I took ... and the calves of course. When I took round, the cows round there, I had to walk them of course, and the soldiers would come and the American soldiers would make a noise to make the cows run and think it was funny. They didn't mean it nastily, you know, you know how it works. But when the black soldiers came they stopped their engines and let them go, always

S1: Right.

S2: And when a ... with an accident ... this is what this mistake is because somebody said it was they were drunk and they weren't. Some soldiers were going from Colton House, black ones, and they went over the rail..., the little bridge here, and they crashed into the wall. Two of them were killed.

S1: Oh dear.

S2: And this one, white, soldier who came up here said, he was from the Southern States, and he said, my father said, 'I was very sorry to hear about your friends', I don't think he said 'friends', but ... 'being killed'. He said, 'That! Don't matter they were only blacks.'

S1: Did he really?

S2: Yeah. So that was it. But somebody said, told me the other day, that they had heard it that they were drunk; and they weren't. They swerved to avoid some children. I'll tell you who'll tell you, back me up and that's Lil, Lil Curtis.

S1: Right.

S2: And she'll back me up about the bomb.

S1: Yes.

S2: Because David Bradbury says that it was in the second field. It isn't. They were in the first field.

S1: Right, now, we're going over the footpath are we?

S2: Yes.

S1: Over ...

S2: The very first field. And one of us ... I couldn't tell you which one was left, I think it was ... I'm pretty sure it was the last one, because the plane must have been going that way. And he must have been jettisoning his bombs; that's what was thought at the time.

S1: Right.

S2: They used to fly over here every night going to Liverpool I'm afraid, and the one, the furthest away from Colton anyway, that I think is the one that's still there but I couldn't swear to that.

S1: Yeah.

S2: But the first one it was, not ... They were all in the first field, I know that, and the first bomb, it didn't go off—of course you know. There was a big crater and there were sheep in the field and two sheep had fallen in and one was dead, and Geoff and I had to pull the other one out. We got it out but a wet sheep in the winter, I can tell you, was ...

S1: Very heavy.

S2: Heavy?

S1: Yes.

S2: But we did get it out and we put it on its side and we pushed it alright.

S1: And it was alright.

S2: So we told the farmer and he came and he put fences, you know, fencing around the bomb holes.

S1: So how many were dropped in the field?

S2: Bombs? Four I believe.

S1: Four!

S2: I wouldn't swear to that.

S1: It was lucky they didn't go off wasn't it?

S2: I think there were four. Yeah. But they can't get the one out because the more they ... this is what I heard of course.

S1: Yes.

S2: From the people, soldiers that came, the Bomb squad. They came and they got it out. And that was, my little boy was about four at the time.

S1: Right.

S2: When they got them out.

S1: Yes.

S2: Of course he always, he said, wondered what they were doing of course. And I said getting them out. And he said, 'Will they send them back to Germany? I don't think so.

S1: So there was a lot of housework to do in your home when you had all the evacuees then?

S2: Yes. There was.

S1: Who did all the work? Did everyone join in and do the work? Did the evacuees help in the house?

S2: Oh no.

S1: No.

S2: Didn't help, no.

S1: Who did most of the household ...?

S2: We had two maids, I'm afraid.

S1: You had two maids?

S2: Yes.

S1: Yes. And did they do all the chores?

S2: My mother was very ... she would do as well.

S1: Yes.

S2: But ...

S1: And did you ... you had, obviously, taps and so on. When did electricity come to Colton? Was it here when you moved in?

S2: It was here when we came.

S1: Yes. I thought it would be. Yes. So what sort of appliances were there in those days to help the housework?

S2: An electric iron, which came from the light which my father was always saying was very bad working it backwards and forwards.

S1: Right.

S2: And he always...

S1: So it used to swing? Did the light swing as you did the ironing?

S2: Yes. He always wanted us to turn the iron off. I do remember that. Before we used it, get it hot and then I ... But of course you didn't. You didn't use it like that.

S1: No. Did you have a vacuum cleaner? Hoover of some kind?

S2: You know, I can't remember.

S1: No?

S2: Yes. I think ... no I don't think we did.

S1: No?

S2: Certainly not the stairs because I remember.

S1: Sweeping?

S2: Sweeping the stairs with a hand brush.

S1: Yes. And what about the washing? Was there a set day for doing the washing or did they just ...?

S2: Yes. A set day, but the laundry as well I'm afraid.

S1: You used to send it to the laundry. Yes.

S1: So how would it get sent to the laundry? Did someone come and collect the washing?

S2: Yeah.

S1: Yes.

S2: And the ... We had got a boiler in at Colton. You know, we used to ... they used to put the stuff in there; there was a dolly and ...

S1: Yes.

S2: For the ordinary, you know. But it was the tablecloths and sheets that used to go to the laundry.

S1: To the laundry. Come back beautifully ironed, I bet. Yes. Yes.

S2: Oh no, they were ironed.

S1: Beautifully ironed.

S2: Yes.

S1: Yes. That's what I'm saying.

S2: Oh I see, yes.

S1: I bet they looked lovely when they came back. Yes. I think people used to use the laundries a lot more; my mum used to send ...

S2: You what?

S1: My mother used to send sheets to the laundry.

S2: Yes. Yes. I think people did then, yeah.

S1: You didn't have the same sort of washing machines and things that ...

S2: No.

S1: ... we've got today.

S2: No. That's right.

S1: Yes. And you would have had a lot of sheets.

S2: You had your name in little red letters, didn't you.

S1: And you'd have had a lot of sheets wouldn't you?

S2: Yeah.

S1: With all the evacuees and all the people in the house?

S2: Yeah.

S1: Yes. And what about the cooking? Did the maids do the cooking too?

S2: Mother usually did the cooking.

S1: What sort of meals do you remember, at home? Very simple meat and veg?

S2: Very simple. Meat, well not meat because ... well, yes, meat ration for the ones that ate meat. There was some most ghastly things called, was it 'Country Pies'?

S1: Country Pies!

S2: Not Country Pies, something like that. And they were ... heaven knows what they were made out of, but they were sent round to every village because people in villages couldn't get into the shops. You know, you were rationed but sometimes they had extra, like sausages and perhaps a bit of liver or something like that,

S1: Right.

S2: They'd keep for their special ... You know, you've seen it in Dad's Army, that sort of thing.

S1: Yeah.

S2: But people in the country couldn't, you know, couldn't get that sort of thing. So they made these ghastly vegetarian pies. They weren't Countryside. Something like that. They were ghastly!

S1: Were they?

S2: But we looked forward to them!

S1: Why did you look forward to them if they were so horrid?

S2: Looking back they were.

S1: Oh, I see.

S2: Horrid. Then there was some stuff called Spam that you could buy.

S1: Oh yes.

S2: And then of course we had eggs; we did eat a lot of eggs.

S1: Yes. With the chickens. You were lucky with that. Yes.

S2: And then I remember once, I don't know how we got it, well mother was asked if she ... somebody told her they could get her some tins of salmon.

S1: Right.

S2: Which was black market.

S1: Yes.

S2: And poor mother had got 15 people to cater for and she was, she thought that would be lovely not to have to... so she said she thought she'd think about it. And she went to bed that night and she said she thought about it. [Laughs] She said 'I can't do it.'

S1: Ow.

S2: Not with your father being a judge!

S1: Yes.

S2: We never got that salmon.

S1: With the judge. Could have been embarrassing couldn't it? Yes.

S2: But, anyway, poor mother, she was so disappointed.

S1: So did the maids live in? Did the maids live in?

S2: Yes.

S1: Yes. How many bedrooms did you have at ...?

S2: Seven.

