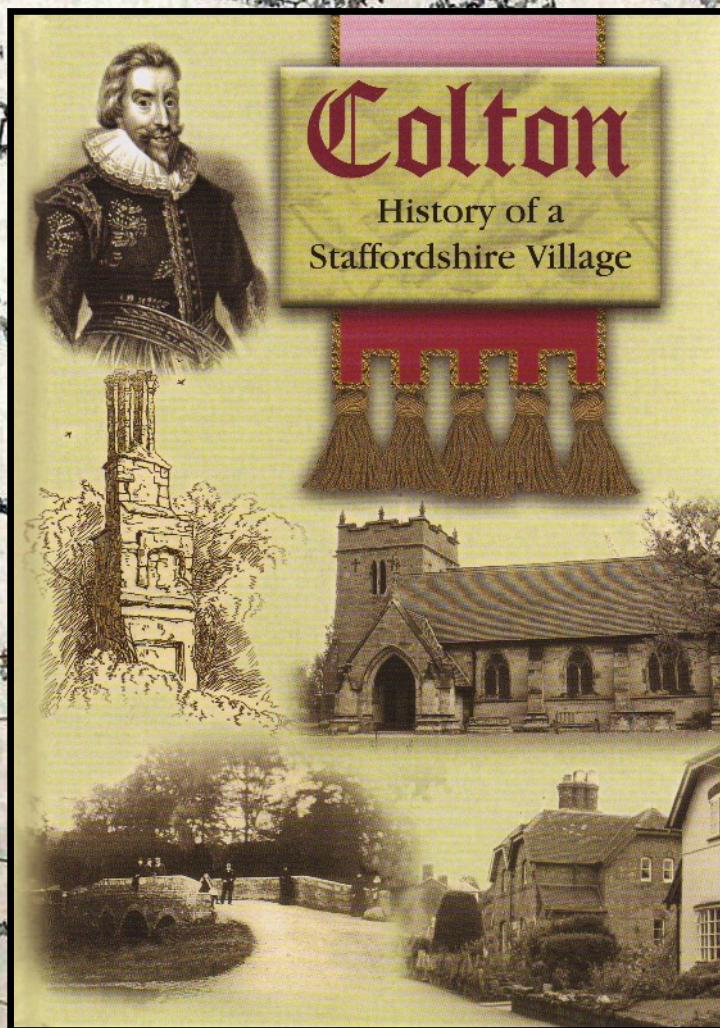


All Our Stories

Volume V

Sheila Bergin. Nona Goring. Maureen Dix. Dorothy Bradbury.



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Colton History Society

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Blue Bag to whiten washing



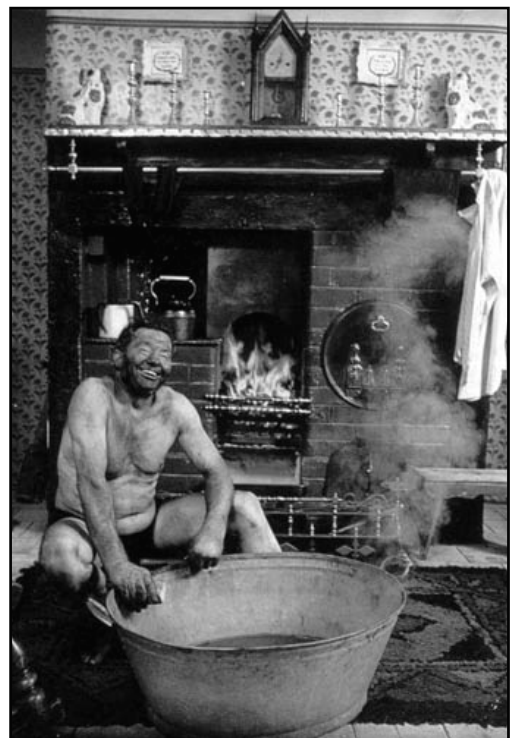
War time Gas Mask



Comptometer
(adding Machine)



Coal Miner



Coal Miner having a bath in
the zinc bath tub in the kitchen



School dentist



Milk being delivered
sold in jugs from the churn

Colton History Society

All Our Stories



Sheila Bergin's story

Sheila Bergin.

S1: Maureen Dix
S2: Sheila Bergin
S3: Nona Goring

S1: This recording is being made for Colton History Society. Maureen Dixon, Nona Goring are interviewing Sheila Bergin on Tuesday the 12th of March 2013.

Good morning Sheila

S2: Good morning.

S1: Can you tell us about your family and where and when you were born, etcetera?

S2: Yes. Well, my dad's name was Tom Preston; he was born in 1913 and his family lived in Colton, I would say from the early to mid-1800s. Dad and his parents and brothers and sisters lived at The Forge and I think initially they actually rented it and then eventually bought it.

Dad left school at 13 and he worked at the manor. He'd always been interested in farming and I think the whole family was really. And while he was working there he gradually built up his own stock around The Forge. I think he converted the out buildings and he built pens and various things, and as far as I can make out he also rented land behind The Forge, which I suppose really is more or less where the village hall is now. So he built up stock, etcetera, and eventually became independent. He gave up working at the manor and met my mum and they were married and my brother was born, Trevor. My eldest brother was born in Colton and then my parents moved to a smallholding out at Holly Bank, which is between Armitage and Rugeley, and that's where I was born. But while they were there, they actually applied and were very successful in getting one of the smallholding on Blythbury Road, which had been made out of old wood farm and it created eight starter farms for young farmers.

And so in January 1938 they moved there. I was just a few weeks old I think. And Dad actually stayed there with Mum until he retired in 1984 and we finished up with five children. Another three were born at the holding and then Dad retired and Mum retired to High Street in Colton in, well, in 1984.

S1: Right. What do you remember about your neighbours?

S2: Well, I suppose they weren't, in the conventional sense, neighbours but they were ... there was a wonderful cooperation between the farmers because, obviously, they were all starting out together and trying to build up the equipment and stock, etcetera. And so they helped one another in many, many ways. There was quite an interaction between them all: haymaking and harvest times they always worked in collaboration. They shared all the implements and the tools and they were always there for one another. If a cow was having trouble calving then they only had to shout 'Help!' and one of the neighbours came to help them. But I think also the farmers' wives had a wonderful, close-knit group as well and they were there for one another and gave lots of help and advice and, in a way, they all became honorary aunts and uncles to us kids. Yes.

S1: Can you remember the day that the smallholdings were built?

S2: Well, I think they were ready by January 1938 and the date on the front of ours said 1938, but how long they were in preparation I don't know.

- S1: Thank you. Did you think the winters were harder in your childhood and what did you wear?
- S2: Well, in my memory, there seemed to be more snow than in recent times although, looking out of the window ... [Laughs]. We've just had a hard winter really, in many ways, haven't we?
- I don't remember too much about what we wore but I think the first thing that springs to mind is the liberty bodice. And the knee-length socks which had a fold-over and we always had garters to hold them up. We had hand-knitted gloves and scarves and girls had the bonnets and I think the boys had the balaclava-type things didn't they? But one thing I do remember is that the boys didn't seem to wear long trousers in those days did they. To me it's amazing nowadays. Yes.
- S1: Yes, they got to a certain age and then they would wear long trousers.
- S2: Yes. And I think that certain age was ...
- S1: 14.
- S2: Yes, it had to be, yes, I would say.
- S3: Yeah, I remember that.
- S1: What did you do for baths and general hygiene?
- S2: Well, the irony was that in actual fact because the houses were newly built they were actually built with bathrooms, with a bath, but only a cold water tap to it so we children weren't bathed in the bath until quite a lot later when we actually had a Rayburn stove installed in the kitchen and that provided the hot water throughout the house. So Sunday night was always bath night and that of course was a bath in front of the fire. I seem to remember hair washes were Sunday morning which gave your hair time to dry, and, if you were going to Sunday school, it was all nice and clean and fresh to go to Sunday school. So, yes, bath in front of the fire, take it in turns, and I remember a big rubber mat to stop all the splashes. And the rest of the week, yet again in front of the fire, with a good wash down. Or sometimes the little ones I think were plopped in the sink and bathed in the sink.
- S1: And I assume it was your mum who did the washing and cleaning around the house?
- S2: Yes, well, washing day of course was always Monday. And it's funny how the house seemed to change around because when we were small, what became the living room was called the kitchen because it had the range in it for cooking, etcetera. And the back kitchen became the kitchen later on. And in the back kitchen there was a copper, which the fire was lit and so flake soaps and things for boiling, etcetera. I do remember the dolly tub and the blue bag for the sheets, because all the sheets seemed to be white—you didn't have coloured sheets or anything. And the wooden-rollered mangle and don't put your fingers anywhere near that.
- After a year or two I know an aunt used to come and help on Mondays as well with the washing, and *much* later the sheets went to Lichfield Laundry—they were picked up and went to Lichfield Laundry. But, obviously, as time went on we got a washing machine and things developed didn't they?
- S2: Yes. But initially, of course, we didn't have electricity in the house either. And I remember that, it must have been just after the war, an uncle came and because we'd had a petrol engine for the milking machine somehow my uncle utilised that so that it charged batteries and we had a very, very basic electric light in the house, which of course was prone to give out once the batteries had drained. But, yes, really, fairly rapid changes. I mean we think of a rapid change now but to my parents it must have been very rapid change I think.

S1: And how did you celebrate Christmas?

S2: Well, when we were very young we went to my grandmothers on Christmas day because aunts, uncles, cousins, etcetera, used to go as well and I don't know how we all fitted in, looking back, but we did. And Mum and the aunts, prior to Christmas, made all the mincemeat and the Christmas puddings, cakes, and such like. For Christmas dinner we had chicken usually—home grown—and Mum and the aunts as well used to make a lovely stuffing, parsley and thyme stuffing—it was beautiful. Yeah.

For Christmas day itself we always, on Christmas Eve, we hung one of Dad's big socks and Father Christmas was very obliging; he left an apple and an orange and various small items. Sometimes just small things, but family presents we either exchanged when we went to my grandmothers or later on. When we had Christmas at home we had to wait until after we'd had our breakfast to open the presents. And I do remember, for many years, we had Christmas trees. So I must have been fairly young when we started having a Christmas tree but initially it only had candles which were never lit, of course.

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

S2: I do remember that Sunday breakfast was a very special meal. Somehow, I suppose it was a day of rest and Dad did the minimum that he could get away with. So we started off Sunday breakfast all together and I think it was usually a cooked breakfast on a Sunday morning. The rest of the time I think we probably had just porridge and toast and cereals, etcetera. I do remember dripping-toast, which was ... especially pork dripping—it was beautiful. We always had a joint on Sunday and usually there was a pie and custard after that, and of course that joint from Sunday was cold meat for Monday, washing day, which went together with bubble and squeak and pickled and pickled cabbage, etcetera. If there was any pie left we had that with cold custard as well. And if there was any left on Tuesday, Mum had a mincer which she attached to the table and minced it all up, and that was with ... we had mince with onion on Tuesday. Because we lived on a farm, I suppose, and there was milk readily available and eggs, we were quite lucky in that we had sweets and egg custards and rice pudding and I remember tapioca and semolina as well. And, just occasionally when Dad had been to the cattle market on a Tuesday, he would bring fish and chips home wrapped in a newspaper and that was quite a treat—but it didn't happen very often. Yes.

S1: And how did you keep the food fresh, or just store it?

S2: Can you put it off for a minute?

S1: It's alright, it will be ...

S2: Yes. Worked out, yeah.

S1: So, what was your favourite meal?

S2: I think Sunday tea was, actually, because it was one of those meals where we were ... there was always extras around, relatives or friends or such like, and having a sweet tooth I enjoyed the jelly and the blancmange and the tinned fruit, etcetera. And sandwiches, we didn't often have sandwiches as such, I can't remember, but yes. I think that was probably my favourite meal.

S1: And did your family grow or rear any food?

S2: Yes. Dad was a great gardener, so he grew potatoes and lots of different sorts of veg and, yes, so there was always a ready supply and that came in useful.

- S1: And how did you keep your food fresh or store it?
- S2: Well, we, as well as Dad growing the veg and some of those... I remember beans being salted down in big stone jars and things like that. And we also had an orchard and we got apples and plums and damsons, and Mum always bottled those for the winter time. And we also had blackcurrant bushes and gooseberries and raspberry canes and grew strawberries as well. So wherever possible they were preserved. Pigs were killed and preserved. We had a slab which, I don't know whether it's the conventional name, it was called a thrall, in the pantry, and the sides of bacon, etcetera, were salted down there. I remember hams hanging in the kitchen as well.
As well as the bottling, in later years the WI in Colton had a canning machine and that rotated around the village for anyone who'd got preserves to do, and Mum for many years bottled, tinned, a lot of her fruit as well. And of course there was the meat safe, which I don't know how much use that was but the meat was religiously put into it.
- S1: Keep the flies off.
- S2: Yes.
- S1: So where did your family buy the other food that you couldn't get?
- S2: Yes. Well, we had a bread delivery three times a week. I think it was Monday, Wednesday, Friday, and I assume that came from the Co-op. The general supplies we actually bought from the Co-op and I suppose Mum or dad or whoever was going in, sometimes it was the whole family who trooped in plus pram, and the pram was very handy because it had those removable things at the bottom and you could stock, put all the shopping in and then load the children back in on the top of it.

In later years, when we had the phone, Mum used to phone the order through to Cheshires, who came, who were from Lion Street, and that was delivered by van. And when we travelled into Rugeley we either, as I said, walked, cycled, or we went in the horse-drawn float and that was quite an experience.
- S1: Where did you go to school and were your school days happy?
- S2: Well, Colton school until I was eleven; and I certainly don't remember being unhappy. I don't think they were unhappy times, you just accepted that that's the way things were didn't you?
- S1: Yes. And what did you wear for school?
- S2: I think, in the winter time it was a gym slip with a jumper underneath and I think, sort of, I remember navy double-breasted gabardine raincoats, I suppose, yeah, I think which covered a multitude of sins, and I think because they were double-breasted they were obviously unisex so they got passed down the family—it didn't matter if you were a boy or girl you still They still fastened on the right side. Three-quarter socks and heavy shoes in the winter, which Dad was prone to tapping scent in to try and preserve them a little bit. In summer it was cotton dresses and cardigans and ankle socks and sandals.
- S1: What lessons did you have?
- S2: Well, looking back my main impression is arithmetic. Mental arithmetic as well as sums. And English I remember as really spelling and compositions and that was the nightmare of the week really, was the composition. I suppose we did touch on history and geography but I don't have any direct memory of it at all.

- S1: Do you remember your teachers?
- S2: Well, Mr Broughton, obviously, and there were several assistant teachers in my time at Colton school but when we finished at Colton it was Mrs Shaw, I do remember, and she taught, obviously the younger children. And the girls used to go, I suppose it was when the boys went out and do the gardening, the girls went through and we did handicrafts and more like sowing, knitting, that sort of thing. Yeah.
- S1: Were there punishments if you misbehaved?
- S2: There were, yes. The boys got the cane and the girls had a slap on the arm. Yes.
- S1: And how old were you when you left Colton school?
- S2: I was 11 and I travelled to Stafford on the train from the Trent Valley station for my secondary school years.
- S1: And what is your most vivid memory of your school days as a whole?
- S2: Well, Colton school I think I was always very anxious. I think Mr Broughton must have had a thing about time keeping because I was frightened to death of being late for school, I do remember that. Another thing is the lavatories, which were very, very basic weren't they. But not associated with school but on the way home from school we always had a regular stopping-off place at different ... to have a drink of water, and Mrs Hardcastle was one, Mrs Shelly, old Mrs Shelley, was another one. And in my early days an aunt, oh I suppose she'd be a great aunt, lived at the bottom of Bank Top and she always was out with a drink for us, helped us on our way home. Because we always seemed to be so dry.
- S1: What games do you remember playing at school?
- S2: I don't remember any games lessons as such at school, but obviously lots of playground games I think. The things that spring to mind are ring games and things like that. There was 'I wrote a letter to my love' and 'ring-o-roses'. We used to do 'Alley', 'The big ship sails through the alley-alley-oh', 'Sheep, sheep come over'—and they're not necessarily games but we spent a lot of time hand-standing against a wall and doing cartwheels and admiring anyone who could do a cartwheel because I couldn't. Yes, great fun.
- S1: And did the school organise any school trips?
- S2: Well, I do remember going to Rhyl, a couple of years running, and that was organised I think through the school. Now whether it was just Mr Broughton or whether there was an organisation working through the school, I don't know, but that was great fun, yes. And I do remember my mum knitting me a bathing costume to go with the inevitable results! [Laughs]
- S1: And what do you remember about the school holidays?
- S2: Well, can you just ... yeah.

The school holidays. I suppose, I'm not quite sure whether it's so much school holidays or weekend I remember but I think they were very strongly linked to weather and season. Because at home we all had jobs to do before we were free to enjoy ourselves. So if we were confined to the house we had books and we played cards and board games and did jigsaws, played I spy I suppose. We had a radio, so we listened to the radio and we did have a wind-up radiogram but I don't think we had many records. I did learn to knit quite early and I do remember embroidering, and we also had a daily

Colton History Society – All Our Stories. Shelia Bergin

newspaper and there was usually a children's section in that so we scanned that to see what we could find out of that. If we could get outside, we had ... Dad had fitted up a swing in the barn and he fitted a swing up in the woods as well, so we had a swing and we roamed the fields. And I do remember just meandering around the fields around the house and making daisy chains and finding different wild flowers and things like that.

We also had a habit which, we weren't very popular with my dad for this, for doing gymnastics on the air line to the milking machine. And I think he was always frightened to death it would, we would, fall down underneath our weight. We played in the hay barn and we roamed all the lanes and the fields and made contact with the other children who lived in the area. We fished, very basic: stick, cotton, and a bent pin and a goose-feather float, and we used to ... we knew where we could find the fish in the ponds. We went blackberry-ing and we also knew where, in the area around, we could find gooseberries; we knew where there were gooseberry bushes in the hedges, and the damsons and plums as well. And how those came to be there other than being spread by birds, I don't know. We probably knew where all the violets and the primroses and the cowslips and the bluebells clumps were in a two-mile radius as well. And Easter was always looking for primroses to bring home for Easter.

And I think it must have been from about eight onwards, we used to cycle up to Admaston and Newton to spend time with the Woodward children and the Betson children, and who obviously we knew from school.

S1: So, that's 'How did you spend your days'. We've done that haven't you?

S2: Yeah.

S1: And 'Do you remember playing games with friends?' Yes. Did you go on holiday?

S2: No. No, we never actually went away, well, other than maybe to stay with an aunt for a night, but ... and cousins came to stay with us as well, but no, not the conventional holidays that people have nowadays. Definitely not.

S1: And what was the social life in the village like?

S2: Well, I suppose we were very much on the periphery in some ways. We weren't in the heart of the village so I don't think we were hugely involved in village social life when we were younger. But Mum was a member of the WI and she made many lifelong friends through WI and joined in a lot of adult activities. But as regards childhood mixing I don't think there was a huge amount. I can remember going to the odd village party and fetes and games and things like that, but they're almost vague memories really. When we were older we went to square dances and whist drives.

S1: And what do you remember about church services? Sunday school and festivals?

S2: Well, there was the fete, which I ... was obviously a church organised one and that was an annual fete and it seemed to me—and I may be absolutely wrong on this—it seemed to me it was always Lady Baggot who opened the fete. But there was a lot of preparation went on for that and certainly a group of girls were always ... Mrs Gooding got a group of girls together to make handicrafts and put together a bran tub and things like that. And that was good because that was one way in which we were integrated into the village. Didn't go to church but we did for many years go to Sunday school and, in later years—I won't say progressed—but I became a Sunday school teacher.

S1: Did your parents have paid employment?

- S2: No. Obviously Dad was self-employed but Mum was very involved around the farm as well, and they shared a lot of the tasks that had to be got through between them.
- S1: And what hours did they work?
- S2: No set hours, they just carried on until all the daily tasks were done really. But busy times, like haymaking, etcetera, they were working until it went dark because, as I've said before, they all worked together, the smallholders, and so they went from one farm to another and with one eye on the weather it had to be got in. Yes.
- S1: When did you leave school and what did you do then?
- S2: After I left school, which was after sixth form, I worked initially as a dental nurse and then went as a pupil teacher and then I carried on to teacher training college.
- S1: And where did most people find employment?
- S2: That's something I'm not sure about, because having spent my secondary years in Stafford at school I wasn't really aware much of people around. But it didn't seem to me that they had any difficulty finding jobs in local industry or on farms, etcetera.
- S1: Do you know what happened if they couldn't find employment?
- S2: I don't because I cannot recollect one person that I came across who was unemployed. No, I don't know.
- S1: Do you remember being ill yourself or other members of your family?
- S2: I suppose, out of our family, I was the one that most things happened to. I had my tonsils out when I was five. And then I was hospitalised at seven because I was having walking problems, but none of the other children actually went into hospital I don't think.
- S1: What treatment were you given?
- S2: Well, certainly when I was in hospital for my walking problems I had penicillin and the story went that very few people had had penicillin before those times, so ... But it worked, so, it ... and it's proved to be a wonderful invention hasn't it really?
- S1: And do you remember any other home remedies?
- S2: I don't remember any home remedies but I do remember that we had regular doses of cod liver oil and I suppose it would be welfare orange and syrup of figs.
- S1: And did you see a doctor very often?
- S2: No. Other than my two spells in hospital I think we were a very lucky family as far as health is concerned and didn't really have health problems. The only things that we had were the usual measles and chicken pox and such like, and I don't even know whether the doctor was involved in those. I don't remember seeing a doctor.
- S1: And did you visit the doctor or did the dentist come ... sorry. Did you visit the dentist or did the dentist come to the school?

- S2: It was the school dentist. No, I didn't in my early years visit anyone other than the school dentist and that wasn't a pleasant experience.
- S1: No. Do you remember any health visitors coming to your house or to the school?
- S2: Certainly at home, when the younger children were born there was the midwife came because they were all, in those days, home births weren't they? And I do have a vague recollection of possibly when I was sort seven plus, someone who I think must have been a health visitor came on a regular basis. Yeah.
- S1: Did life change a lot during the war?
- S2: I don't know because being born just at the beginning of the war I have no memories at all and I wouldn't have known of what happened before, so I couldn't. I'd have to say no, I don't know.
- S1: And so do you know how your family prepared for war?
- S2: No, not at all, no.
- S1: And did you see or have any contact with any soldiers?
- S2: I have a vague memory of the American soldiers in the village and I think that's where I learned to say, 'Give us some gum, chum!' or something like that. Which is not very nice is it? But, I mean, my main contact is on the other side of things because we had a German prisoner of war who helped us on the farm. And he was a farmer's son from Bavaria and so he was very familiar with farming procedures and he was a huge help. And he became like a favourite uncle to us all. He was absolutely wonderful, yes.
- S1: And did any bombs drop near here?
- S2: I don't know. I wouldn't have known. I didn't think no.
- S1: Do you remember rationing and how did it affect you family?
- S2: Only the post-war rationing I think and it probably didn't have as much impact on us, living on a farm, and having access to quite a lot of the things which I think had been rationed, so I don't think it had a huge effect on us. I may be wrong but I don't remember it.
- S1: Perhaps for clothes and things like that. You'd have to put coupons in wouldn't you?
- S2: I suppose there would have been but I don't remember that we were ... because it, sort of, ... The thing was, in those days, you had the clothes were passed along weren't they? If you didn't have sisters, brothers, you then ... there were cousins and so they came your way one way or another.
- S1: Right, thank you very much Sheila, that was very interesting and we look forward to ...
- S2: Thank you.

Colton History Society

All Our Stories



Nona Goring's story

Nona Goring.

S1: Marion Vernon

S2: Nona Goring

S1: This recording is being made for Colton History Society. Marion Vernon is interviewing Nona Goring in her home in Heathway, Colton on Friday the 22nd of March 2013.

Well Nona, can you tell me something about where and when you were born? Your date of birth?

S2: Yes. I was born in the second cottage in Lloyd's Row, which was just round the corner from the High House where Mrs Upton kept the shop there and yes I was born on the 5th of May 1942. I had already got two older sisters: Barbara who was eight years older than me and Laura who was 12 years older than me. And obviously me mum and dad. And we lived there for quite a long time. I think I was about 16 when my mum and dad moved out of the village.

S1: So you actually spent all your childhood really.

S2: Yes.

S1: there in the centre of the village.

S2: Yes.

S1: Yeah, do you ... did you remember very much of who lived around you, your neighbours?

S2: Yes. There was Mr Griffiths lived in the first cottage by High House. Then we had the second one. And then Mr and Mrs Parr had the third one. And the fourth one did change hands a few times; I know that there was another Mr Griffiths but most of my childhood, Hibbs, Mr and Mrs Hibbs and their family lived there.

S1: Yes. So were there lots of children together down there?

S2: Yes. Quite a few children. Yes. It was quite a, very happy childhood really.

S1: Yes.

S2: And the village in those days had no streetlights. No nothing. So you were brought up walking about in the dark.

S1: Did you have electricity when you were little?

S2: Yes.

S1: You did.

S2: Yes. When my mum and dad lived at the Bank Top Cottages up there they didn't have electricity but they had it when ...

S1: They'd already moved by the time you were born.

S2: Yes. They'd moved. Yes.

S1: So that was luxury. And how did you heat your house?

S2: With coal. My dad was a miner so we got concessionary coal.

S1: Okay.

S2: And it was like one of the ranges, the black-leaded ranges.

S1: Right.

S2: And my mum used to use that because she didn't have another cooker. She did all her cooking on it and it had two ovens I think, if I remember rightly. And ...

S1: And would you boil your kettle on there as well?

S2: Yeah. Everything would be done on that. She didn't have a ... We just had one main living room, if you like, and then there was what they called the back kitchen. And that just had a cold tap and then all of the stone sinks and next to that was a big copper boiler that we used to use for all ... she used to ... my mum used to boil the washing in there.

S1: Right.

S2: And we used to heat water for baths and things in there as well.

S1: Right. So did that have a fire underneath it?

S2: It had a fire underneath it.

S1: Would that be coal fired as well?

S2: Coal fired yes.

S1: How often would that be used then? Every day?

S2: Well, it ... yes, because ... At one time it was used every day because my dad didn't get a ... there was no showers at the pit so he used to have a bath every day when he got home, because he was black.

S1: In the tin bath?

S2: In the tin bath.

S1: Downstairs?

S2: Downstairs.

S1: Yes.

S2: Yeah.

S1: How many bedrooms were there in your house?

S1: Two bedrooms.

S2: Two bedrooms.

S1: Two upstairs ...

S2: Yeah.

S1: And two down.

S2: Yeah. And then there was like between ... there was like a pantry that went towards the stairs. It wasn't by the kitchen it was a pantry there and a cupboard under the stairs.

S1: Right.

S2: We used to call it the 'bogey hole'. And ...

S1: Yeah.

S2: And Barbara or Laura used to be put in there when, in the war, when the bomb ... when the siren went out for the bombs. They used to put them in there.

S1: Did they play in there? Or just to sleep?

S2: No. Just to put them in there until the all-clear had gone really. My sister Barbara has always been very claustrophobic and she thinks it comes from that.

S1: Right.

S2: Because it was only a small cupboard.

S1: Yes. Gosh!

S2: That they used to be in. And they took the idea from, if you ever saw bombed places the stairs were always still standing. So they thought it was quite a safe place for them to go.

S1: And what about the washing then? Did your mum do it on a regular day?

S2: Yeah. Monday was always washing day. Yes. And she had a, like a galvanised tub with the hot water and the soapy water in and she used to have a dolly.

S1: What sort of soap would she use? Do you remember?

S2: I can't remember, no. That wouldn't be ... I wouldn't be bothered with that would I?

S1: Not really. No.

S2: So yes.

S1: Did she ever scrub it as well?

S2: Yeah. They used to have like a washboard thing, didn't they? And scrub it on that.

S1: Do you remember doing that?

S2: Yes I do.

S1: Yes.

S2: And I can remember her ... the white washing. Because everybody had white sheets in those days.

S1: Would they be changed...

S2: You never had coloured anything.

S1: Would they be changed every week?

S2: Every week. But what they used to do in those days, and my mum used to do, was put the top sheet to the bottom and then a clean one on the top.

S1: Yes. So they lasted a fortnight on the bed.

S2: Yeah. But you couldn't ... I can still see all my mum's washing hanging out blowing white as white.

S1: Yes.

S2: It really ... Beautiful washing, you know?

S1: Did she bleach it, do you think, to make it so white?

S2: No. She just boiled it up in the copper.

S1: Oh. She actually put it into the copper and boiled it.

S2: Yeah.

S1: Yes. And if it was wet, how would she dry it?

S2: Well, it would be just hanging round the house on, like, clothes horse things, and that's how she dried it.

S1: Steaming everywhere .

S2: Yeah. Steaming everywhere up.

S1: Was it warm upstairs in the house?

S2: It was cold. It was, even though we'd got this roaring fire, I don't remember it being over-warm upstairs. I know, in the winter, we used to get like the frost on the inside of the glass, frozen up. So it couldn't have been that warm.

S1: No. How did you keep warm? What sort of clothes did you have?