S1: Seven bedrooms!

S2: Yeah. I think one ... no, only one lived in. Yes. Only one lived. Oh one lived ... two lived in for a time, that's right, and then one was called up, of course.

S1: Oh right.

S2: And then the other one came from right round the corner.

S1: A local girl?

S2: Yeah.

S1: Oh right. Do you remember who that was?

S2: Yes. Miss Parr.

S1: One of the Parrs?

S2: No.

S2: Emma was her mother. She was very nice. Oh she was ever so. Anyway, she died now; she died in a shop in Rugeley when she was about ... under twenty anyway.

S1: Oh really? Oh, that's sad.

S3: Bet it was a lovely house to live in wasn't it?

S2: Oh yes it was. Yes.

S1: You talked about going to parties. What sort of, you know, did you have parties at your house as well?

S2: At Christmas we had relatives.

S1: Right.

S2: My grandmother lived in London: Westminster. And she used to come up, you know, quite a lot to sort of have a break from ...

S1: Right.

S2: ...from the bombs and things.

S1: Yes.

S2: And my grandfather on the other side, my mother's father, he came to live with us for a time.

S1: And how did you celebrate Christmas?

S2: Just all together.

S1: Yeah. What did you eat for Christmas dinner? Do you remember? Do you have any memories of it?

S2: You could get turkeys, you know, that was one. They said people in the country couldn't, but in some ways we were in a way better because we could get eggs, which ... Oh, eggs of course were rationed for the people.

S1: For most people.

S2: I mean it wasn't like black market ...

S1: No.

S2: ... if you kept your own, if you ate them in the country. But, you know, we could get them.

S1: And did your mum make Christmas puddings?

S2: Yes.

S1: Yes.

S2: And Christmas cake. Yes.

S1: Yes.

S2: But looking back I don't think there was any fruit in.

S1: No. Quite simply.

S2: Black, black ... black currents or something.

S1: Oh right. Got put into the puddings and things.

S2: I honestly can't remember.

S1: No.

S2: No, we couldn't have had Christmas cake because people couldn't have wedding cakes properly.

S1: No. How did you celebrate after you got married? Where did you ... did you have a honeymoon? Did you have a wedding breakfast or ...?

S2: Oh we went to Wales of course.

S1: Do you like Wales?

S2: Yeah.

S1: Yes.

S2: Oh I love Wales.

S1: And whereabouts in Wales did you go?

S2: North Wales. Snowdonia.

S1: Right.

S2: I love the mountains.

S1: Yes. And then did you ... where did you live then?

S2: Back home.

S1: Back at home. Yes.

S2: And Geoff.

S1: With Geoff, yes.

S2: Geoff was a conscientious objector as well you see, and he worked in Birmingham at the ... his father was quite a big man, he was manager for the whole of the area of The Midlands for one of the big ...

S1: A big company?

S2: Insurance. It doesn't matter anyway.

S1: No.

S2: And Geoff got a job with them as well.

S1: Yes.

S2: But then when the war came ... well, not came, when the war was coming, he decided that he wasn't like my father: he would be a conscientious objector. And all his brothers—he had seven brothers—and they all joined up and he didn't. So, he went to work they asked what he was going to do and he said he was a conscientious objector and the manager said, 'Collect your cards, get out, and I never want to see you again,' or something like that. Geoff did that and went home and his father said, 'You said what?' And he said 'I said I was going to be a conscientious objector.' And his father said, 'well you can get out of here then. I don't want to see you again.'

S1: Really?

S2: So, Geoff rang up and he was coming over and he said 'I'm afraid I can't come because I don't know quite what I'm doing now.'

S1: No.

S2: So my father gathered what we we're saying on the phone, and so I always remember he dramatically came across the room and picked up the phone and he said, 'Geoff, come over here at once!' So Geoff came over ...

S1: Supported him.

S2: ... and lived with us.

S1: Yes.

S2: So that you could say I lived with him about four years, five years before we were married.

S1: Right.

S2: But it wasn't living together.

S1: No I know.

S2: I can honestly say it was not living today, what they mean by today. We were very different in those days, weren't we?

S1: That's one of the big changes isn't it?

S2: Yeah.

S1: Yes.

S2: Yeah.

S3: There was rules that were kept weren't there?

S2: That's right.

S1: Yes. And so ...

S3: Was Geoff a Quaker?

S2: No.

S3: No.

S2: But I looked through ... I could look through the window at Colton Lodge, the one facing up this way, and Geoff was in the one sticking out, the bit that sticks out at the back and we could wave to each other. Goodnight to each other.

S1: Ah! Romantic!

S2: We did blow kisses but that was as far as we got.

S1: Yes.

S3: Your dad was very kind wasn't he?

S2: Oh he was lovely.

S3: To give him a home.

S2: He said, his family said, 'You just work here and worship that man that's all it is. And Peggy of course wouldn't want to kill a thing of course, she's such a meek girl.' I thought, 'meek!' Bloody hell!

S1: That was a local family said that did they?

S2: What? Geoff?

S1: Who said ...?

S2: Geoff's parents.

S1: Oh Geoff's family. I see. Did they make it up afterwards? Did they?

S2: Yes, more or less.

S1: Yes. That's ...

S2: But his brothers, all his brothers were lovely with him.

S1: Yes.

S2: Especially the one ... he was a major in Burma.

S1: Right.

S2: And then he had to act as... But he had to order some of his men to be killed because the Japanese were coming and they were torturing the ones that were ...

S1: Who were injured.

S2: Yeah. He never got over it.

S1: No.

S2: In fact, all our family think he killed himself because he was in his car and it just went straight into a brick, and he was like this all the time, you know.

S1: God. Wrecked his life.

S2: He used to cry and cry and he was so nice.

S1: And then it ... so whom at ... you built this house did you?

S2: Yes.

S1: Just you and Geoff?

S2: Geoff. Yes.

S1: Right.

S2: Except the chimney; we didn't build the chimney and we didn't do the electricity, but we did everything else.

S1: Oh you built it together, literally.

S2: We couldn't get the bedroom window up because it's a big double one. What the hell are we going to ... We hadn't got any tackle either. So got ... we came in got ... down at Colton Lodge we've got the Encyclopædia Britannicas, and I looked up building to see how.

S1: [Laughs]

S2: Oh don't make me laugh too much!

S1: Sorry.

S2: Looked up in the encyclopaedia how the Egyptians did, and then I think I worked it out from that. Anyway, Geoff and I got a ladder, we put the ladder against the, this part was built, you see, so he put the ladder against that. Geoff got a rope—he was very strong Geoff was—got the rope and he was up, stood on the upstairs part pulling the rope.

S1: Pulling it.

S2: And I walked up the ladder pushing ...

S1: Pushing.

S2: ... the bottom of the window frame.

S1: Like the pyramids! Up the side of the pyramids.

S2: That's right.

S1: Yes.

S2: That's right.

S1: Well, what a good idea!

S2: That's where I got it from.

S1: Yes.

S2: So that's where I got it from. I said Egyptian.

S1: Yeah, you did.

S2: That's right. So then we got it in, and it wouldn't quite fit and I said to Geoff, I was so fed up, 'Oh give it a wham!' And so it became quite a thing.

S1: Was wrong.

S2: But they came to inspect it every week, the building authorities, you know.

S1: Yes.

S2: And quite satisfied.

S1: That's good isn't it? And how long ... when did you finish it? What year was that? Do you remember?

S2: Oh the same year, in '46.

S1: Forty-six.

S2: No, that was when Doreen was born. Fifty. When did my father retire? Excuse me a minute [Laughs] I'm stupid. I just can't quite remember.