S2: Well, everyday play clothes. We just had, I mean you didn't wear ... girls didn't wear trousers. The boys only wore short trousers anyway until they were about 16. So you used to wear socks up to your knees and then a skirt or a pinafore dress or something with a jumper. And that'd be it. And a coat

- S1: And a coat .
- S2: And a coat, yes, for outside and I think we were quite tough as children really because we played, we were out all the time. And, you know, we were encouraged to go out. And I think even when my own children were born they used to be outside in the pram to sleep.
- S1: Yes.
- S2: And to sit up and play. All the time. Cold weather or not. And I think we must have been the same.
- S1: Yes. How did you celebrate Christmas in those days?
- S2: Yes. We used to have decorations hanging up that were homemade, I think, but chains and things like paper chains.
- S1: Did you make them?
- S2: Yes. I think we did.
- S1: Yes.
- S2: And I can't remember whether we had a tree then. I'm presuming that we had a small tree of some sort.
- S1: But you don't have any memories of that?
- S2: I can't remember a tree. No.
- S1: No.
- S2: I can remember later in life, after I was married, me mum having the most awful artificial tree. It was horrible.
- S2: Perhaps she'd had it since we were little. I don't know. It wasn't very nice and she still used to put it up every year.
- S1: Yes. Do you not remember the decorations or anything?
- S2: I remember the decorations and I remember they used to put quite a lot of decorations around the room. You know, like I say, paper chains and things like that. And we always got a present on Christmas morning.
- S1: What did you do on Christmas Eve? Did you hang up a stocking or anything like that?
- S2: Yes. We hung a stocking up.
- S1: Yes.
- S2: Yes. And we always used to get just the usual apple, orange, and nuts, and things like that in our stocking. But we always got a present, a wrapped up gift, but you just got one each.
- S1: Yes. What was your favourite present? Do you look back and remember one particular one?

S2: I think probably a doll. I had a very nice doll one year and not that long after Christmas, a few weeks after Christmas my cousin, aunty and uncle and cousin came and my cousin squashed the face in. Of my doll.

S1: So upsetting isn't it?

S2: So yes.

S1: You've not forgotten that.

S2: No. But we did have a pay present every year yes.

S1: And did you have a special meal at Christmas?

S2: Oh yes. Yes. A cockerel usually that my dad ... it was one of my dad's own.

S1: Right you reared it?

S2: He reared it. Pigs, and chickens yes.

S1: And did you have a big garden then down at ...?

S2: Yes. The garden ran from the High House where the backs of the cottages were, right up to Bank House, which is where Ascough's is now. And they ran right the way up. So they were really long gardens.

S1: So were the cottages at right angles to the road.

S2: No. They were straight to the road and then they went right back at the back and then each one had got a strip that went right up.

S1: I see. At right angles to the ...

S2: Yes.

S1: Oh right!

S2: So ...

S1: Yes. And what did your dad grow in there in the garden?

S2: Oh vegetables, all the vegetables. Everything really.

S1: Did you children ever help?

S2: I don't think so. I think we were probably hindered him more than helped, but we did spend a huge amount of time with our dad as children. My dad was big on walking and exercise and I think it was because he worked in the mine and he used to love the fresh air. He always, even on a cold day, he'd be sitting at the table in the kitchen having his breakfast with the door wide open.

S1: Did he?

S2: Yeah. He liked the fresh air.

S1: So did you always eat in the kitchen?

S2: No. No not always. I'm telling you that was after they'd moved. They had a table in the kitchen.

S1: Oh right. Okay. Yes. Where did you eat as a family? In this main big front room bit?

S2: In the main living room, yeah, we had a table and chairs in there, yes.

S1: Would you always sit round for the meals?

S2: Yes. We all sat at the table yes.

S1: No television in those days.

S2: No.

S1: And did your mum do all the cooking?

S2: All the cooking, yes.

S1: What do you remember particularly that she used to cook?

S2: All sorts. She was a very good baker. She used to bake all sorts of things, you know, apple pies and steam puddings and all that sort of thing.

S1: What did she steam them in? Do you know? Do you remember?

S2: I think they was just steamed in a pan of water.

S1: What, in a basin in a pan of water?

S2: Yes. In the basin or sometimes they'd be in a cloth.

S1: Yeah. What sort of a cloth would she use?

S2: If it was like a roly-poly type, a jam roly-poly, it'd be in like a cotton cloth.

S1: Like a muslin?

S2: Yeah, wrapped up in greaseproof paper and then in the cloth and tied with strings both ends—like a cracker. And then that would be boiled in the water. So, yeah, that was what she did.

S1: Was it delicious? Did you have that with custard?

S2: Yeah. With custard. And always decent meals every day like we had because we'd got all our vegetables in the garden and ...

S1: When would you have your main meal? In the middle of the day or in the evening.

S2: No, in the evening. Everybody then together.

S1: Yes.

- S2: So you'd just have what we called lunch when we came up from school. I don't think ... I think I came home from school at lunchtime. And that what ... you know?
- S1: Yes. What was your favourite meal of the week? Was there sort of a routine?
- S2: I think there probably was a routine. I think you'd have a roast on a Sunday and cold meat and bubble and squeak on a Monday, etcetera, and maybe even cottage pie off that same ... you know what I mean?
- S1: Yes. And what was your favourite? What did you look forward to? 'Oh it's such and such a day!' Or did you just enjoy all of them?
- S2: Just all of it I think.
- S1: All of it. Yeah. So how did your parents keep the food fresh? If your dad reared food ... so once your pig's killed, how did you keep the ...? Did you have a refrigerator?
- S2: I think they cured some of it. Obviously they had some pork joints but I think probably some of that would be shared with neighbours.
- S1: Yes. And would neighbours keep pigs as well and you'd share them?
- S2: As far as I can remember, our neighbours didn't keep pigs. There was only our pigs in the garden like. He had, my dad had, a sty and he had this pig—it was called Sally.
- S1: Oh you didn't eat Sally did you?
- S2: No. And every time it had a litter, which was quite a lot, we were allowed to keep one of them and then ministry had the rest. And my dad had a horrific accident in the pit, where they didn't give the signal that they were going to blast and he got it in his face. And they took him to Rugeley hospital and then sent him home, and I can remember me mum having a turn because he was still black and he'd still got the same vest on with all the blood on and everything—nothing had been taken off him or anything. And he'd got bad wounds on his face. And I can remember even now—I was only little—I can remember him pacing the floor at night, banging his head on the wall nearly with pain. And he went down and he saw one doctor down at ... they was with Rugeley doctors, one doctor down there said 'Oh take some Aspirins'.
- Anyway, it was a week after and he went down and he saw a different doctor and he said, 'Were you X-rayed when you had your accident?' He said 'No'. He says, 'Right. Go to Stafford and wait for me. I'm following.' And he'd got a stone that had gone in there, by his nose, and it was only a fraction from his brain. And if it had gone a fraction more it would have killed him. And he had that taken out.
- S1: In the hospital in Stafford?
- S2: Yeah.
- S1: That was a big operation, wasn't it?
- S2: Yeah. He was only in hospital about a week I think. But at the same time the pig had had a litter of piglets and she wouldn't eat.
- S1: Because your dad wasn't home.

- S2: Yeah, because me dad wasn't there. And me mum worried herself silly trying to get this pig to eat. And I remember the first day me dad came home from hospital she said, 'I'm so sorry to have to ask you but will you please go and speak to the pig.' And do you know, it ate as soon as it see dad, the pig ate all the cold food that, you know, and everything. It was alright after that, it was just ...
- S1: How long did people have to give their pigs to the ministry?
- S2: I'm not sure. I'm not sure at all.
- S1: Quite a while after the war?
- S2: But it was quite a while. Yes.
- S1: Because you wouldn't remember the war itself much, would you? Because you were born in '42.
- S2: No. In '42. No I don't remember much about ... The only thing really I remember about the war is the rationing, because it went on for quite a long time after.
- S1: Yes. So that affected the shopping and so on when you were a little girl.
- S2: Yeah.
- S1: Yeah. Where did your family go to buy food from? I didn't really finish the first part. Let me just finish the first bit. How did they store the food then? So ...
- S2: As far as I know it was just one of the meat safes that they had, with the little mesh on so the flies couldn't get in.
- S1: Right. Okay.
- S2: And we didn't have a fridge or anything like that. No.
- S1: But you did talk about a larder or a pantry did you?
- S2: Me mum had a pantry but it wasn't one of these with like a cold slab. It was just for storage really.
- S1: Right, yes. Difficult, isn't it, when you think of trying to keep things fresh?
- S2: Yes.
- S1: Yes. Sorry, yeah. Coming on to the shopping then: where would she go to buy things that she needed?
- S2: Well, there was quite a few different people came and delivered into the village: the bread man came and I think like a mobile shop, like a grocery man came as well, and the milk came with Webb's from Boughey Hall—they came with a pony and trap with a churn on it and pulled up out side the house and you went out with your jug and they'd got a measure and they'd ...
- S1: And you remember doing that?
- S2: I can remember that.
- S1: Yes.

S2: Yes. But ...

S1: So they were dairy farmers?

S2: But mainly, anything sort of big we went into Rugeley for. Yeah.

S1: Yes. What shops were there in the village? Well, in the village there was, when I was little, there was Mrs Upton's and Miss Williscroft's.

S1: Yes.

S2: Later on, of course, Mr Brown had a shop but that was later.

S1: And he had the post office later up there.

S2: Yes.

S1: Where was the ... Was there a post office when you were little? Or would you not remember that?

S2: I'm not sure if it was ... It definitely wasn't Mrs Upton's. I'm not sure if Miss Williscroft had any. I can't ...

S1: You don't remember.

S2: No, I don't remember. I suppose really it ... Yes! Of course there was a post office: it was Mrs Deakin.

S1: Right.

S2: And that was up ...

S1: Up Martlin Lane?

S2: Up the Martlin Lane—the end house. And I have still got—and I'll find it out sometime—I've still got my mum's savings book that she ... and Mrs Deakin's signature against ... And it was five shillings and five shillings and five shillings. And then she drew ten shillings out. And that's how it went. She obviously saved for things and then drew it out. But I've still got that somewhere.

S1: Did you get a little bit of interest on it as well?

S2: Yes. Probably.

S1: Yes. So how would you travel if you were going into Rugeley to buy anything for ... Would you go into Rugeley for clothes? So you haven't mentioned anything like clothes or hardware in the village, so ...

S2: Yeah. It would be Rugeley for all that sort of thing.

S1: And how would you get there?

S2: I can't remember when I was very little but later on there was a bus.

S1: Bus.

S2: Green bus service. So, yes, but I would imagine it just, I mean, just your bicycle or you walked it or whatever.

- S1: Yeah.
- S2: People walked in them days, even when I had my children small I used to walk into town with a pram. You know, you walked it.
- S1: So you lived here all your life. Did you go to school in the village?
- S2: Yes. Colton school, when I was five. And I, well, the September, I was five in the May and I'd started school. You didn't start before five then. And I started school after ... in the September after the big holiday. And the day I started school, Mrs Shaw started teaching at Colton that same day.
- S1: Was she straight out of college then?
- S2: No. She'd got her children then.
- S1: Oh right, yeah.
- S2: Yeah. So I don't know where she'd taught before but she came to Colton the day I started school. Definitely. And her little boy, Richard, came with her. And I used to think it very odd that it was his mum and he had to call her Miss. Used to think, 'Oh, why is he calling his mum "Miss"?' So yes. So there was like Mr Broughton and Mrs Shaw.
- S1: Were you happy at school do you think?
- S2: I think I was very happy at school. Yes. I can't remember any incidents that were awful or anything like that, at all.
- S1: Did you ever have any punishments? Did you misbehave or ...?
- S2: I can't remember having any punishments. And I would because I'm the sort that would of never forgot, you know what I mean?
- S1: Yes.
- S2: But I can't remember having any punishments.
- S1: What lessons did you have?
- S2: Oh just straight writing and arithmetic, you know, that sort of thing.
- S1: Yeah.
- S2: Nothing ...
- S1: No crafts or anything like that?
- S2: I think we did some knitting with Mrs Shaw. Mrs Shaw came and a bit of sewing, but I can't distinctly remember what they were we did. But that was definitely where I learned to knit.
- S1: That's good isn't it? To start your... yes. You still knit now.
- S2: Yes I do, yes.

S1: How old were you when you left Colton school then?

S2: I was 11.

S1: 11.

S2: Yeah.

S1: And then you went to where?

S2: I went to Aelfgar.

S1: Right.

S2: No bus in those days. You went on your bicycle.

S1: Right. All weathers?

S2: All weathers. And you didn't miss school either; you went. And there was a few of us in the village that went at the same time to the same school. Janet Jones, who is now Sargeant, and Eileen Duval who I used to bike in with. A few.

S1: Because there wasn't the same amount of traffic was there in those days?

S2: No.

S1: Did you fell safe just yes.

S2: You never thought about it.

S1: No.

S2: And you didn't have to chain your bike up either. You just put it in the bicycle shed and came out and fetched it when you were ready. You know.

S1: Different times.

S2: Different times. Yes. So.

S1: What do you remember most about the playtimes? When you were little at Colton, do you remember playing games?

S2: Hopscotch, throwing ball against the wall, or juggling, skipping, and then sometimes there'd be playground things to rhymes: 'The farmer had a wife', that sort of thing.

S1: Would you do that on your own or with a crowd?

S2: No. With all the others because ...

S1: I mean with an adult or just children ?

S2: No, just the children would play. Yes.

S1: Yes.

- S2: And I think, unlike today, because there is children at the village school that have out ... from outside the village. But apart from the Lea ... Admaston and Lea Heath children, you knew all the people, all the children that were at school with you. You know.
- S1: So I suppose you'd play out of school with them as well.
- S2: So you'd play out with them as well. Yes.
- S1: Got to know them very well.
- S2: Yeah.
- S1: Yeah. Did you go on any trips from school?
- S2: Yes, I think we did. I'm not sure if we went to New Brighton. Or Rhyl or somewhere like that. But they were just day trips.
- S1: Yes.
- S2: And you'd, I think you'd have a little package of ... you'd have a sixpence I think, and an orange and an apple, you know, and things like that.
- S1: And take a picnic with you would you?
- S2: Maybe. I can't remember taking a picnic. No. But obviously we did; we must have eaten during the day.
- S1: Unless they took you to a café or something there.
- S2: I don't think that was on the cards in those days.
- S1: And were you allowed to paddle? What did you do when you got there? Do you remember it?
- S2: I can't remember what we did when we got there. I'm sure we were allowed to paddle; I'm sure we went on the beach. But I mean sometimes, because we went away on a family holiday every year and I think me memory might get mixed with that.
- S1: Yes.
- S2: Because obviously we were paddling then, you know, with, when we were up ...
- S1: Where would you go on your family holiday?
- S2: Only into Wales. Rhyl or somewhere like that. In a caravan.
- S1: Always by the sea?
- S2: Always by the sea, yeah. And later on when my children were small and my younger sister, Valerie—her children are the same age as mine—and we, my mum and dad used ... we always used to go and have a caravan each. In a row!
- S1: Lovely.

S2: And have a big family holiday with the little ones as well.

S1: Special.

S2: Yeah. So.

S1: So, looking now at the school holidays. You've told me what you did in, at school breaks and so on. Was it different in the holidays? Did you work anywhere? Did you just roam free?

S2: No. We just roamed about, ran free. Just took off and went off for the day really: roaming about and, you know, fill the day with ...

S1: What would you do?

S2: All sorts of things. All sorts of things. You'd make a den or, you know, all those sorts of things.

S1: Was it boys and girls together or just girls?

S2: Yeah. I think so yes.

S1: Everybody together? Yes.

S2: Yeah. Because I don't think that we were outrun with the boys; there was only like, of the same age, ...

S1: Yes. more boys.

S2: ... there was only like ... yeah, there was definitely more boys.

S1: Yeah.

S2: Yeah.

S1: Did they lead you to do adventurous things then?

S2: No, they used to try, and because I was pals with Janet and they lived up Hollow Lane and, like I've said, no street lights, so it'd be going up to Janet's house—in the dark—and you'd hear 'Oooooooh' from the trees. Yeah, they used to be trying to frighten us.

S1: Yes.

S2: It didn't work.

S1: No.

S2: We weren't bothered.

S1: So, looking at the village. What did the village offer as a way of social life? Did it offer anything for children particularly or ...?

S2: Yes. And most of the things that they held in the Reading Room, parents would go and they'd take their children with them.

S1: Right. What sort of things?

S2: You didn't get ... stay behind with babysitters in those days. Everybody went.

S1: Yes.

S2: So there was dances, and you went as well, and there was whist drives and beetle drives, and everything. There was lots of things. And Mr Best that lived in the Malt House farm, he had a cine camera and he took a lot of film of events in the village: the garden parties, children in the playground, the children coming out of school, all that sort of thing, and now and again he'd show them in the Reading Room and everybody could go and watch.

S1: Yes.

S2: And I can remember I was on those films.

S1: Yes.

S2: But nobody knows whatever happened to them.

S1: No? They've disappeared.

S2: No.

S1: Yes. Very sad.

S2: Yeah.

S1: All that footage gone.

S2: Yeah.

S1: But so you used to go down there quite ... How often in the week would that be held?

S2: I can ... I don't know how many times a week but I know there was something on quite often.

S1: Yes.

S2: And we had things in the village like garden parties and ...

S1: Would that be for the church or for the school?

S2: Yeah. It was at the church.

S2: At the church.

S2: It was behind the Old Rectory, always on those lawns there, all the stalls round and ... Yeah. I can remember it was usually Lady Baggot that opened it.

S1: Yeah. Do you remember the people who ran the stalls? Do you have any memories of it?

S2: I do remember some people. I mean, I can't remember whether it was then, when I was little, or whether it was when I was a bit older, but like the WI ladies and ... like Mrs Preston and people like that.

S1: Would they run a cake stall or something like that?

S2: Probably.

S1: Yes.

S2: Probably. There was cakes and there was always ... I think Miss Jones used to have a stall but I can't remember. There was somebody that always used to have lavender bags, I always remember that—I can't remember who it was.

S1: Yeah. And did you ever belong to any village organisations like the Produce Guild or anything like that?

S2: No.

S1: Did your mum?

S2: Don't think so. I think mum was a bit too busy.

S1: Yes.

S2: You know? I mean, having four ... Because eight years after I was born, when I was eight, my youngest sister was born. And we were so spaced out: eight years between Valerie and me, eight years between me and Barbara, and then four years between Barbara and Laura. I think she'd sort of got children at different stages of their life to deal with, you know.

S1: Yes.

S2: Really busy.

S1: Did you go to church as a family or ...?

S2: Always go to church, yes. We went to church on a Sunday and then again you went to Sunday school as well. Always.

S1: What do you remember about that?

S2: I remember Miss Rochell.

S1: Yes. Was she a teacher?

S2: I remember going like nature walks with the Sunday school. And obviously you have teachings, don't you? Bible teachings and things like that. Yeah.

S1: Yes. Enjoyed it.

S2: Yeah.

S1: Did you ever have prizes or anything like that?

S2: I don't remember.

S1: No.

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

S1: Just looking at your parents a little bit more then. Your mum didn't work?

S2: No.

S1: Obviously she did a lot ...

S2: No, she didn't work.

S1: ... of work in the house, looking after the family. Did she make clothes for you as well or ...?

S2: No.

S1: No.

S2: No. I can't remember it ... and she can ... she could knit. I mean, obviously as I'm older, she knitted, but whether she knitted for us or not I can't remember that.

S1: No. But ... And your dad worked in the mine.

S2: Yeah.

S1: How did he like the work there?

S2: I don't know. I don't know. If he didn't like it, he never said.

S1: Never said. No.

S2: I know he was very fond, like I said, of the fresh air; he used to be out ...

S1: Yes.

S2: And he used to ... we used to spend a lot of time with my dad because he used to be home. You see, they'd start work about half past five in the morning and so he'd be home early afternoon.

S1: Ah! Yes.

S2: And he'd take us walking and he'd gather children as he went.

S1: Did he?

S2: Yes! Everybody went.

S1: They all knew your dad, yes.

S2: Everybody went and [coughs]. Excuse me.

S1: Where would you walk to?

S2: Well, if it ... a long way. If it were with my dad you went a long way. He'd say, 'Oh we're not going there! It's only a cock's stride.' If it was a short distance.

S1: Right. Yes.

S2: 'No, we'll go up there and then we'll cut off and go round there.' But all the walks that we used to do, me and me elder sister, Laura, a few years ago now, she used to come up once a week in the summer and we did all them ... and it's all still there.

S1: Yes.

S2: All the old walks.

S1: How many miles would you do then? Several miles?

S2: I would have thought so, yes.

S1: Yes.

S2: And sometimes, I can remember times, probably in the school holidays otherwise I would have been in bed, but I can remember times when it's been a lovely moonlight night with all the stars out, and my dad'd say, 'Come on! We'll go walk dog.' And we used to go all the way around Hamley and back up. Yeah. And I can remember doing that on loads and loads of times. Yeah.

S1: Special times.

S2: Yeah.

S1: Just you and your dad?

S2: Just me and my dad.

S1: Were you your dad's favourite do you think?

S2: No. I don't think my dad had favourites. I think my mum did but I don't think my dad did.

S1: No.

S2: So.

S1: What happened if your dad couldn't go to work? Did they still get paid?

S2: No.

S1: A basic pay?

S2: No.

S1: What would happen then?

S2: Well, I can't ever remember a time, even when at times when my father had accidents and things like that, he wasn't off work that long. And he was a saver, my dad; he'd always got spare money. He always saved up, so that at a time like that we'd always got something to fall back on.

S1: Yes. I was just thinking, when you talked about the accident at work.

S2: Yes, well, he ...

S1: It wasn't his fault at all; there was no compensation or anything.

S2: Don't remember him having any compensation. I don't think he ever did.

S1: And he didn't get any pay while he was off.

S2: Don't think so.

S1: Gosh! It was a different world wasn't it really?

S2: Yeah. And yet it wasn't his fault.

S1: No.

S2: The signal wasn't given for the blast. So. But I can remember ... I can't remember him being off work for a long time.

S1: No.

S2: I think he'd have been back.

S1: Pushed himself to get back.

S2: Yeah.

S1: How did he get to the pit?

S2: He used to go on a bicycle at one time and then he always had, as I got older, he always had a little motorbike.

S1: Right.

S2: Always.

S1: And did you go on it with him sometimes?

S2: Yeah. And sometimes I used to drive it. You'd, yeah, you'd get round the back lanes and he'd say, 'Come on! You have a go now.'

S1: Really?

S2: Yeah.

S1: Yes. Did you like that?

S2: Yeah.

S1: Oh yes.

S2: We did all sorts. I mean, my dad, you know, the names of all the trees and all the wild flowers and everything, we learned from my dad taking us walks and telling us what they were.

S1: Yes.

S2: And he'd tell us about birds' nests and eggs, and he'd fetch an egg out of the nest to show you and he'd say, 'that's a blackbird's egg,' and he'd put it back in. You weren't encouraged to take it. No.

S1: No. Just taught you what it was.

S2: Just to show you what it was. Yeah.

S1: Where did most people find employment? Were most local people ... did they work in the pit?

S2: Quite a few worked in the pit but there was other employment as well.

S1: What was that?

S2: I mean, there was quite a lot at the Trent Valley, on that estate there. There was the Colour Mill.

S1: What was that?

S2: It was for tanning; it was a tanning place I think. Where the tanning took place. And other places around and about like that, so there was more, more than the pit.

S1: So did everyone find work or was there ...?

S2: Oh I don't think there was anybody unemployed.

S1: Not in those days.

S2: No.

S1: What would have happened if you were?

S2: Well, I think it was hard luck.

S1: Yes. Just ...

S2: It was just hard luck.

S1: Yes.

S2: Because I don't think there was any help, you know.

S1: Do you remember being ill at all when you were little?

S2: Yes. Yes I did. I tell you what, I can remember being really poorly with it as well: I had jaundice.

S1: Did you?

S2: And I can remember being all yellow, and the all the whites of my eyes were yellow. And I wasn't very old, but I was old enough to remember it now.

S1: Do know what caused that?

S2: No. No I don't know, but I had jaundice and that was for years and years. I mean, I could do now I think, but for years and years I wasn't allowed to give blood because it leaves something in your bloodstream, the jaundice does—apparently.

S1: What did you take for it? How did they treat it?

S2: I can't remember. I can't remember what I had for it. But I did see the doctor, I know that.

S1: And would you have to pay to see a doctor in those days?

S2: Yeah, I would have thought so, yeah.

S1: Did you see a doctor very often, do you remember? Or was it a big thing to see the doctor?

S2: Didn't ... No, I think it was a big thing. There was lots of home remedies for things.

S1: Do you remember any?

S2: No. I think they'd just ... you'd have medicine, probably medicine that your mum bought at the chemist.

S1: Oh right. Yeah.

S2: You know, that sort of thing. Cough medicine.

S1: Yes. Cough medicine.

S2: And rub your chest with Vic, or whatever it was.

S1: Yes.

S2: And yeah.

S1: Yeah. And did you see a dentist regularly when you were a child?

S2: Only at school. Only at school. The dentist used to come to school. I don't remember going to a dentist, *a* dentist, other than that.

S1: No. And were there any other health visitors or nurses who came ...?

S2: Yeah. Yes. They used to have like a ... Used to have the nit nurse come to school and also you'd have a, I don't know whether it was a doctor that used to come or just a nurse, but you'd be examined. You know, listen to your chest.

S1: Did you have inoculations or anything like that? Or did you have all the childhood illnesses.

S2: You had the ... You didn't have the inoculations like they have now. No. You had all your chicken poxes and measles, and I was 17 when I had the measles.

S1: Oh were you?

S2: I was quite poorly. But the usual things, mumps and things like that, you had.

S1: Yeah. So the war, you don't remember very much at all.

S2: No. I know my mum ...

S1: What do you remember afterwards?

S2: My mum had an evacuee: Marcus.

S1: Oh right.

S2: But I don't remember him.

S1: You don't remember him.

S2: No.

S1: No.

S2: Laura and Barbara both remember him.

S1: Yes.

S1: So it was just the norm for you really, growing up then, that things were rationed. You didn't perhaps ... Did you think much of it?

S2: No. The only thing that I can remember, and that was after the war when the rationing was still on, and I can remember walking up from school and seeing all these rows of jars of sweets in Mrs Upton's window, where there hadn't been any for weeks. And I can remember bolting home and saying, 'there's sweets! There's sweets!' You know. And going and having some sweets as a treat like.

S1: Did you have pocket money?

S2: I don't think we did.

S1: No.

S2: I don't remember having pocket money.

S1: How often would you buy sweets when you were little, once they were back out of rationing?

S2: Not every day.

S1: No? But you'd buy ... I mean, I can only really remember after I moved from Colton school when I was 11, and we used to sometimes call at the corner shop there by ... It wasn't Jupp's then but it had been Jupp's. When my kids were little it was Jupp's.

S1: Yes.

S2: And we used to go in. That was always a sweet shop.

S1: And did that keep you going on the way home?

S2: Yeah.

S1: So do you remember any real characters from the past?

S2: It was a ... there's always characters, I think, in a village. There's always real characters and I think there were a few, but I don't really ... I just remember them as people that lived in the village, if you know what I mean.

S1: Just people.

S2: Yeah.

S1: Yes. Was it a nice place to grow up?

S2: Oh lovely, yes. A lovely place to be, yeah. Yeah it was.

S1: And have you lived here all your life?

S2: Yes, apart from a couple of years that's all.

S1: Yes.

S2: When me mum moved out to Brereton.

S1: Right.

S2: And then when I got married I came back. Yeah. It was only ... Well, I was married when I was 19 and it was about three years.

S1: How old were you when you left school?

S2: Fifteen.

S1: Fifteen. What did you do then?

S2: I worked at Thorn Automation. And I started off at ... It wasn't Thorn Automation then. It was British Electronic Products first and then it was Lancashire Dynamo before Thorns took over. And I was an internal mail clerk, so I went around the whole site and all the offices and they had trays on the desks and there was an in and an out, and they had like these envelopes with ... they used to cross that name off and put who that was for. And they used to have to ...

S1: Yes. Keep reusing them and turning them round.

S2: Yeah, and just turn them around. But I did end up in the accounts department and I was a comptometer operator.

S1: Were you?

S2: Yeah. And everybody from the whole site used to bring things to be calculated and that sort of thing. Yeah.

S1: And did you still work there when you were married?

S2: I left to have Stephen. I didn't go back.

S1: Didn't go back.

S2: No.

S1: No. No, that was the way it was in those days wasn't it really?

S2: Yeah.

S1: Was there anything else you wanted to tell us about Nona?

S2: Not that I can think of. I'll probably think of a load when we've finished.

S1: Well, thanks ever so much. Fascinating.

Colton History Society

All Our Stories



Maureen Dix's story

Maureen Dix

S1: Marion Vernon
S2: Maureen Dix
S3: Nona Goring

S1: This recording is being made for Colton History Society. Nona Goring and Marian Vernon are interviewing Maureen Dix on Tuesday, 20th March 2012.

Good morning Maureen. Would you like to tell ...

S2: Good morning.

S1: ... us a little bit then, about your family, about where you were born and about your family?

S2: Yes. My maiden name was Shipley and I was born in Bank House, Colton. I was christened at home because I had a ... breathing difficulties—I presume it was bronchitis or something like that.

S1: Was that straight after the birth?

S2: Yes. And I wasn't expected to live. But it has been said that my auntie saved my life with rubbing back and front with goose fat.

S?: Yes

S2: Which was an old recipe.

S1: Yes.

S2: I think we left there about 1940.