So that's when he retired and that's when they came. Yeah.

S1: 1939 to 1960?

S2: Nineteen sixty.

S1: Ah, so that was quite a while after the war wasn't it?

S2: Oh yes.

S1: Yes.

S2: Oh we'd all been forgiven by then.

S1: Right.

S2: And loved.

S1: Yes.

S1: Yes. And so you built ... Had you got any building skills before that? No? Either of you?

S2: No.

S1: No! That was quite an undertaking wasn't it?

S3: Incredible isn't it?

S1: Yes.

S2: It's all wood, of course.

S1: Yes.

S2: Except the chimney.

S1: Yes.

S3: Right.

S1: So did you buy it sort of as a kit, ready done?

S2: That, yes, that's right. Colt it was called.

S1: Yes. The Colt house. How nice!

S2: James, what his name? Nev

S1: Yes. Nev.

S2: Nev James, he's got one as well ...

S1: Yes.

S2: ... hasn't he?

S1: Yes.

S2: Yes, and ...

S1: And Pete Jones ... is that the same?

S2: Pete Jones, that's right yes.

S1: Yes.

S2: Yes.

S1: So was that a popular way of building houses at that time?

S2: No, not really.

S1: Not really. No.

S2: The queen had quite a lot built for her work people on the ...

S1: Right.

S2: On the estates.

S1: What did you ...

S2: Oh, they were such a nice firm.

S1: Yes.

S2: They really were and that's how they came to build their two, you know.

S1: Yes.

S3: Followed your example.

S2: That's right. But they built ... oh no, one isn't a bungalow. No.

S1: So did you have many holidays when you were growing up and in your younger years? Did people ...

S2: Lots.

S1: Lots.

S2: Except for the winter...

S1: Yes.

S2: The war years.

S1: Did you go to the sea or what did ... where did you go?

Colton History Society – All Our Stories.

Peggy Peat

S2: Wales.

S1: Always to Wales. As a child and always growing up?

S2: Yeah, I was three weeks old when I first went to Wales.

S1: And where did you stay?

S2: I opened my eyes and I thought this is where

S1: At three weeks. Yes. You didn't live there though.

S2: No, but we went every three weeks.

S1: Every three weeks! Did you? Where did you stay?

S2: In the ... A farmhouse that we had.

S1: You owned a farm?

S2: It was a farm yeah. A farmer and his wife, yeah.

S1: So did you ... your parents owned that?

S2: No!

S1: No, no. You just stayed with the farmer. They must have been like family then mustn't they?

S2: Yeah.

S1: Yes.

S2: I remember we'd go up in our car—phut, phut, phut—and they'd all come out and the villages ... the friends would all come out to see our ... they hadn't seen a car some of them.

S1: Gosh! No. So did they have a ride?

S2: Oh yes.

S1: Yes.

S3: What sort of car was it?

S2: A Jowett.

S3: A Jowett! Wow!

S2: It had a little dicky in the back where Michael and my brother and I sat. But if you think of driving today with children not strapped in, in the back of a car without anything over. You know.

S1: Yes.

S2: In ...

S1: Though there wasn't the traffic about was there?

S2: No.

S1: And we didn't do the speed really, did we?

S2: But my father was always proud. There was a very steep hill going up North Wales. Sometimes my father, twice my father found a car stuck there, the engine wouldn't go and it was a probably a posher car, and Dad's little Jowett used to go up.

S1: Used to sail up it.

S2: Oh sometimes we had to get out and push.

S21: Push. Oh right.

S3: The Jowett Javelin was it?

S2: Oh no, long before that.

S3: Was it?

S2: Oh, Jowett Javelin? Good gracious.

S2: No, this was a dicky, a little dicky at the back, you know, we sat in it. And as I say there was nothing over our heads or at the sides of us or anything. But we had to get out sometimes and push it up. It was the only one.

S1: Right.

S2: And my brother once fell flat on his face. He was only about five I think. Hurt himself.

S1: Ah. 'Cause he was pushing?

S2: Yeah.

S1: Yes.

S3: Why were you drawn to Wales? Were you ...?

S2: My grandfather was.

S3: Was he Welsh?

S2: No, he was Scottish. Yorkshire. But no he went there as a little boy, on a train of course in those days. And he loved it. And then he always went down and my father went down when he was a little boy.

S1: So do you remember any particular characters around in the village in the past?

S2: Yeah. Can't remember their name. Of course there was Bill Leek.

S1: Bill Leek?

S2: Yeah. Was he quite a character?

S2: Yeah. He lived at the house going down towards ... down what's-a-name Lane.

S1: Bishton Lane.

S2: Bishton Lane. Yes.

S1: At the Lodge?

S2: Yeah.

S1: Yes?

S2: That's right, yeah.

S1: How was he a character?

S2: He could mend cars. He was very clever at mending cars ...

S1: Right.

S1: Was that his job?

S2: Yes.

S1: Did he work in the garage?

S2: Can't remember.

S1: No.

S2: I think he did. But you know in the war years when you couldn't get things done.

S1: Right.

S2: But to go and build.

S1: Yeah.

S2: Do something with it.

S1: Right.

S2: Like John Smith's. You know, John Smith's?

S1: Yeah.

S2: Well I mean John Smith's was much sort of better you know. I mean John Smith's was wonderful at doing cars.

S1: Oh was he?

S2: Yeah.

S1: Yes. What was his ...?

S2: I think he was a great engineer.

S1: Was he? Yes.

S2: Kate Smith's

S1: Yes.

S2: And he was very good too. I suppose he was a character now. That's a long time ago.

Oh you'll have to ask Lil about her name. She used to come ... she was a character. Cut her own finger off with the secateurs.

S1: Who was that? Someone who helped Lil?

S2: She was a friend of Lil's.

S1: A friend.

S2: I can't think of her name. Do ask Lil about her, because she really was a character.

S1: Right. Did she live in Colton?

S2: Yes.

S1: Yes.

S2: Out at the top. Just passed The Dun Cow.

S1: Right.

S2: Well where ...

S1: Where Jack Brown lives now? No?

S2: Yes. That's right. Of course, what do you call that? What's that road called?

S1: Heath Way?

S2: Heath Way! Heath Way, of course, wasn't there then.

S1: No.

S2: And she ... there were a row of cottages.

S1: Right.

S2: Old cottages and Lil lived in one of those.

S1: Lil Curtis lived in one of those?

S2: Lil Curtis.

S1: Oh did she? Yes.

S2: And she was a friend of this—oh I wish I could think of her name! She ... I see her now. She ... when I went, Geoff and I went to Wales, we only went for three days after we were married. She came and milked the cows for me. And she walked down—I can see her now—walking down the middle of the road, of course there were no traffic then.

S1: No.

S2: It was a ... her own. She wouldn't use my milking stool; she wanted her own. So she carried her own, followed by her father, who was smaller than her, carrying the bucket. And I can just see them now, walking down the road. Oh she was a character.

S1: So did you keep the cows after the war as well? Must have done.

S2: For a little a while.

S1: Yes. Because that was '46.

S2: Yeah.

S1: Yes.

S2: Never got over them going.

S1: The cows? Were they ...?

S2: Oh they were gorgeous.

S1: Oh were they?

S2: Snowy and ?

S1: Why did you get rid of them?

S2: Just couldn't go on keeping them; we couldn't afford to go on feeding, you know, buying hay for them and they were getting on.

S1: Right. Just made ... had to make that decision.

S2: Just had to, yeah.

S1: Yes. But you love animals don't you?

S2: Geoff was worried at the time, but, oh, Snowy was gorgeous.

S1: Yes.

S2: I used to ride her.