S1: So how old would you have been then?

S2: I would have been two.

S1: Two.

S2: Yeah. And we went to Chatter Pie Row. The ... I suppose I was five when we left there because it was in a very poor state; they weren't doing any more repairs to the houses and the ceiling fell in on me on my bed.

S1: Do you have any memories of Chatter Pie Row?

S2: Yes, oh yes. I vaguely ... I mean they're all little bits, you know, that I can remember.

S1: Yes.

S2: I do remember that it was war time and that the ... one day the coats all shook off the back of the door and the windows rattled and cracked, you know.

S1: Very frightening. Were you in the house?

S2: Yes, we were.

S3: Can you remember who lived in the other cottages?

S2: I can, yes. First of all it was Mr Griffiths. Was it?

S3: Yeah.

S2: Tom Griffiths. Then Mr and Mrs Talbot, then Mr and Mrs Yates with all their family.

S1: Was that a big family?

S2: It was. There were eight of them I think.

S3: They're still in the village, well, Pam is.

S2: Yes. And then it was us.

S1: Yes.

S2: Then Mr and Mrs Myatt and Joyce and Gwen. And then Mr and Mrs Norman.

S1: Right, yes.

S2: They moved to Abbots Bromley I believe. And when the ceiling fell in, etc, it was very difficult because I was ... and my brother had been born by this time. We were all in one bedroom which just housed the double bed, the single bed, and one wardrobe. You know?

S1: Yes.

S2: And ... because they were very tiny those rooms weren't they?

S3: Yes.

S1: Were they two up and two down? What were they?

S2: No. There was one down, with a scullery.

S1: Right.

S2: And two bedrooms.

S1: Yes. And the toilets down the garden?

S2: Do you know I can't remember where the toilet was? It must have been down the bottom of the garden.

S3: Mostly they were in the cottages weren't they?

S2: Yes, right away ...

S3: At the bottom of the garden.

S2: Yes.

S1: Perhaps as a little one you wouldn't have used it a lot.

S2: I don't suppose I did.

S1: No.

S2: I can't visualise that.

S1: No.

S2: But what I can visualise is a yard that went from one end to the other and it was only about a yard wide. And then you had steps to go up onto the garden.

S1: Right.

S2: And, of course, being wartime dad dug a shelter and put a ... like an Anderson shelter over the top.

S1: Yes.

S2: But I don't remember us ever going in it.

S1: No?

S2: Only to play.

S1: Yes. [Laughter] And were you allowed to play in it? At the time, in the war.

S2: I suppose I must have done.

S1: Yeah.

S2: Because the war was still going on when we left. But it was ... we used to go down the road to the Bank House because they'd got cellar—and by the time we'd got down there the all-clear had gone anyway and we never did go in the cellar either. So it was, you know, only little bits and pieces I remember.

S1: Yes.

S2: Yes, then we moved to Stockwell Heath to live with an auntie, and her husband was in the war, in RAF. So we went to live with her and then it ended up with seven of us living in a one up and two down. Two up and one down again you know.

S1: Yes.

S2: And yes, it was lovely.

S1: Whereabouts was that?

S2: That was at Stockwell Heath.

S1: Whereabouts in Stockwell Heath was that?

S2: Just round the corner up towards Knight's farm.

S1: Right, yes. On to the little lane there was it?

S2: Yes. It was a barn really.

S1: Right.

S2: It looked like a barn from the back and ... but the biggest portion of it was still a barn.

S1: Right.

S2: And then we'd just got the little cottage on the end. I had a talk with the new owner not long ago, because I took me daughter to see where we lived.

S1: Yes.

S2: They couldn't believe it. And he said, 'Oh', he'd been told that people lived there. But he said 'I couldn't believe it', and he said it was 'nice to have a word with you', you know.

S1: Yes.

S2: And they have got permission to revert it back to a dwelling, if necessary.

S1: Have they? Yes.

S2: But he didn't know whether he was going to do that.

S1: No.

S2: Yes, we ... There was no electricity of course: we'd got oil lamps.

S1: Right.

S2: And being little it was my job to clean the glass, because I could get my hand in it and polish it with newspaper.

S1: Newspaper!

S2: Yes.

S1: Did it get very sooty?

S2: Oh yes.

S1: What did you burn in the lamps then? Was it ...?

S2: Oh it was Paraffin.

S1: Paraffin.

S2: Yes. And we only had one cold-water tap but we'd also got the well in the garden.

S1: Right.

S2: And ...

S1: So what did ... How did you use the well? Was the well used for outside? For the garden, more? Or ...?

S2: I think it was but it wasn't long before we covered, well, dad covered it over because we were young and ...

S1: Yes.

S2: And my brother was only little and then Christine came along. So, yes, it was covered over.

S1: Yes.

S2: We kept pigs and chickens and the goat occasionally arrived—and went again, because they were a nuisance.

S1: Yes. Was it a big garden there?

S2: Yes. Quite a big garden. Yes.

S1: Who did it?

S2: My father was the gardener.

S1: Yes.

S2: And uncle Harry did occasionally and the one time that he did ... did it, and set potatoes, because it was the 'Dig for Victory', you know.

S1: Yes.

S2: And a cow got in the garden and he was so mad that they'd ... it'd ruined his gardening that he kicked it up the backside and broke his toe. [Laughs]

S1: Oh my goodness! Who was that? Your ...?

S2: Uncle.

S1: Uncle.

S2: Yes.

S1: Was that after he came back from the war?

S2: Yes. He was ...

S3: Yes.

S2: I think he came out a little bit early.

S1: Right.

S2: For some reason. I think ...

S1: Yes.

S2: ... perhaps it was he often lost his temper and, you know, I think looking back on it I think he'd got the post-traumatic stress.

S1: Yes.

S2: But of course it wasn't recognised in those days and ...

S1: No.

S2: ... they had to just get on with it, you know?

S1: Yes.

S1: What about your parents? Did either of them work?

S2: Oh yes. My dad was a miner.

S1: Yes.

S2: And he helped out on the farms as well. Mr Knight employed him when it was corn, you know, cutting the corn.

S1: The harvest.

S2: Harvest.

S1: Yes.

S2: And dad went round the edge with a scythe to cut the edge that these ... corn ... that the machines couldn't get to.

S1: Yes.

S2: You know?

S1: Yes.

S2: So that was one thing I remember.

S1: Did you go and watch?

S2: Oh yes. But we were ... haymaking, we got involved as well.

S1: Did you? Yes.

S2: As children, you know?

S1: Yes.

S3: Yeah. I remember that.

S2: Yes. And with the corn you used to pick up the stooks and put [Laughs] put them together ...

S1: Yes.

S2: ... in, you know, I don't know what they're called: stooks I suppose.

S3: Yes.

S1: Yes. That's right.

S2: Yes.

S1: Yes. So you used to be actually doing that?

S2: Oh yes.

S3: Yes?

S2: Yes. And ...

S1: Happy times. And did you take a picnic out with you?

S2: No, because we only lived next door to the field that ...

S1: So you popped back and had something.

S2: Yes.

S1: Yes.

S2: But, and of course then there was the pond, which played a big part in our lives because we used to do dams and, you know, ...

S1: Yes.

S2: ... little rivers and all sorts of things around the edges. You know.

S1: Yes.

S2: And if our shoes got wet we didn't dare go home but we went to Mrs Goodall, at the edge of the pond, and she used to dry our shoes under the fire. And one day my brother's shoes were forgotten and when we went to get them out they were crisp.

S3: He was in trouble?

S2: Oh, well, I was in trouble.

S3: Oh you were in trouble.

S2: I was four years older than he.

S1: Right.

S2: And so I ...

S3: You were responsible.

[Laughter]

S2: Yes.

S1: How were you punished for something like that? Was there a punishment or just got told off?

S2: Oh, we just got told off really. I can't remember being smacked or anything.

S1: No.

S2: I did occasionally catch one but I must have been very naughty for that. [Laughter] Yeah.

S1: So your father was in the pits. Which pit did he work in?

S2: He worked at Brereton pit to start with and he often ... well, 'often': he had accidents down the pit because he was a hewer, which hewed out the rock and then of course sometimes the roof would fall before they could get the pit props up.

S1: Yes.

S2: And he had broken feet occasionally, you know.

S1: Did he? Yes. Where did he get the treatment for that if he had an injury?

S2: I think it must have been Stafford.

S1: In Stafford. Was he well ... when he ... if he was injured at what was he given sick pay while he was off? Or ...? How did it ... was it ...?

S2: I don't know. They didn't get paid ...

S3: They didn't get paid.

S2: ... if they weren't at work.

S1: Not if they were injured ...

S2: No.

S1: ... at work?

S2: And, of course, very often they only worked two or three days a week anyway, because it was, you know, there wasn't the work for them.

S1p: Right.

S2: But I do remember he had a bad back as well and he went for years where it wasn't treated, and one day Nona's father pushed him all the way from Brereton to Colton on his bike. They were both on their bikes, like, and he ...

- S1: Yes. Put his hand behind and helped him along.
- S2: Yes. But then of course dad had to come, struggle to get from Colton up to Stockwell Heath. And it was diagnosed as a slipped disk and once we'd moved back to Colton, in 21 Heath Way, across the road here, he was in plaster from his armpits down to his groin for 12 months. And that was how they treated the slip disk in those days. You know?
- S3: And did it work?
- S2: Yes, it worked. Yes.
- S3: But he couldn't ... do any ... couldn't go to work or anything.
- S2: No.
- S1: So how do you manage financially in a situation like that?
- S2: Well, financially, you didn't really. I suppose there was a little bit of welfare money.
- S1: Right.
- S2: Mum had to go out to work of course.
- S1: Yes.
- S2: And people like Bob Grimley, who was the milkman, he let us have milk every day and not pay. Kept on a record, of course, and when dad got back to work it took us about 12 months to pay it all off again. You know?
- S1: Yes. There was milk for the children then wasn't there?
- S2: That's right, yes.
- S1: It was kind, wasn't it?
- S2: Yep.
- S1: Yeah.
- S2: Very. Yeah, so Charlie Dilley used to come with his van. So, bring the groceries and ...
- S1: So what would ... what sort of meals would you have in those days? Not massive meals? Just simple meals?
- S2: Well, yes, simple meals: bread and jam was a favourite for tea time, kind of thing.
- S1: Yes.
- S2: But the main meals, we had rabbit or chicken and bacon from the sides of the pigs that were killed. You know? Things like that.
- S1: Yes. I suppose while you were up at Stockwell Heath and you'd got your animals ...
- S2: And we'd got plenty of vegetables.

S1: ... and you'd got ... Yes. More food.

S2: Yeah. Because dad was a good gardener and we had good vegetables.

S3: Planting food out in the garden.

S2: Yes.

S3: Yes.

S2: Yes.

S1: I'm thinking when you came back though, later on, and he was in his plaster cast he wouldn't be able to ... would he be able to do any gardening even?

S2: No.

S1: No?

S2: No. But he would direct me mum and ...

S?: all the time.

S2: ... and me.

S?: Yes.

S2: Yes. And we didn't ... you know, we had a big patch over ...

S1: Yes.

S2: ... in the Heath Way.

S3: A big patch. Yeah.

S2: Yeah. And so we just cultivated two sections at the back and left one strip at the side, you know, rough.

S1: Yes.

S2: So, yes.

S1: But you managed. Yes?

S2: Yes. You do manage.

S1: And when he was down at the pit, what sort of hours would he be working there?

S2: Well, I know that ... we, when we lived in Bank House, when we went back for a time before we got the house allocated in Heath Way, we, dad was often late getting up and of course if you were late you couldn't go down the pit. So he said he would give us half a crown if we woke him up in time. We were getting him up at five o'clock in the morning. [Laughter] So he wouldn't pay us because it was ...

S3: Too early.

S2: It was too early. And he would have woke if we'd have left him.

S1: Yeah.

S2: But he had one half crown.

S1: Ah, yes.

S2: Yeah.

S1: Did he quite like the work down there or did he hate going?

S2: Oh, I don't suppose ... You just got on with it.

S1: Just got on with it.

S2: Didn't you?

S?: Yeah.

S2: You'd have never have said to ...

S1: Just a necessity, just a necessity.

S2: That's right. Yes.

S1: Yes.

S2: Yeah. Later he went to Leigh Hall and became a deputy down there, so ...

S1: Yes.

S1: And your mum, when she had to go out to work, what did she do?

S2: Cleaning mainly. And potato picking. We used to go ...

S1: Right.

S2: And I used to go and help mum with her load, kind of thing. You know?

S1: Yes.

S2: And then when Miss Rochell had a holiday, mum would do the post.

S1: Right.

S2: And similarly with Admaston post.

S1: Right.

S2: She would go and help out there.

S1: Yes.

S2: Yes. The Colton round was 14 mile and the Admaston mile, round, was 26. You weren't officially with a ... on a bike round Colton because it was only 14 mile, but you were allowed to have a bike on the ...

S?: On the Admaston.

S2: ... Admaston one.

S1: Yes. It's a long way out to all the farms and outlying areas.

S2: That's right. And heavy work because some of the farmers just sent off for farm, you know, spare parts, etc.

S1: Yes. And they were in the post.

S2: So you needed a bike around Colton.

S1: You did, yes. Umm.

S2: Yes. So ...

S1: So let's go back up to Stockwell Heath, your life up there. Seven of you in a little, tiny cottage.

S2: That's right.

S1: How did that work? Did you manage to sleep and live side by side happily?

S2: For the main part. Yes. Yes, the bedrooms: you went through one to get to the other. Well, on the top of the stairs ...

S1: Yes.

S2: ... the one bedroom was open and the other one had a door.

S1: So who had the closed one?

S2: We did. My father and mum, my brother and I.

S1: Yes.

S2: But it was only room for a double bed and a single bed, a small wardrobe and a chest of drawers.

S1: Right. So did you top and bottom, you and your brother? How did you manage that?

S2: No, side by side I believe.

S1: In the single bed?

S2: Yes. And the window ... well, the floors were concrete upstairs.

S1: Were they?

S2: Oh yes. And it was a very cold place and the little window was right level with the floor, and you had to get down to, on your hands and knees, to look through the window.

S1: Yes.

S2: So its ...

S1: Yes. So did you always share the meals together? You all ...

S2: Yes.

S1: ... ate as one family.

S2: Yes.

S1: Really. Yes. And what about washday? What would happen when it came to washday? You say it was one small room downstairs?

S2: Yes. Well, you washed outside.

S1: Which day was washday?

S2: Monday was washday. And that was a nightmare. No matter how poorly I felt I would not stop at home on washday.

S3: On washday.

S1: And it was always a Monday.

S2: And if it was in the holidays it was my job to turn the mangle, which was a great, big one. You know? Not the small type.

S1: Yes.

S2: And ...

S1: And you say you did it outside?

S2: They did it outside.