S1: Did you?

S2: Well, you know Aspley House?

S1: Yes.

S2: Well that's where I used ...

S1: It's behind us.

S2: I used to have the cows on that field because those houses weren't there of course.

S1: No.

S2: And if she was at the top I used to get on her back and hold her horns and she'd run down the hill. There was a Miss Holland, Miss Holland who lived in Aspley [38:59] House.

S1: Right.

S2: And her old mother who was bedridden. I used to go and see the old lady sometimes and Miss Holland saw me riding this cow and she said she nearly had hysterics because she thought I was going off any minute, and she said: 'Do you parents know that you ride a cow?' I said no. 'Does Geoff know you ride the cow?' and I said 'No.' 'Well I'm going to tell him if you don't promise me never to get on that cow again.'

S1: I'm just going to turn it over Peggy.

S2: Oh Lord! I'd forgotten all that rubbish was ...

[Laughter]

S1: Well I don't think this one's been working so it's a good job I've got the other one on isn't it? I just hope it's picking it all up.

S2: Anything else about Colton?

S1: Is there anything else you wanted to tell us really? I think we're almost at the end aren't we? You've been having to talk and talk and talk. Anything else you wanted to tell us then?

S2: Oh, the police came several times, of course, but ...

S1: The police came?

S2: Yeah. Because of me being sending messages and things.

S1: Oh I see yes. When you ... when they thought you were sending messages to the Germans.

S2: Yeah.

S1: Oh dear, that must have been very upsetting.

S2: Can't read my writing.

S1: So has Colton been a nice place to live?

S2: Oh, gorgeous, yeah.

Colton History Society – All Our Stories.

Peggy Peat

S1: Yes.

S2: I wouldn't want to live anywhere else.

S1: No.

S2: The people are so kind, honestly. I just can't get over how kind they have been, honestly.

S1: Yes.

S2: Carol, across the road, I couldn't get to the ... I knew ... I got to the, managed to get to the phone after a time but they kept saying 'how long have you been behind there?'

S1: Not sure. No.

S2: I just said 'Carol' and 'Is Carol there?' And that's about all I could say, so she came—it wasn't Carol it was Mel who... And Carol came straight up and she ... and Mel came with her, and I said 'We've got to ring for an ambulance.' They've rang the ambulance and the ... what do you call it? Medics.

S1: Paramedics.

S2: Thank you. Paramedics came. And they said 'Oh we'll have to send her an ambulance and I've got to go ... get her to hospital.'

S1: Yes.

S2: So they took me into hospital. Ever so nice. And one wants to come back and see the animals.

S1: You've got lots of animals haven't you?

S2: His name was Mike.

S1: Oh right?

S2: Mike and Les.

S1: Yes.

S2: And he's coming back ...

S1: He's going to pop in to see you?

S2: Yeah.

S1: Yes. And the animals, yes.

S2: He said to Carol...

S1: You've been known over all the years as ...

S2: He said to Carol, 'How many animals has she got?' And she ... 'I honestly don't know'.

- S1: No. You've been known in the village for a long time for your love of animals and caring for animals, haven't you Peggy?
- S2: Yes I had some rabbits when I was young and I didn't look after them properly. When they died and I'm sure it was my fault, so I said I've got to make up for it. So it's only a guilty conscience you see, it's nothing...
- S1: Oh, it's a love for the animals though isn't it? Yeah.
- S2: You know the rabbit and the cat? They all sleep together.
- S1: Do they? Where do they sleep? By the fire?
- S2: In the kitchen.
- S1: In the kitchen? Yes.
- S2: The cat washes the rabbit's foot. I mean the rabbit washes the dog's foot.
- S1: Oh right. So they're all friends together. How nice.
- S2: I've got a picture of them but every time you get them when they are just nice, they will move.
- S1: They do, yes. That's right. Anyway, is there anything else that you wanted to tell us do you think Peggy?
- S2: I don't think so.
- S1: Think we're about there aren't we? Thank you ever so much. It's been really, really interesting listening to you.
- S2: You know there's ghost at Colton House?
- S1: A ghost? No. Tell us about it.
- S2: Ghost at Colton Lodge.
- S1: Right.
- S2: I can tell you about the ghost at Colton Lodge because it won't hurt people at Colton Lodge.
- S1: No, no.
- S2: When I was ... my grandmother had a sort of companion friend called Miss Staunton. Miss Staunton always wore grey or navy blue and she had grey hair. Well, Miss Staunton used to come with grandma always. Grandma was downstairs, Miss Staunton ... I went up, had to go upstairs and you know how you sort of glance up if you're going up stairs? I glanced up and I saw Miss Staunton standing at the top of the stairs but then I looked down to see where I was going and when I got to the top of the stairs Miss Staunton was not there. So I just went and got whatever I wanted and went downstairs and said, 'I saw Miss Staunton.' I said, 'Well how did she get down. She hadn't been up at all.
- S1: Right.
- S2: And I know, I know that I saw ...

S1: A person.

S2: I wasn't frightened or anything and I ... anybody can say I imagined it but I know that I saw a grey figure standing there. There's no doubt about it. Of course, we never told the children, the evacuees. But one day, it was the one maid's day off, and she'd gone off, so the house was empty. Mother had gone up to court with my father and done some shopping and left.. mother was worried that she would get back before they came out of school. And she came back and they were in the front garden and Muriel, who was such a character, she was lovely little girl; beautiful blonde hair and blue eyes and pink cheeks. She was gorgeous. And she said, mother said, 'Oh I'm so sorry. Have we kept you waiting long?' She said, 'No. But that horrible Miss Staunton,' she said, 'She stood in ... ' —there was a vestibule there not a front door, it was glass. She said 'That horrible Miss Staunton was standing there looking at us all the time. And she never let us in. She wouldn't let us in.'

S1: How strange!

S2: It was strange.

S1: Yes.

S2: But there was one at Colton House, as well.

S1: Right.

S2: And when the soldiers were digging, I don't know what they were digging for, they found there was a priest hole there.

S1: Oh right?

S2: And apparently they think, I don't know whether they thought it went, was a priest, a tunnel there, sorry, not a priest hole.

S1: Right.

S2: There's a priest hole at Bellamore Farm.

S1: Right?

S2: But there is one there. Whether they've pulled it down now I don't know.

S1: No.

S2: But they shouldn't have done because it was definitely was a priest hole there.

S1: Right. And the tunnel went right from Colton House?

S2: And they were digging one day and they were all frightened and they came up and they wouldn't go on digging it apparently.

S1: Oh right.

S2: But I don't know anything personally about that.

S1: No.

S2: But I do know personally about ...

S1: Yes.

S2: ... this one. I'm not saying that the people are dead. I don't know. I don't know anything about it.

S1: No.

S2: But I do sometimes wonder if things are left rather like a camera, you know what I mean? You know, we don't know what 'time' is do we really? We don't know what 'space' is really. Don't know whether it's some sort of imprint that's left on them. I don't know.

S1: There's a lot we don't understand.

S2: Lot we don't know but I honestly did see a woman standing at the top of the stairs.

S3: Do you know who the people who were living in Colton Hall? Who would have been living there then?

S2: You mean Colton House?

S3: Bellamore, right.

S2: Oh, Bellamour Lodge?

S3: Yeah.

S2: Yes. Rileys, yes.

S3: Rileys?

S2: Rileys, yes.

S1: Do you go down there sometimes?

S2: Yes. Sometimes yes. Of course they had set up a petition in the village to have us ... to ask us to leave.

S1: Oh did they?