S1: Even if it was raining?

S2: Yes. And there were all buckets: one with bleach, one soaking soiled things, one with ...

S3: Blu?

S2: Blu. Yes.

S1: Yes.

S2: A Blue Reckit's

S3: Yeah.

S2: Blu. And ...

S1: One of those little bags? Would they the bag in it and leave it in or would they just dip it in and out a bit?

S2: I think they'd dip it in and out a bit ...

S1: Yes.

S2: ... until it ... Yes, because ...

S3: Until it was blue enough.

S2: Yes.

S3: Yeah.

S1: And they'd save it again. Yes.

S2: Yeah. And the soap, of course, was a big piece of green, hard soap. And we had the washboard and the dolly tub.

S1: Yes.

S2: Yes. And, of course, if it was dry it would ... not raining, it would be fine: you could get the clothes dried. And you would iron your sheets by putting them through the mangle again. You didn't have to iron those.

S1: Oh, really!

S2: It pressed them.

S1: Once they were dry.

S2: Yes. You folded them and pressed them through the mangle.

S1: Oh! That was labour saving wasn't it?

S2: It was.

S1: And how did it ... Did you have long lines, long clotheslines to dry them on?

S2: We did. But we also had hedges. You know?

S1: Oh, you put them over the hedges.

S2: You put them on the hedge. Because my auntie from Bank House would come with washing for the four of them. They'd call at Mr Talbot's and get their washing ... his washing, because Mrs Talbot had died by that time. And ... No, Mrs Talbot hadn't died by that time. I can't ...

S1: She perhaps wasn't well enough?

S2: No, because ... no. Yes. I think she wasn't well enough. Although she did use a smoothing iron and she used to iron most of the village men's collars. The stiff collars.

S1: Yes.

S2: You know?

S1: Yeah. Oh right.

S2: And she had quite a nice little living out of that, I think.

S1: Yeah. Ah. Umm.

S2: But then, of course, there were four of us and three of the other family ...

S1: Yes.

S2: ... all washing together. Three sisters, and the air was blue most times. Cabbages would fly, and everything. You know?

S1: Did everyone change their beds each week?

S2: Oh yes.

S1: So that's going to be an awful lot of sheets all to be washed.

S2: That's right.

S1: As well as clothes.

S2: Yes. And, of course, the clothes weren't like they are today.

S1: No?

S2: They were wool trousers and things.

S1: Right. Yes.

S2: You know.

S1: Yes.

S2: And serge.

S1: Yes.

S2: So it was ...

S1: And it didn't change ... at least people didn't change their clothes as often in those days.

S2: Oh no. No, you had to make do with them for a week, I think.

S3: Yes.

S1: I think so

S3: Yes. I think you wore them for a week.

S1: And then just had ... changed them just, I suppose. Did you have special clothes to wear on a Sunday? Or Not?

S3: Your Sunday best.

S1: Sunday best?

S2: Well, yes. I remember having one dress and it was a big event if you got a new dress.

S1: Yes.

S2: And this one was pale green with red little flowers over it. I always remember that.

S1: Yes. So special wasn't it, to have a new dress?

S2: It was special.

S2: But, yes, apart from that you just didn't have new clothes did you?

S3: No.

S2: Because I had pass-me-downs from me cousins.

S1: Yes.

S3: Yeah.

S1: Shared. Yes, that's right.

S3: I think everybody had hand-me-downs in those days.

S2: They did.

S1: It didn't feel different.

S3: No. We were all the same.

S2: That's right. Yes. It was a lovely place to live for a child at ...

S3: Oh yes.

S2: ... Stockwell Heath. You know? Because it was such a nice little community, you knew how far you could go—we couldn't go any further than the bottom of the hill; we didn't go past Mrs Jones down Hamley Lane, as we called it.

S1: Yeah.

S2: It's called Moor Lane now isn't it?

S1: Yes it is. Yes.

S2: And then up to the farm, but no further. We didn't ... yeah.

S1: And the winters up there must have been quite hard, was it.

S2: Well, of course, the 1947 winter cut us off well and truly. And Dad, Uncle Harry, and Mr Goodall dug a big way through the snow, from the bottom of the hill to the bottom of Heath Way. You know?

S1: Gosh! That must have been something.

S2: Because it was all level with the tops of the hedges.

S1: Really? Yes. Yes. How did you manage then? Just had to walk through to get food and things?

S2: Well, I do remember me mum and Aunt Anne going out at eight o'clock in the morning to walk to Rugeley to get ...

S3: Bread ...

S2: ... groceries.

S1: Essentials.

S2: Yes.

S3: Yes.

S2: But Luke Mellor or George would come with the tractor, over the fields, and throw us some bread.

S1: Oh did he.

S2: To the bottom of the hill.

S1: Yes. That was a big help then.

S2: Yes it was. It was.

S1: Yes.

S2: So ...

S1: Did your parent ... did your mum make bread at all or ...?

S2: No.

S1: Always bought the bread.

S2: Yes.

S1: Yes.

S2: No, me mum didn't make bread. She was a very cook pastry cook ...

S1: Yes.

S2: ... and cakes, but I don't remember us having any homemade bread.

S1: And did it freeze the pond? Up there when it was wintertime?

S2: Oh yes. Yes, and the boys from the village used to come up and slide on the pond.

S1: Right.

S2: And, of course, at night time, when they'd gone—well, teatime—we had the pond and we'd got the slides already made.

S1: Yes. Bet you had some great fun on there. Yes.

S2: Yes.

S1: Looking back, I'm sure the winters were colder. Do you think the winters were colder in those days than they are today?

S2: Really, more definite seasons ...

S3: Yes.

S2: ... weren't they?

S1: Yes.

S3: Yes. There were more definite seasons, yes.

S2: Yes.

S1: And you didn't really have the clothes to keep you warm that children today have got, did you?

S2: Oh no.

S1: What would ...

S2: No, you'd have ...

S1: ... be wearing when you were sliding?

S2: ... chapped knees.

S2: Yes.

S2: Chapped knees and hands and hot aches. I remember the hot aches a lot.

S3: Yes.

S2: When you tried to warm them up it would be ...

S3: Yeah.

S2: ... really painful.

S1: Because your knees wouldn't be covered would they?

S2: No.

S1: You didn't have tights or ...

S2: No, had three-quarter-length socks.

S1: Up to the knees.

S2: Yes.

S1: Yes.

S2: And then you didn't wear long skirts.

S1: No.

S2: Or anything neither.

S3: No.

S2: Yeah.

S3: No. And there was no central heating, you see, in the houses were there?

S1: No.

S2: No.

S1: I was just coming on to that .

S2: No, you'd just got your fire.

S1: Just one fire in the whole place?

S2: In the range, yes.

S1: Yes.

S2: Yes.

S1: And so did ... Where was the cooking done on the range?

S2: On the range. Oh yes. Yes, everything was done on there.

S1: So you all lived in one room and cooked in that same room and ...

S2: Yes.

S1: ... washed-up in there. Was the sink in the corner where the tap was? Or ...

S2: Yes, we'd got another little partition. You know, a little scullery.

S1: A little scullery had where the tap was.

S2: With a tap and a brownstone sink.

S1: Right.

S2: Yes.

S1: Yes.

S2: And then we'd got a pantry, which was as big as the scullery.

S1: Right.

S2: We used to have the stone slabs round to put the sides of the beef ...

S3: Keep everything cold.

S1: Yes.

S2: Yes, and ... which we rubbed with saltpetre to preserve it.

S1: Yes.

S2: Etcetera.

S1: Yes.

S2: Yes, it was ...

S1: So you kept your own animals and actually killed them and butchered them?

S2: Well, I think a qualified butcher would come and kill.

S1: Right.

S2: You know.

S1: Yes.

S2: And they would have a portion of the pork, I suppose. But we were sent out of the way when that was ... But we'd very often not get ...

S1: Far enough.

S2: Far enough away not to hear the pigs squealing.

S3: Squealing. No I was right on it. You know. Man next door used to kill.

S2: Did he?

S3: His and ours and ... It was just something that happened.

S2: It was, yes. Yes.

S1: So you went to school then, from ...

S2: Yes.

S1: Stockwell Heath?

S2: Yes, I did start school while we were in Chatter Pie Row

S1: Right.

S2: I was four when I started and ... yes. I loved school and I couldn't wait to get there, you know? So ...

S1: It's nice to feel like that isn't it? You used to walk down to school?

S2: Yes. Although I did have a little bike, but when me brother started school—we were at Stockwell Heath—and, yes, I used to give him a lift on me bike.

S1: Oh did you?

S2: Yes.

S1: Yes. Where did he sit or stand?

S2: Oh, he sat on the seat.

S1: And you stood up.

S2: While I stood up and peddled, yes.

S1: So you'd come all the way down; but not up the hill on the way back did you? Did you walk that bit with him on the bike? Did you get up?

S2: I presume so.

S1: I can't imagine you managing to get up that hill with a school child.

S2: No, I don't think so. No. I don't know. It's [Laughs] Doesn't look very steep now does it?

S1: Till you drive up it.

S2: But I remember it being quite steep.

S1: Yes.

S2: Yeah.

S1: What do you remember about the school?

S2: I remember ...

S1: Remember your teachers?

S2: Yes. I can't remember, I think it was ... I can't remember her name at all, but she was caught burning food coupons in the ... there was a hollow log, a hollow tree, by the side of the cemetery. And she was caught burning coupons in there. And I think she was dismissed from the school.

S1: Oh dear.

S2: But I can't remember what her name was.

S1: Why would she have been doing that?

S2: I don't know.

S1: No.

S2: Some fraud and thing.

S1: Right.

S2: I don't know. But ...

S1: So that's one of the teachers got dismissed.

S2: Yes.

S1: What a shame! Yeah.

S2: And then Mrs Shaw was there wasn't she?

S3: Mrs Shaw, yes.

S1: Yes.

S2: There was Diane, Glynis, and Richard.

S3: 1947, Mrs Shaw came.

S2: Oh, was that ...?

S3: Because she came the day I started school.

S2: Oh, right. Yes, I couldn't remember times. But Tom ... I know after the year after the war we had a party: the first time we had a school party. And we all had to take our cups and plates and that, and coming from that part... I think we had fish-paste sandwiches and jelly.

S1: Yes.

S2: I think that was our party.

S1: Red jelly?

S2: Yes, red jelly. And Tom was very ill when he got back to the Bank House and he was just paralysed; he couldn't move. And he was there, in the armchair, for about a week or more before they allowed him to be moved back home. We had to have a taxi, take taxis to take him from Colton up to Stockwell Heath, and he was ... they thought it was polio.

S1: Right.

S2: But it wasn't and he got over it. But what it was, nobody knows, you know.

S1: There was quite a lot of polio around wasn't there at that time.

S2: Oh there was, yes.

S1: Yes.

S2: Yes, it was a big fear at that time.

S1: Did anyone in the village actually contract polio that you knew of?

S2: No, I don't think so.

S3: I can't remember anyone.

S1: No.

S2: No.

S3: No.

S2: No. But, you know, it was a fear.

S1: Yes.

S2: That you would have ...

S1: But you enjoyed school. What subjects did you study at school? What sort of topics did you remember learning there, or do you have any memories of that?

S2: Well, I do remember Mr Broughton was very keen on his intelligence tests, and you had this hundred questions to answer within ten minutes or something like that, you know?

S1: Yes.

S2: That might be an exaggeration but that's what it seemed like.

S1: And it probably helped you towards your 11+ did it?

S2: That's right, yes it did. And I know he used to ask me to sing by myself. And I ...

S1: Oh you could sing?

S2: Well, I ... perhaps I was but I can't sing two notes together now. [Laughter]

S1: So was that in a singing lesson or in an assembly or ...?

S2: No, that must be assembly and ...

S1: Yes.

S2: ... then suddenly he'd say: 'Maureen Shipley! You sing this song!' You know.

S1: Right. Yes..

S2: So ...

S1: Did you have assembly every day? Do you remember?

S2: Yes, we did have prayers every day.

S1: Yes. Always in the morning?

S2: Yes. Yes, and of course then we went to church on the Ascension Day and things like that.

S3: We went quite a lot to church didn't we?

S2: Yes.

S3: Went a lot of times.

S2: Yes.

S1: And did the vicar come in to the school as well?

S3: Yes.

S2: Yes.

S1: So it was very much linked to the church?

S2: That's right, yes. Yes.

S1: What else do you remember about school? The toilets?

S2: Yes, I remember the toilets. You didn't go unless you really had to because it was so cold. The wind would blow through wouldn't it? Yes, just the wooden seats and a big hole that went ... let everything go down to a middle channel. And the boys said they had to clean that out, you know? So ...

S1: Separate boys and girls was it?

S2: Either side of this channel, yes. Boys went in one side, we went in the other. Yeah, and the dentist ...

S1: Was it a bit smelly? [Laughs] Sorry!

S2: Well, didn't notice the smell so much because we were used to that at home.

S1: Yeah.

S2: I mean we had the toilet with the bucket underneath, you know?

S1: Yes.

S2: So that was just par for the course.

S1: And did they come and collect that?

S3: No

S2: No. No you had to bury it. Yes. Bury ... dig a big hole and bury it. And just remember where you'd buried it last time so that ...

S3: You did.

S2: ... you had another patch.

S1: Yes. How often would you empty that then?

S2: Oh it would have to be emptied every week really.

S1: Once a week.

S2: Yes.

S1: Sorry, I interrupted you. You were just going to tell me about the dentist.

S2: Oh yes.

S1: Dentist in school.

S2: Dentist Duck used to come.

S1: Right.

S2: And we were absolutely terrified of him because you stood ... it went in the North Room didn't we? You stood in a long row waiting to be seen.

S1: Yes.

S2: And he'd got his chair there with a bucket of cold ... clear water on the one side and a bucket of blood on the other. Because once he'd pulled the tooth out you could spit into this bucket and wash your mouth out with water.

S1: So he was actually ... You were queuing up to go and have teeth pulled out?

S2: Yes.

S1: Gosh! Not an examination or anything first? Just check...

S2: No. No, he just checked us and then pulled it out if it needed to be ...

S1: And did your parents ... Your parents weren't there with you?

S2: Oh no.

S1: No.

S2: No. In fact, I ... One of my cousins, Mary, I must have cried out at something and Mary said something to him and he smacked her, the dentist did, for daring to say something. [Laughs]

S1: Oh gosh! He was very strict.

S2: He was. And everybody, all over the region really, they were terrified of dentists because of what he was like. You know that it took my husband till he was at least 40 before he'd go to the dentist! He was really frightened of them, all because of Dentist Duck.

S1: And did you ever go on any trips out from the school or ...?

S2: Oh yes. Once a year we went to Rhyl and we had a sixpence and an orange from the school. It was a lovely day out: we ... I don't remember it ever raining, so...

S1: On the bus or on the train did you?

S2: Go on the bus, yes. Yes, it would come and ... It was a great event because we never went on holidays or anything. And ...

S1: I know. And did you take a pack up with you? Did you take some sandwiches with you or something?

S2: We must have done.

S1: Yes.

S2: I think we must have done although I can't really remember ...

S1: No.

S2: ... actually doing it, you know?

S1: No.

S2: But I can't remember either going to a café or anything, for anything to drink, so, yes, it must have been a packet. Bread and jam again!

S1: Yes.

S2: Yes.

S1: And you left Colton school at 11 did you then?

S2: Yes.

S1: Yes

S2: And then went to the high school.

S1: Yes.

S2: 1949.

S1: In Stafford was that?

S2: Yes.

S1: Yes.

S2: Yes. So, yes, it was a big adventure.

S1: Yes. How did get there?

S2: We used to go to cycle to the Trent Valley station. Go on the train to Stafford and then walk from the station to the Oval, which was nearly to English Electric—it was quite a walk through the other side, you know. Which was alright really if you hadn't got your hockey boots, your hockey stick, your satchel full of books. You know. And ...

S1: Were there several of you doing that together?

S2: Yes. Monica from the farm ...the manor.

S1: Yes.

S2: Dorothy Cooper.

S1: Yes.

S2: Bradbury.

S3: My sister, Barbara.

S2: Yes, Barbara. Barbara Lycett, Sheila Preston, and myself.

S1: Yes. All girls!

S2: Yes.

S1: Do you think the girls seemed to achieve more down at the school than down here?

S2: Oh but ...

S3: It was a girls' school.

S2: Yes it was a girls' school that we went to.

S1: Right. Oh I see.

S2: And the boys went to Rugeley Grammar.

S1: Oh, I understand.

S2: Yes.

S1: Yes.

S2: So ...

S1: So the boys didn't have to go so far.

S2: No. Geoffrey ... Wardle

S1: Wardle?

S2: That's right. And what was his older brother's name? It was Geoffrey and ... Colin! Wasn't there?

S3: I can't remember.

S2: It was Colin the younger one. Yes, we were quite a ...

S2: Mr Broughton really had quite a lot ...

S1: It was a success.

S2: Yeah.

S1: Yes. And did you have a lot of homework to do from ...

S2: Yeah.

S1: ... junior school or from secondary school? From either of them?

S2: Well, from Colton we didn't have homework

S1: No.

S2: But your high school, yes, you did have quite a lot of homework. Whether I was just slow at doing it or not I don't know, but with oil lamps and things as well it was quite ... I'd got to get on with it quickly.

S1: Quickly, yes.

S2: And it was a big relief to get down to Colton and with the electric lights and the bathroom, you know.

S1: Yes.

S2: Yes.

S1: Right! I'm going to go back to home life then, Maureen. I'm just thinking about cooking and so on. So, you would have bread and jam for tea, you mentioned. And what ... Would you have a cooked breakfast in the morning before you went to school or would you just have a ...

S2: No.

S1: What would you eat in the morning? Anything? Porridge or anything?

S2: Oh we'd have something to eat.

S1: Yes. You don't remember?

S2: I don't remember. Probably egg.

S1: Oh right.

S2: Which was the powdered egg, of course.

S1: Oh right, yes. You didn't have chickens?

S2: Well, we did, yes, but I don't remember ... We also had the powdered egg.

S1: Yes.

S2: And that would be for breakfast.

S1: Right. That would mix up into like a scrambled egg would it?

S2: Yeah, so I think that's more or less what we had.

S1: Yes.

S2: Your memory plays tricks, isn't it?

S3: It does, yeah.

S2: Some things are quite sharp and others ...

S1: Yes. You're right. All cooked on the range of course.

S2: Yes.

S1: Would the kettle be on there all the time?

S2: All the time, yes.

S1: So what would you drink? Would you drink a hot drink or ...?

S2: Well, yes, you'd have tea. You'd have a cup of tea.

S1: Everybody had a cup of tea. With sugar?

S2: Yes.

S1: In those days? Did you?

S2: Oh yes, well ...

S1: You managed to get sugar?

S2: You didn't have much but you did have a bit of sugar in your tea. Yes. Milk, of course, we got from the farm so ...

S1: And what about lunchtime? Would you stay at school on weekdays?

S2: Yes. And we used to sit in a row against the wall in the playground.

S1: Oh! Outside!

S2: Outside mainly, if it was dry.

S1: You took a packed lunch. What would you have for that? Can you remember?

S2: No.

S1: Or a drink?

S2: Probably be bread and jam. Well, you'd have your bottle of milk wouldn't you? From ...

S1: Provided at school?

S2: Yes.

S1: Yes.

S2: At school. Yes.

S1: Yes.

S2: Yes, and when we got to the high school we would be able to buy a penny bun, which was from Robinsons' cake shop.

S1: Right.

S2: And it had got sugar on. That was beautiful buns.

S1: You can remember that!

S2: I can. [Laughter]

S1: Yes.

S2: Oh yes, and you used to have to have half a crown every Monday to take to school for games money. Now, you provided all your own games kits so what the money was for ... I suppose it was for hiring the fields and that.

S1: Pitches.

S2: Yeah.

S1: It was quite a lot of money in those days though, wasn't it.

S2: It was! And I would have their last half crown that they'd got, you know.

S1: Yes, and the uniform as well. It would have been expensive to go to the high school.

S2: Yes it was. Yes.

S1: Yes.

S2: Very expensive because you'd got indoor shoes, outdoor shoes, plimsolls, ...

S1: Yes.

S2: ... gym kit for actually doing the gym, you know. Gymnastics.

S1: Yes.

S2: And you ...

S3: It makes you realise how much your parents gave up for you.

S2: Yes.

S3: You didn't realise at the time do you?

S2: No, that's right.

S3: because ... you know.

S2: I mean they must have been really ...

S?: Yeah.

S2: ... horrified when they saw the long list of things that had to be provided.

S1: That was the downside of passing the 11+ wasn't it?

S2: Oh yes. And the neighbours at Stockwell Heath, we used to ... you know, as I say, it was a very ... you were welcome in any house.

S1: Yes.

S2: You know. And Christmas time we were asked to do the carol singing. Well, there was only me brother and I and Tom sounded like a little hoarse frog when he was singing. But we got to Mrs Toys and she would always invite us to ... we sang outside and then they'd invite us in to sing again because they'd got a party. And we would have an apple and an orange or something and then a little present off the tree.

S1: oh.

S2: I can't remember what the presents were ...

S1: No.

S2: ... but it was the event that ...

S3: Yes.

S1: Oh yes.

S2: ... was so special, you know.

S1: So did you go to all the houses, carol singing?

S2: We did, yes, and ...

S1: Did you get invited in to most of them?

S2: Yes. We could have a mince pie in Mr and Mrs Bull's.

S1: Yes.

S2: And Harry, he was lived there.

S1: Yes.

S2: And an apple or an orange from Mrs Jones. Mrs Norman would give us a penny each. We had quite a number of pennies.

S1: Yes.

S2: It would come to about five pence, you know, in old money.

S1: I suppose there were quite a few more houses, because there was the row of houses wasn't there?

S2: That was the ...

S3: The barracks.

S2: The barracks.

S1: Yes

S2: Well, we only really came into contact regularly with Mr and Mrs ... with Mrs Hoare and Bertha because she was in a wheelchair with arthritis: a very delicate person, you know, her hands were so slim, slender, and opaque-looking weren't they? But she used to make lovely paper flowers. I don't know what she did with them.

S1: No.

S2: But she was always making paper flowers.

S1: Did you sit and watch her doing that? I bet that was fascinating to watch.

S2: It was, yes.

S1: Yes.

S2: And there was always a very strong smell of tea brewing, because it was always on the hob. You know?

S1: Yes.

S2: And then Sally Able was on the first one and she was a little, tiny little lady with ... all in black. Long, black skirts, etc. And there was a lovely gooseberry bush under her window and the biggest gooseberries you've ever seen, and of course we were told we should never touch those.

S1: For what reason?

S2: Because ... well, I did find out a bit later that she emptied the poo out of her bedroom window all over this gooseberry bush every morning.

S1: And it seemed to thrive on it then.

S2: Oh it did it good, yes.

[Laughter]

S1: Good job you were warned then, not to eat them wasn't it?

S2: I know, but you didn't take much notice of it did you?

S3: Did you eat them?

S2: Oh yeah. Yes, then there was the farm: Mr and Mrs Norman and Fred.

S1: Yes.

S2: And Mr and Mrs Deakin used to live in the cottage ...

S1: In the cottage.

S2: ... at the bottom.

S1: Yes.

S2: I loved going there because you went over a bridge to get to the front door.

S3: The brook by it.

S2: Yes.

S1: Very picturesque.

S2: Yes, it was, and the door... the garden was well maintained as well.

S1: Yes.

S2: The lovely flowers, etcetera. Yes, and ...

S1: Idyllic place to grow up, wasn't it?

S2: Oh it was. Yes.

S1: Yes.

S2: And Mr and Mrs Toy were absolutely marvellous with children.

S1: Yes.

S2: They loved children; hadn't got any of their own.

S1: Right.

S2: And we used to help with everything: pulping the mangles, I used to do, and feeding the chickens, and getting all the windfalls in the autumn.

S1: Yes. And they welcomed you there?

S2: Oh yes.

S1: Yes.

S2: Yes. They ... We used to go haymaking with them and, you know.

S1: Yes.

S2: It was a lovely childhood.

S1: Yes.

S2: Yes.

S1: But in the evenings, coming home from school, did you have a cooked meal then in the evening after school?

S2: Yes.

S1: With your vegetables and so on. What about Christmas dinner? Do you remember having a special meal for Christmas?

S2: Oh yes! It would be Christmas ... with chicken, of course.

S1: Yeah.

S2: Very little else.

S1: Not turkeys in those days? It was chicken? Yes?

S2: Well, we didn't have turkeys.

S1: No?

S2: No.

S1: Most people had chickens didn't they? I think. Yes.

S3: Don't have chicken throughout the year did you?

S2: Not really.

S3: Just at Christmas.

S2: Yes, it was a Easter ...

S1: Yes.

S2: ... Christmas, wasn't it?

S3: Yes.

S1: With all the trimmings?

S2: Yes, you'd have your stuffing and roast potatoes.

S1: Yes. Would your mum make a pudding?

S2: Yes, oh yes. With the sixpence in. Well, a threepenny bit, the silver threepenny.

S1: Yes.

S2: Joeys, they were called, weren't they?

S1: Little Joeys. Just one would it have been?

S2: Oh yes. I've still got mine. [Laughs]

S1: How many times did you get it? Just the once?

S2: I can't remember really. I can't remember.

S1: No.

S2: Yes, I've got about four Little Joey ...

S1: Yeah.

S2: ... threepenny bits.

S1: Yes. That's nice.

S2: Yeah.

S1: Memories. Yes. And would you have crackers or anything like that?

S2: No.

S1: No.

S2: No, we didn't have crackers but we did make our own paper chains.

S1: Yes.

S2: You know, that you would put up.

S1: Yes.

S2: And we had a little Christmas tree.

S1: Yeah. A real one?

S2: But it would only be a little one. Yes. A little. Yes.

S1: And what would you put on that? Do you remember decorating it? Would you decorate it or would your parents decorate that?

S2: Well, we would help but it was only homemade things.

S1: Yes.

S2: You know? Little homemade angels and things like that.

S1: Yes. Special.

S2: Yeah.

S1: Yes.

S2: And of course we only had the radio, no wireless as it was called, with the big—what were they called?—the big ...

S3: Accumulator.

S2: Accumulator, yeah.

S3: Yeah.

S2: Which we had to take to Degge,s garage in Rugeley to be charged up.

S?: Charged up.

S2: Yeah.

S1: Yes. How would you get in to Rugeley?

S2: On the bus.

S1: With a big accumulator?

S2: Yes. Well, they weren't that big. I suppose they were like that, weren't they?

S1: Oh yes.

S2: Yeah. But, yes, we ... I've forgotten what I was going to say.

S1: About the radio at Christmas time? You would listen to it would you?

S2: Yes, but mainly only the news.

S1: Yes.

S2: Later on we would have the Luxembourg, Radio Luxembourg.

S1: Yes.

S2: You know. But only for a short time.

S1: Did you listen to ... Was there a king or queen's speech for you to listen to during ...

S2: Yes.

S1: ... on Christmas day?

S2: Yes.

S3: Yes

S1: ... on the radio?

S2: Yes.

S1: And would you always listen to that?

S2: Oh yes.

S1: Would you have a stocking at Christmas time? Did you have stockings?

S2: We did. We would have one penny and a little orange—tangerine I think it was—and an apple. And just one present. And I remember my brother having a little peddle aeroplane it was, not a car. And of course they hadn't painted it early enough and the paint wouldn't dry, and so on the bedroom floor there were like red lines of red paint. [Laughs] As he went backwards and forwards on the one spot, you know, because that was all he could do. There wasn't room for anything else.

S1: Do you remember a favourite gift you had at any time?

S2: I remember ... Mrs Taylor was my godmother and she bought me one of these little black men, you know, money box where the hand lifted up and put your pennies into his mouth.

S1: Oh yes.

S2: I do remember that.

S1: Yes.

S2: I had a doll at one point as well, but I don't remember much else.

S1: Did you play with the doll much? Do you remember playing with dolls much or were you really mostly just out and about?

S2: Mainly out and about.

S3: Yes.

S1: What games do you remember playing, say, in the playground at school?

S2: Yes, there was a Creeping Jenny where the one you stood up with your face away from everybody against the wall and everyone was started from the other end of the playground, creeping up on you. You'd turn around and if you saw them moving then they were out.

S1: Yes.

S2: You know. And skipping and ...

S3: Hopscotch.

S2: Yes, hopscotch. And then playing ball—three balls ...

S1: Against the wall?

S2: ... was the most I managed.

S1: Yeah. Against the wall, did you play?

S2: Yes. Or up in the air.

S1: Yes. And did they go with seasons? Did you tend to ...

S2: Oh yes. There was definite ...

S1: It was the marble season.

S2: Yes.

S1: Yes.

S2: That's right.

S1: Different seasons.

S2: Yes, different seasons. I don't know how it was ever designated as this season or that season, but, yeah, it did, it went around.

S1: Yes. Everyone just played together.

S2: Yes.

S1: Do you remember anybody being left out at all or was it really just very friendly down at the school.

S2: I think it was very friendly.

S1: Yes.

S2: I can't remember people being left out.

S1: No.

S2: And I don't remember feeling left out, you know.

S1: No.

S2: No.

S1: Yeah. Coming back to the house then and, I mean, thinking about hygiene really and you just lived all on top of each other. How did everyone manage for getting washed and bathed?

S2: Well, you'd have a wash in cold water in a morning.

S1: Right. In your room or downstairs.