S2: And they went round with people to sign it. They went to Bellamour Lodge and Mr Riley, who didn't agree, said 'I don't agree with them,' he said, but everybody's got a right to their own opinion but he wouldn't sign it.

S1: Wouldn't sign it. No.

S3: What was he ... what sort of job did he do?

S2: Something in Stafford. I think it was.. I honestly don't know.

S3: Was that ... were they there before Mr Price came?

S2: Oh yes.

S1: Anyway. I'm going to thank you. You're going to get tired now. Thank you very much indeed.

S2: I'm sure I could think of some much more important things.

S1: We can always come again if you ... Thank you very much.

S3: Not at all. It's been fabulous.

S2: Would you like a cup of tea?

S1: I'm fine thank you Peggy.

Colton History Society

All Our Stories



Peggy Bannister's story

Peggy Banister

S1: Marion Vernon
S2: Peggy Banister
S3: George Vernon

S1: This recording is being made for Colton History Society. George and Marian Vernon are interviewing Peggy Banister on Monday, March 9 2009.

Well Peggy, can you tell us a little bit about your family and where you were born—because you weren't born in Colton, were you?

S2: No. I was born in the Bower Lane, Etchinghill and my father was a miner but he kept a little farm. He'd got pigs and a cow and chickens ... and me mum loved turkeys!

S1: Yeah. Did she look after those or did your dad look after them?

S2: My mother looked after the turkeys, yes. And then we moved from there to Penkridge Bank, and I can remember that better than anything because I was only tiny when I went up. I must have been about two.

S1: Oh right.

S2: And I'd got a brother. My oldest brother was working when we went up there. Jack must have been just born, because he's ... he was two years younger than me. And those are the days that I remember when, you know, things we had to do.

S1: Yeah.

S2: My dad did the gardening and mum did the housework and the washing, but Jack and I always had to do something when we got home at night. Now Jack would get the sticks and coal in one week and I would fasten the fowl (the chicken) 'cause we'd got a big orchard and quite a few chicken pens. And we did it alternately.

S1: Right.

S2: And I hated that. Because Jack used to torment me. He used to stand in a barn and say, 'Hurry up, he's coming. Hurry up.' He used to say to me. But those were the days, they were lovely days because we used to out of the house with a little bit of salt on our hand and in the garden, in the yard was a big boiler and that was the pig swill, that it was called then. Well it was all little teeny potatoes because when me dad did the garden and we had a lot of potatoes and all the little ones were in this boiler.

S1: Yeah.

S2: So we used to take one out and peel it and dip it in the salt and eat it. As if we'd never had anything to eat!

S1: So did you dad grow lots of vegetables and things like that for you?

S2: Yes. I think everything we really needed, 'cause we had quite a big garden.

S1: Yes. Yeah.

S2: Great big yard it was. Because we had two horses and pigs, and cow if not two—we'd always got milk, always got ...

S1: Oh you had your own milk?

S2: Always got a milk pudding in the oven, always.

S3: Yeah.

S2: I think every day.

S1: Yeah. And how did your mum cook? What did she cook on?

S2: It was an old-fashioned black grate, yes.

S1: So, did you have electricity?

S2: No, I don't think so.

S1: No gas or anything?

S2: No, I think at night we had an oil lamp on the table.

S3: Did you ride the horse?

S2: No, we didn't ride them. We had one each. Jack and I had one each but they were ... they were young ones, you know, and they really wanted training. And me dad ... I think me dad thought he was going to train them, but we used to walk them round the orchard.

S1: And did you have running water at the house? Did you have a tap or did you have a...?

S2: I think we must have because just outside the back door was a shed...I presumed it was a tin shed, it was like the washhouse, we called it.

S1: Yeah.

S2: And that was where we had our baths. Because we had a long ... one of those long tin baths and because me dad worked at the pit, he worked nights, and when he came home every morning my mother would light the boiler so that he can his bath as soon as he came home. Because he took all his dirty clothes off out there and had a bath before he came in. And that was where we had our baths as well, Jack and I.

S1: Right. So she heated the water with the fire, with a boiler?

S2: A boiler in there, yeah.

S1: Right.

S2: That's where she did her washing as well. I can see her putting the whites into the boiler.

[Laughter]

S1: My mum used to always put a blue in with the whites.

S2: Yes, that's right. Yes.

S1: Did you have a special day for washday? Do you remember ...?

S2: I think Monday was washday. Yes, I think they used to be almost a day for everything. Monday washday, and Tuesday she probably did the bedrooms or something like that. I don't, you know, I don't really remember what she did, but I know the little chores Jack and I, you know, used to have to do.

S1: Yes.

S2: We used to have to lay the table and things like that, and be quiet because your dad's in bed.

S1: So where did you go to school in those days?

S2: Slitting Mill.

S1: Yes.

S2: From Penkridge Bank we went to Slitting Mill School. I went until I was fourteen but Jack left I should think must have been about eleven and they went to Rugeley. The boys. The boys went to Rugeley school but not the girls.

S1: What do you remember of your school days particularly? Were they happy days?

S2: Oh yes. I think so, yes. One day we walked down into town, cookery, to take cookery in the town—I can't remember who took us but I enjoyed that. I like cooking and I liked sewing, very fond of sewing.

S1: So you learned lots of different skills?

S2: Yes, that's right. Yes.

S1: And did the boys, went into Rugeley, where would they go to? The school where Fair Oak is now would it be ...?

S2: No, no. It was in the town. It was in ...

S1: Right near to Pendlebury's I bet, was it?

S2: No, no, no. It was the other end of the town. Just off Horsefair, where that pub is; as you go down Horsefair there's a pub on the left, isn't there...

S1: Yeah.

S2: That's the school there.

S1: Oh, I know. Talbot Street is it called?

S2: Talbot Street School, that's right. Yes, that's where they went.

S1: Ahh. They went there. Well that's interesting.

So what do you remember about Christmas when you were little?

S2: Not a lot really. I know we used to hang our stocking up and have an orange and an apple and some nuts in it ... a sixpence if we were lucky.

S1: Oh right. And a toy perhaps? One or two little toys ?

S2: Not a lot of toys. I mean a lot of the toys I think of ... me dad would make things for us. He used to make lots of things, he did.

S1: What do you remember him making for you? Anything in particular?

S2: I don't really remember. I do remember him making something and Jack going into the shed and saying, 'What are you doing, Dad?' And he said, 'I'm making a tray for Sis because when she gets married a tray will be useful.' Well Sis was thirteen years older than me. So he looks at Sis and he says, 'Me dad's making a tray,' and she says, 'Yes.' He says, 'Well is your dad my dad?' Because there was such a lot between us he suddenly thought, um is your dad my dad?

S1: Yes, suddenly realised, yes.

S2: She's laughed about that many a time.

S1: What games do you remember playing as a child, at school and at home?

S2: I remember skipping and hopscotch, and Jack and I used to play a lot of hide things: hide and seek or hiding things. Hide a ball or hide something. And there was such a lot of place where we lived that you can hide ... it would take you hours. And he'd say, 'Have you found it yet?', I'd say no, and you keep on looking.

S1: So you two were ... did you have friends round very much or did you just play together mostly?

S2: We played together, I think, mostly, yes. I used to go to Etchinghill sometimes because my school friend was Frieda and we were friends right up till we were married and then she died having her first baby. So, yes, it was very sad that was, very sad.

S1: Did many people die in childbirth in those days?

S2: Yes. They did.

S1: Did they?

S2: Yes. Well it was either the baby or the mother, see, and they didn't give her a choice. The baby lived. The baby went to its grandmother's.

S1: And were babies born mainly at home in those days? Were they home births or in hospital?

S2: Yes, oh yes, I think they were.

S1: At home.

S2: Yes, because when I was born it was January the 20th and my dad said ...

S1: And what year was that?

S2: '21. And my dad said it was a lovely sunny day, he said and after dinner he said I had to put the pony and the trap ready, he says, to go down into town from our lane to fetch the nurse. That was in the afternoon, and he said I was born at ten past six.

S1: Right. Yeah. He had to go fetch her in the pony and trap. So do you have any memories of the war years?

S2: Quite a few.

S1: Were you here in Colton by then?

S2: No. At the end of it I was because I worked at Stockwell Heath—I was in the Land Army.

S1: Were you?

S2: Yes, and I went to Stockwell Heath to milk a cow for a feller, where Jimmy Toy used to live, by the pool. That big house nearby the pool, that was where I went. But before that I worked for—before I was married—Tom Wheatman. You know the Wheatmans? Well Ed's dad that was, Tom Wheatman. And I was thrashing. We went thrashing a lot.

S1: Did you?

S2: And I worked with a feller that after he took on his own. He did his own thrashing, he and his sons.

S3: How did they do the thrashing then? Was it with steam?

S2: No.

S3: No.

S2: No, I don't ... well, what would it be? Because, you know, the thing used to go round ...

S3: I remember.

S2: ... and round.

S1: Yes, like that.

S2: I don't know. I can't remember.

S1: And what did you do, feed it in?

S2: No, I was getting it out at the back.

S1: Getting it out.

S2: From the back, yes.

S1: And did you start that when you were how old, fourteen?

S2: No, no. That was when I was in the Land Army.

S1: Oh when you were in the Land Army. How old were you when you went into the Land Army?

S2: About nineteen.

S1: Oh right. So what did you do before ... after you left school, before you ...

S2: After I left school? Well I went away for a month to a friend's, Penkridge. And my dad came one Sunday and he says, 'Come on lady I've got a job for you. And it was housework. It was service.

S1: In service.

S2: It was at the bank in Rugeley. The bank that's in the square now. I went there. And after that I went up to Etchinghill to Whitworths. Do you remember Whitworths? They used to have a shop in the ... George Mason's been on to them actually.

S1: Oh yes.

S2: And I was there for five years. I was there till I went in the Land Army.

S1: So did you live in when you were in service?

S2: Yes, I lived in. Yes.

S1: And what did you have to do in service?

S2: I had all the housework to do but not the cooking. Mrs Whitworth used to do the cooking.

S1: Right.

S2: But I had 1.50 a month and Mrs Whitworth said, 'Would you like to wash Mr Whitworth's socks?' I don't know if it was everyday or how often I had to ... 'and I'll give you another shilling.' So I had another shilling. So I had one pound sixty, what would it be then? £1.50, £1.60, I don't know what it was then but anyway ...

S1: I suppose about 11 shillings. One pound and 11 shillings was it?

S2: That's right. That's right, yes. That's what I had then for quite a long time.

S1: Yes, yes. But I suppose you had ...

S2: But I liked it.

S1: ... all your food provided and so on.

S2: Oh yes, that's right, yes. And they were like, more like a mother and dad.

S1: Were they?

S2: Yes, to me.

S1: And did you manage to see your own family quite often as well?

S2: Well, I lived ... we lived at Etchinghill so I used to go round every night when I'd finished, you know, and then go back in and just make them a drink and make myself a drink before we went to bed.

- S1: So you saw them every day.
- S2: And Reg used to come up. Because I met Reg when I was sixteen.
- S1: Oh did you! How did you meet him?
- S2: Well I knew him from ... oh I met in the town. Oh I'll tell you how I met him. I was going out with a boy, the only boy that I'd had apart from Reg, was a feller from Brereton. And he didn't go out very often because they did a lot of this work on the black market, you know. They were farmers, and they did a lot of killing of beasts, you know, and selling it, and he had to go out at night and sell it. So I didn't see much of him. And I think I must have been going out with him about eight months and then Reg came and met me down the town one day and he says, 'Stuart can't come out, he's busy,' you know, he can't come out, 'but I'll take you home.' Now Stuart's told me since that he never intended him to run me off. He said I'd thought got something going there. But anyway, I went with Reg and for six years, we were engaged when I was 21.
- S1: Right. And married when you were?
- S2: Twenty-two.
- S1: Right.
- S2: Well, I don't know if I was twenty-two because I put in for the house in Colton. They were being built, the ones down there.
- S1: Number 9.
- S2: Yes. He put in for it and they wrote and told him he couldn't have one because he wasn't married. So we got married. And we got married in the October, the same year as I'd been engaged instead of the next year. 'Cause we were going to get married the next year, on my birthday in January.
- S3: What year was that then?
- S2: How old are you?
- S4: Forty-five.
- S2: Not forty-five. You were born in '45.
- S5: I was born in '45!
- S2: '43.
- S3: Ah right. end of the war. Right.
- S1: So that was during the war. Just before the end of the war.
- S2: Yes.
- S1: And was Reg in the war then?
- S2: Reg didn't go. No. No. Because he was on the farm, worked for his dad.

S1: You didn't have to go if they ... I knew he was a farmer that's why I was going to check.

S2: The family, you know, lived in Hamley across here. Across here now.

S1: Yes. That's right, yeah. So you're related ... he's related to the Banisters who still farm.

S2: No. No relation at all, no. I don't really know where Charlie and George came from, but Reg came from Solihull, from Birmingham way to Slitting Mill. They had the farm in Slitting Mill.

S1: What was it called?

S5: Sheep wash.

S2: Then they left and came to Hamley.

S1: Yes.

S?: And they retired from there, didn't they.

S2: And retired from there, yes. Left Reg high and dry.

S1: So what was Colton like when you moved in?

S2: Oh, I enjoyed it. I liked Colton when I came. I loved walking down the village, you know. Because I was on my own, you know, and I used to have a walk down the village. And I think about the first person I met was Mrs Challenor.

S2: And she was leaning on the gateposts, you know. She was still there when I came back up again and I didn't know what was going on but she said, 'I'm watching this house down here,' she said, because the feller there was very ill and she was waiting to see how he went on, you know. And he died. And it was Watty Norman's brother.

S1: Right.

S2: I forgot his name. Bob, Bob Norman. Yes. And she was about the first person that I spoke to. Yes.

S1: Did she live along here then?

S2: No, she lived ...

S5: No, she lived on...

S2: You know where, you know where ...

S5: not Charles's now.

S2: Charles's bungalow, Mrs ...

S1: Mrs Nixon's.

S2: Yes, Mrs Nixon. There was a row of houses there and next door to there was this big house which was Mrs Challenor.

S1: Right. Yeah.

S2: Yes, I enjoyed that. And I also enjoyed the rallies, because I used to do a lot for the ...

S1: The steam rallies.

S2: Yes.

S1: Tell me about the steam rallies.

S5: Went down round Colton.

S2: Well Rose and I used to always do the tombola, so we were always after stuff, you know, for the tombola stall, and I used to make teddies—I used to love making teddies—and used to make quite a lot for the stall because it was two days; it's a long time, two whole days.

S1: Was it Saturday and Sunday?

S2: Yes.

S1: A weekend.

S2: Yes. And I used to thoroughly enjoy doing that.

S1: Right. So it was a very big event, was it?

S2: Well when it was down Colton really it was massive because people came to see the hall. Well there was no hall there. It was at Bellamour Hall, you see. Well there was only a bit of brick and stone left. I don't think there was much.

But when it went to Stafford ...

S5: It got too big didn't it?

S2: ... yes, it got too big for down here. So then we went to Stafford.

S1: But it was nice having it in the village, I bet, wasn't it?

S2: Oh yes.

S1: Did they have many steam engines come?

S2: Oh yes, quite a few. There was a quite a lot going on.

S1: And all the village people helped, did they?

S2: Yes. Yes, we had a tug-o-war.

S5: Oh yeah.

S2: Mr Price organised this tug-o-war. Anybody to come and take on the ladies, and nobody came.

S?: We all had a lovely big vase each. You've still got it haven't you. This big vase. We all won one of these big vases.

S1: Nobody came.

S2: Nobody came, no. There we were waiting.

S2: Mrs Wright from here, and there was Vera Collins, Vera. There was a woman from up the lane by the school, I can't remember her name. There was quite a lot, you know, in this tug-o-war; about ten of us I should think.

S1: Put out the challenge and you got no takers!

S2: So we used to practice. We used to go down and practice; all that practice for nothing.

S5: Well we used to have May Pole dancing as well at church, didn't we. And the garden fetes.

S2: Oh, the garden parties were nice. Reg used to play the violin.

S1: Did he?

S2: Ben Jackson on the drums and Tommy Doe. They were nice days, lovely days they were. Yes, down at the church.

S1: So that was organised by the church?

S2: Yes, it was a church garden party.

S1: What do you remember of that? Did the children used to go and dance?

S2: Yes. And they had a decorated pram. And she'd got a little tiny one; it was no bigger than that. A little tiny pram, and we let Paul in it. And there he went round with this little pram. I've got some picture somewhere, but of course I didn't know you was coming else I could have found them out.

S1: So were there a lot of religious services and festivals that were part of village life?

S?: Well, there was Easter ...

S2: I think in those days you was part of everything. I mean, I went to the Women's Institute. I was in that. I was in the Mother's Union, and we did plays in the village hall.

S1: Did you?

S2: Yes.

S1: Who put those on?

S2: Mrs Preston

S1: Right.

S2: Yes, Ivy.

S1: And lots of people came to watch?

S2: Ooh, yes. Yes, quite a lot. They came to watch me try to light a cigarette ...

- S5: Cigarette but she didn't smoke. Her one and only cigarette.
- S2: It was called 'From 5:00 to 5:30' and it was an afternoon tea. And I come bouncing in in shorts and a tennis racket, you know, and I put my cigarettes down on the table and me matches or lighter, I can't remember which I had, and then I get my cigarette out, and do you know I could not light this cigarette! And I'd had quite a lot of practice but of course with not smoking I didn't know how to light it. Rose Deval used to say, 'She won't light it, she'll never light it' and I didn't.
- S1: And was the reading room used a lot in those days?
- S2: Ooh, quite a lot. Yes.
- S1: And the old reading room of course.
- S2: Yes, the old reading room.
- S1: What sort of things did they used to have on in there?
- S2: Well we tried to put something on every month because Rose and I used to do either a whist drive or a ...
- S5: Jumble sales.
- S2: Yes, a jumble sale or a ... what's that other game? Beetle drive or something like that. We used to try to do something once a month and that was to help the traction engine.
- S1: To raise the money?
- S2: anything we wanted, yes. Yes we did quite a lot for the village hall. But that was all there was to go to in those days.
- S1: That's right.
- S2: Because I used to walk to town with June in the pram when she was little and back again and think nothing of it. Into Rugeley. I used to walk down there.
- S3: To do your shopping?
- S2: To be weighed. And she'd put on an ounce. Some days two ounces.
- S1: Where did you go to in Rugeley for that?
- S2: The church round, I think—I don't know if it's still a church. The new church St Pauls moved from further down, just across from the Catholic church. There's a hall there, isn't there.
- S1: Yes, yes.
- S2: And that was a church then. Reg used to play the violin there on the Sunday. Peasant Sunday Afternoon it was called.
- S1: Right. Yes.
- S2: And he used to play down there.

S1: Yeah, it's still a church or it's still got a church building there. They have a snooker club in there and things, I think now.

S2: Are there. I don't really know what ...

S1: We used to go and do our hockey club refreshments in there at one time.

S2: Oh yes.

S1: So that was a good walk,

S3: He used to live in Jack's cottage?

S2: Yes, it was thatched, thatching it was.
but you'd got most food here available in Colton, had you? For most things, you could buy in Colton in those days.

S2: Nothing. Nothing.

S1: No?

S?: Nothing much, was there?

S5: There was Miss Williscroft

S2: Yes.

S5: Miss Williscroft and Mrs Upton's but they were mainly dry stuff won't it, it wasn't, you didn't get so much fruit and veg and stuff like that.

S2: I used to have to buy from there because otherwise you'd got to walk to Rugeley or go on a bike.

S3: When did Mr Brown's shop open?

S2: Does it tell you on that? I think it's ...

S5: I can't remember what date.

S2: I have no idea when it opened and I remember him coming because when he first came and he started doing these dances, he used to live with Rose. He used to stay there, you know, for the weekend.

S1: Right.

S2: Very pleasant. He always has been, hasn't he, very pleasant.

S1: So he used to come to do dancing before he came to live here.

S2: Oh yes, before he came to live here. I'm not sure that it was before he was married but he used to talk about Irene.

S1: And then they ...

S2: I remember Mr... I can't think of his name, the old man that lived there before. He used to walk up here lighting his pipe like this every morning and walk up to see Mrs Upton.

S1: And which was Mrs Upton? Still in the same house.

S2: In the same house, yes. There's just Mr Upton there now.

S1: Yes.

Do you think the winters seemed harder in your childhood. I'm going back a bit now. Do you think the winters seemed a lot harder when you were growing up or do you think ... did you keep nice and warm in your houses?

S2: Yes we seemed to. There was no heating, no. Yes, we seemed to. They didn't seem to bother me but I don't mind the cold. You see, you I like the cold, I don't mind at all. And we always went to school in the snow. I mean it didn't bother, it didn't stop us going to school. And it was quite a walk from Slitting Mill ... from Penkridge Bank into Slitting Mill.

S1: Yes. And how was the school heated? Did they have a...

S2: That was ... oh it was a big, oh a huge stove it was. It came out to about here. A huge stove. And that heated the whole school.

S5: Just that?

S2: Just that. And when we got there—Jack and I used to get there early on a Monday morning—and the woman that did it was my aunt, a Mrs Rudman, and she used to be just stoking it up. But it hadn't been lit early enough. It really should have been lit the night before and ...

S1: And kept in.

S2: Kept in all night, yes. You see when I worked at the school, I worked at the school for twenty years.

S1: At Colton school?

S2: Yes. And it was a boiler house outside.

S1: Oh was it.

S2: And that heated radiators. But oh it was horrible to do.

S1: Was it, yes.

S2: I didn't have asthma till I retired. But I think it was that.

S1: Fumes.

S2: Fumes, yes.

S1: And the dust and so on.

S1: Did you have many holidays?

S2: No, didn't have many holidays. No I hear people talking about holidays they had when they were little, but we didn't have any.

S1: No.

S2: No.

S1: I suppose having the animals it would much harder wouldn't it?

S2: Yes it would. Yes.

S1: Did you have any day trips out or anything like that?

S2: I don't remember any, no.

S1: So when did you first see the sea?

S2: When I was grown up I should imagine.

[Laughter]

I remember it all but I remember taking Roger to Rhyll, oh and he thoroughly enjoyed it. And he was only about six or seven, and he thoroughly enjoyed it.

S1: What did you do for your honeymoon? Well, you know, you got married.

S2: Yes, you'll never believe it. We biked to Worcester. My mother came from Worcester but it was Pershore, outside Worcester, that was where we went to. And my cousins, my mother's sister's girls kept the post office. My mother's sister was still there when we went. I don't remember seeing her husband there but I think she was still there. And the two girls, one girl was married but she went to help the other one that lived there run the post office.

S1: Right. So did you stay with them?

S2: Yes, we stayed there for a week. Yes. Only a country place it was. It wasn't a big place, no.

S1: And did you go out on your bikes a lot?

S2: Yes. We had a tandem.

S1: Oh did you.

S2: Yes, we went out on the tandem. Yes. We used to go to Trentham. We went to Trentham on the tandem. We had a photograph taken on the wall, by the fountain at Trentham. Somebody said let me take one of you, you know. So we were both on it. Because normally we just took a photograph of one another.

S1: Yes. Happy days.

S2: Yes. Oh, they were. Yes.

S1: So did you ever get on the train from Trent Valley or anything? Did you ever go out for days or ...?

S2: No, I don't remember even going on the train. No.

S3: Did they have a good bus service in the village?

S2: Here? There wasn't anything was there? We had bikes. See, we all had bikes. June and John and Roger.

S5: There was a bus when ... sort of when we were coming up towards teenagers because we used to go down on it, didn't we, on a Saturday?

S2: Yes.

S5: We'd go to the pictures and come back at nine o'clock. Go to Florries for our fish and chips. Miss the bus home and go to the cop shop to have a lift home.

S1: Is that what they used to do? They used to bring you back?

S5: Think nothing of it. 'Go on, get in.'

S1: How old would you have been then?

S5: Oh God, about ten, eleven, sommat like that. I would be very old.

[Laughter]

S1: Didn't you know? You thought they'd come on the bus?

S5: Yeah, I know. But he used to drop us off at the bottom of the road.

S2: Oh yes, there's a lot of things I didn't know.

S1: Do you have any memories of like local characters from when you moved in or early days in Colton. Do you remember any real characters around or ... or not really?

S2: No, not really, I don't think. At home we only had one next door neighbour. There were two houses going up Penkridge Bank, you know, as you go up the hill.

S1: I really mean here in Colton.

S2: Oh in Colton. No, I don't think so, no.

S5: No, 'cause you ... Dolman's moved in next door to you, didn't they, at number nine.

S2: At number nine, yeah.

S1: What number did you live at?

S5: Nine.

S1: You lived at number nine. And Dolman's lived next door?

S2: Seven, yeah.

S5: Now Peaks was number five.

S2: Who?

S5: Peaks.

S2: Oh yes, Peaks.

S5: And then they moved, didn't they, to number eleven.

S2: Yes, Sam Peak.

S5: Sam Peak, yeah.

S1: Did you do a lot of neighbouring together? Did they all help each other out? Was it a really friendly community?

S2: Oh yes. We were all friendly, oh yes.

S1: It still feels like that now, doesn't it? Really friendly sort of place to live, isn't it.

S2: Yes, it is. Yes.

S1: Is there anything else you'd like to tell us about Peggy?

S2: I can't think of anything.

S1: Not really.

S5: I was going to say, 'cause when I was little, I mean, we used to have snowdrifts out here. We got up one morning and couldn't find the car!

S1: Really?

S2: Yes.

S5: We had to dig it out, didn't we?

S2: Yes.

S5: And then once, because Annie Leek used to live next door ...

S2: That's right, yes.

S5: ... and we did a tunnel from the gate all the way round to Annie's. And when me dad come home from work we thought he was miserable because he broke it all in so that it wouldn't come down on us. Yeah, we used to tunnel through. It used to drift here. You couldn't go down the lane or anything.

S1: So do you think that the winters were a lot harder then?

S5: Ooh, yeah. A lot harder than they are now.

S2: Yeah.

S1: Did you used to go sledging?

S5: Oh yeah. Up the Martlin. Yeah, we used to have a sledge, didn't we. Dad made us a sledge and ... yeah. We used to go up the Martlin a lot, yeah.

S1: Did you go sledging?

S2: No. I don't remember going.

S5: 'Cause, I mean, then, I mean the snow used to be around for weeks, not just a few days, you know. It was weeks and weeks.

S2: Yes.

S5: You know, we used to go down every day. Up at the crack of dawn and down sledging.

S3: How did your husband get to work? Did he bike to work?

S2: He worked at home.

S3: Oh did he?

S2: He could just walk down the back field, see.

S5: Well when we lived at number nine there's a road ...

S2: Footpath.

S5: They used to go along the public footpath and you'd come out at the farm.

S2: Comes out right by the farm.

S1: Straight across the Hamley.

S2: Yes. He came home at twelve o'clock for his dinner and he came in again at six o'clock when he'd finished.

S1: Right. Did he like working on the land.

S2: Yes, that's all he'd done. They took him away from the grammar school to do that.

S1: Did they?

S2: Umm. And he'd have made a good teacher. He was ... he was very good.

S5: Brainy.

S2: Yeah, very good at arithmetic. I didn't need a calculator when I've got Reg.

S1: And how long did he ... did he learn to play the violin when he was very little or did he learn ...?

S2: No, it was when he was at home. I remember him ... he used to go down on his bike to Miss somebody, I forget her name now, in Talbot Street. I should think he'd be just in his twenties, I should imagine, yes. Because he was twenty-seven when we got married.

S5: 'Cause he used to play the accordion and the ...

S2: He'd got the piano accordion.

S5: I've still got that.

S2: Roger's got the violin. He learned himself to play the piano accordion and the piano.

S1: So he was very musical.

S2: Yes, oh yes, he liked music.

S1: Did he sing as well?

S2: No.

S5: Well when you used to go on trips and that from the village—we used to go on trips, didn't we? When us kids were little. And he used to take his accordion with him, didn't he, and play it on the bus.

S2: I can't remember.

S1: Oh, you used to have bus trips out?

S2: Bus trips, yes.

S1: Who would organise those?

S2: I don't know who used to organise them.

S1: Just a village trip out?

S5: Yeah, you don't think of that when you're little, do you. We're going to Drayton Manor or somewhere like that, you know. Yeah.

S1: How often did you used to go, quite often?

S5: Well, it seemed quite often. I don't know how often it was really.

S1: And your dad used to play the music ...

S5: Yeah, the accordion.

S1: And did you sing along?

S5: Ooh yeah. That was the whole intentions of it, you know. Have a singsong on the way back. A packet crisps and an apple.

S5: They used to give us, all the kids a packet of crisps and an apple.

S1: How nice. So it was really for the children?

S5: Children, yeah. Yeah.

S1: Oh lovely. Happy days.

S5: Yeah.

S1: Right, well. Thanks ever so much. You know, it's lovely to chat about the old times. We're building up a lovely picture. It's really, really nice. So thanks ever so much for that.

All Our Stories

With acknowledgements and thanks to all of those who
shared their memories with us

Barbara Kendrick

Lynn Collins

Colin Norman

Maureen Dix

David Bradbury

Nev & Alma James

Dorothy Bradbury

Nona Goring

Gwen Johnson

Olive & Frank Ballard

Harry Bull

Peggy Banister

Jack & Irene Brown

Peggy Peat

Keith & Hilda Williscroft

Ruth Williams

Laura Hodgkiss

Sam & Pete Jones

Les Kendrick

Sheila Bergin

Lilian Redmond

Stella & Malc Williscroft

Thanks also to the project team
for all of their hard work & efforts in producing

All Our Stories

Bev Croft

Marion Vernon

Bill Brown

Maureen Dix

Gill Sykes

Nona Goring

John Garstone

Philip Charles

Liz Craddock

Shirley Carter





Colton History Society: All Our Stories: April 2014