S2: Oh no, in the kitchen. You know.

S1: In the scullery?

S2: In the scullery.

S1: Ah!

S2: Yes. It would just be hands and face.

S1: Yes.

S2: And, you know, bath once a week in the tin bath in front of the fire.

S1: And the adults as well would have to go in there?

S2: Oh yes.

S1: How did they ... Did they not worry about privacy or did they just...

S2: Well, of course ...

S1: ... take it in turns to go in there?

S2: They would take it in turns I suppose. We were always in bed.

S1: Yes.

S2: They didn't ... I mean, seven o'clock you were in bed.

S1: Yes.

S2: And that was it. You know. There was no question about it.

S1: No.

S2: So ... And you were ready for it.

S3: Yeah, definitely.

S2: Because you'd been playing out all day long and ...

S1: Getting to school and back?

S2: That's right, yes. And I was up early in a morning, sometimes to get up with dead and then ending up black-leading the grate in me nighty, you know.

S1: Yes.

S2: Ending up as black as the grate was. But I must have been about nine at the time, when I was doing that.

S1: Yes.

S2: And I loved washing up, I remember.

S1: Did you?

S2: Yes.

S1: And what did you use to wash up?

S2: Oh, well, it would be like a soft soap and a dishcloth. You know.

S1: Yes.

S2: Yeah.

S1: And would you ... You'd use hot water for that

S2: From the kettle.

S1: Kettle ...

S2: Yes.

S1: ... the hot water through to the ...

S2: Yes.

S1: ... scullery.

S2: Yeah.

S1: Was it ... did it ... Was it safe? Were people just aware of the heat and so on and so kept out of the way? I mean, today there's so much about 'keep the kettle out of reach of children' and so on, but in a home like you're describing everyone would be living ...

S2: Oh yes. I mean ... Yes, I mean that was it: it was hot.

S1: You just kept away.

S2: And you didn't ... yes. And at night time, if it was cold, we used to love the dog to get behind your legs by a chair—keep the draft off.

S1: Yes. What about getting into bed at night? It was very cold wasn't it.

S2: Yes. Well, we used to have the plate out of the oven, the oven plate. You know. And wrap it up in a bit of blanket and put that in the bed.

S3: Can't remember that.

S2: Or a brick.

S3: Yes.

S1: Yes.

S2: Yes. And we used to ...

S1: Did you run and jump into the bed quickly. You know.

S2: Oh yes. You didn't hang around.

S1: And you didn't get up and go down to the toilet at night. You'd use a potty under the...

S2: Yes.

S1: ... bed. Yes.

S2: Yeah. We used to make our own rugs of course, with the ... Nothing was ever thrown away. You used to cut it all up into strips and ...

S1: So when your clothes were not able to be passed on to anyone else, because they were too bad, ...

S2: That's right.

S1: ... then they be cut up.

S2: They'd be cut up and made into a rug.

S1: Yes.

S2: Yes.

S1: Would they be all round the house? Up in the bedrooms and downstairs as well?

S2: Well, there was ... Yes, there was one in the bedroom, I remember. I small one just by ... to put your feet on when you got out of bed. And then one in the ... by ... in the hearth. You know? But ... Yes.

S1: Yes.

S2: But they were so dust gatherers ...

S3: Yeah. Oh yeah.

S2: ... that you had to really beat it until there was no more dust flying out of it.

S1: Yes.

S2: Put them out on the line would you to do that?

S2: Yes.

S3: Only like a hessian wasn't it? Like a sack.

S2: Yes it was a sack.

S1: I think some of crafts are coming back in now.

S2: Well, they are and they're very, very expensive.

S1: Yes.

S2: In fact, I've still got the hook and that.

S3: Yeah, I have as well.

S2: Yes.

S1: Yes.

S2: And I often think, if I could get a sack I would make another rug. You know.

S1: Yes. My daughter's been teaching it to the children in her school actually.

S2: Oh has she?

S1: Absolutely. It's coming back in I think.

S2: Yes.

S1: Yes. So, you know, what happened then if someone was ill? Could ... Did you have to pay for the doctor?

S2: You did, yes.

S1: Did you call the doctor or did you try and manage without?

S2: You did try and manage without. You didn't call him for coughs and colds or anything.

S3: No.

S1: Did you have your own ...

S2: I used to get a lot of boils and—even between me fingers and that, you know?—and I had 24 around that one wrist. And in fact I've still got some of the ...

S1: Scars.

S2: ... scars. I did have to have the doctor for that and I used to have to eat sulphur tablets?

S1: And did they work? Did it ... did they improve?

S2: Well, they said it improved the bloods, you know, your blood, so ... They weren't too unpleasant.

S1: No.

S2: But they were big like, you know.

S1: Yes.

S2: Like a half-crown size. And you used to have to suck it. They were green! [Laughs]

S1: Green? Yes.

S2: Yeah.

S1: And did you have lots of remedies for home cures, other than that?

S2: TCP was a good one for sore throats and cuts and bruises, you know. Syrup of figs for your bowels, and Aspirin I think. That was ...

S3: We used to have rosehip syrup.

S1: Yes.

S2: Rosehip syrup, yes. And the orange juice, ...

S1: Yes.

S2: ... which was thick orange juice.

S1: Because of course fruit wasn't that readily available was it? Unless it was the apples in the orchards and such.

S2: That's right.

S1: When they were fully grown.

S2: Yes. But we did used to store our apples and they would last till about March time.

S1: Yes.

S2: So ...

S1: But bananas and things like that?

S2: Oh no, you didn't have those.

S1: No.

S3: I can remember the orange juice that was bright orange, in a bottle about that big.

S2: That's right.

S3: And concentrated. I seem to think that you got that given.

S2: Yes, you did.

S1: The clinic.

S2: Yes, we did. And, of course, up to a certain age.

S3: Yeah.

S2: And we had Christine came along we were able to share her ...

S3: Yeah.

S2: ... her orange juice, you know.

S1: Yes.

S2: And the syrup of figs, of course, and the malt and ...

S3: Cod liver oil and malt.

S2: Cod liver oil and malt, yes. I used to have to have a spoonful of that every day.

S3: It was nice wasn't it that was?

S2: Yes, it wasn't bad was it.

S1: And did your mum used to make a lot of your clothes.

S2: No.

S1: I know you said you had pass-me-downs as well.

S2: No.

S1: No.

S2: No. Mum wasn't a sewer at all.

S1: No.

S2: In fact when I got to the high school I used to make my own dresses: backstitch ...

S1: Yes.

S2: ... all the seams because we hadn't got a ...

S1: In the sewing class?

S2: No, at home.

S1: No, at home. Did you?

S2: Because we hadn't got a sewing machine at home and ...

S1: Was that the uniform dress? The dress you wore to school?

S2: No. That was for a dress for going out.

S1: Yes. And where did you used to go out when you were older?

S2: Well, there used to be dances. All the villages had a dance.

S1: Yes.

S2: Used to go to Colton of course.

S1: Yes.

S2: Etching Hill, Slitting Mill.

S£: Haywood

S2: Haywood, yes.

S1: How would you get to those places?

S2: On our bikes.

S1: Yes. In your dresses.

S2: Yes.

S1: In your finery.

S2: Yes, the finery came at New Year's Eve. We used to go to the police ball and it was either in the Town Hall or the Drill Hall.

S1: Right. In Rugeley?

S2: In Rugeley.

S1: Yes.

S2: And used to wear bridesmaid's dresses. [Laughs]

S1: Did you? Yeah. And would anyone go to that then?

S2: Well, if ... Yes. You had to buy a ticket.

S1: Buy a ticket. Yes.

S2: Yes.

S1: Yes.

S2: But, yes. And then we'd have to walk home at two or three o'clock in the morning, you know?

S1: Yes.

S2: And me dress was all ripped around the bottom.

S1: And would there be a group of you?

S2: Yes. Oh yes.

S1: Do it together. Yes.

S2: Yes. I was fortunate in that I had older cousins.

S1: Yes.

S2: And so I was well looked after and well chaperoned. [Laughs]

S1: Yes.

S2: Yes.

S1: And looking back to your growing up days here, in Stockwell Heath, in Colton, do you look back to happy days?

S2: Oh yes. That's why we still keep coming back, although we have ... we don't have any relatives left in Colton now.

S1: No.

S2: It's still home. Yes.

S1: Yes.

S2: Yes.

S1: Yes. Happy days.

S2: Yes.

S1: Is there anything else you wanted to tell us about Maureen this morning?

S2: I don't think so. Oh I do! Yes. When I used to go to Gran's, if she was poorly I would be asked to sleep with her and it wasn't a chore at all because she had the most beautiful, thick feather mattress and feathered pillows, and you'd snuggle down into them, you know, and be as warm as a bug in a rug, really.

S1: Yes. Where did she live?

S2: In Bank House.

S1: Right.

S2: And she had the metal, you know, the brass head, bedsteads.

S1: Yes.

S2: And I used to have to cool me hand on the brass bedstead to put on her head to keep...

S1: Oh did you?

S2: Because of her headaches, you know.

S1: Really? Did she suffer quite a lot?

S2: She did, with headaches and ...

S1: Yes.

S2: Yeah. But ...

S1: You used to love going there then?

S2: Oh I did. Because we had very hard mattresses, you know. I think they were more straw than anything else.

S1: Yes.

S2: Yes. So there was no real comfort in your own bed.

S1: No?

S2: Not in comparison, anyway.

S1: No.

S2: No. So ...

S1: Yes.

S2: Yes. That's was one thing I wanted to tell you about.

S1: Yes. Anything else?

S2: Well, the slaughterhouses at Bank House were no longer used, but there were, you know, lots of rats and lots of ... all the sewers and whatnot and the drains coming from the slaughterhouses. And I do remember uncle Bill saying to me ... he took the manhole cover off halfway down the drive. 'When a rat comes, hit it with the spade.'

S1: Oh my goodness! Did you manage to do it?

S2: Well, he would be at the one end with the dog and he'd make a noise to make the rats come through.

S1: Yes.

S2: But every time I saw one I was too late.

S1: I bet you were glad weren't you? Did you really want to do it?

S2: No.

S1: No.

[Laughter]

S2: But they'd shoot past so quickly, you know, you didn't have a chance.

S1: Your reaction time would have to be so quick, wouldn't it, to do that?

S2: That's right, yes. And I used to go with him, not very often but occasionally, to have a look at the snares that he'd set.

S1: Oh right.

S2: For catching the rabbits.

S1: Rabbits.

S2: You know.

S1: Yes.

S2: Yeah.

S1: I expect that having wild rabbits was a real boon wasn't it, to the diet.

S2: Oh it was, yes.

S1: Give you protein.

S2: I mean, I don't suppose we were supposed to go and poach but we did.

S1: Yes. All around the fields?

S2: Mainly up the Hilliards they used to go. Yes.

S1: Yes. Did many people do that?

S2: I suppose so, yes.

S3: Yes.

S1: Yes?

S2: Yes.

S3: I think everybody ate rabbit didn't they in those days?

S2: They did, yes. Yes, it was ...

S1: You don't look back to a time a frugality. You don't look back to thinking it was hard times do you? You look back to happy times.

S2: Well, it was hard times.

S1: Yes.

S2: But you do appreciate what you've got now, more. Because everybody was in the same boat.

S1: Yes.

S2: You didn't ... There was none of this envy or 'they've got it, I need it', you know?

S3: Not at all.

S2: There was none of that.

S1: No.

S2: Because everybody was in, you know, the same.

S1: The same.

S2: Yeah. We didn't have television until I'd finished school. Dad always said, 'No. We're not having one until you've', the two of us had finished homework. You know. So we used to go to me auntie's to watch—what was it?—The Triffids, The Day of the Triffids.

S1: Day of the Triffids, yes.

S2: Yeah. And get absolutely terrified to come home.

[Laughter]

S1: Yes.

S2: Yeah.

S1: Of course the streets were quite dark in those days.

S2: Well, we didn't have any streetlights.

S3: No streetlights, no.

S2: No. And I do remember coming from Stockwell Heath, walking down to go to church with Gran, and I thought as I turned into the bottom of Heath Way I heard a man cough. I took to my heels and fled down. Now, coming back I'd still got to go past there, but it was a cow in the field on the top of the ... that was doing the coughing.

S1: Right. Yes.

S2: But, you know, it was frightening at the time.

S1: Yeah.

S2: And dark. But you didn't get frightened of people or any ...

S3: No.

S2: Not like now: you warn your children this might happen, that might happen, but ...

S1: Lot more trusting in those days.

S2: They were, yes.

S1: Doesn't mean to say there weren't things going on though does it. There were sometimes.

S2: No. I do remember, well, I was told after, I don't remember it at the time, but Gran stopped me walking hand in hand with a soldier going up the road. And she came, you know, out and stopped, you know, got hold of me and took me home.

S1: Yes. Do you remember the soldiers being here in the ...

S2: Oh yes. And we used to go and watch them. Come out of Sunday school, go over to the bridge and watch them cleaning the jeeps, etcetera, in the brook.

S1: Yes.

S2: This one day, a black soldier got hold of me and another couple of children and threw us over the other side of the road. And a jeep came so fast that he couldn't get over the bridge. He hit ... smashed into the bridge and rolled over and over and the two men in it were killed.

S1: Gosh.

S2: That black man had saved us but he'd sent us off home, so we didn't see the result.

S1: Yes.

S2: That anybody was dead. We didn't see any bodies or anything like that.

S1: No. He could see the danger.

S2: But he saw that he was coming so fast that he wouldn't make it. Very fast reaction.

S1: Marvellous. For you.

S2: And I didn't know whether I was dreaming half of this until Theresa Myatt said she was one of them with me, and she was older than I was. She was about six years older than me.

S1: Yes.

S2: And she remembers that as well. So I was pleased to have the chat with her, to confirm what I remembered, you know.

S1: Did you always go to Sunday school?

S2: Yes, most Sundays.

S1: Yes.

S2: Yes. And we used to have a little picture to stick in our books.

S1: Yes.

S3: Had a stamp.

S2: That's right, yeah. So ... And Dad used to love going to church but he was brought up as a Methodist really.

S1: Right?

S2: But he used to go to church and he would sing his heart out.

S1: Did you go with him?

S2: Sometimes. Not always.

S1: In the evening was that?

S2: Yes. In the evening. And they used to like him to go because in church nobody wants to sing out do they? When Dad led them they would sing as well. You know. He was a good singer. He sounded more like Harry Secombe.

S1: Really? Yes.

S2: Yes.

S1: Did he do any other entertaining at all with his voice? Or not? Did he?

S2: Oh no.

S1: Did he sing for you at home?

S2: Oh yes. And he played the piano, or the harp, or whatever instrument he could get his hands on.

S1: Did you have a piano at the house?

S2: Yes. In the Heath Way.

S1: Right. Once you came here.

S2: Yes. And when he was off sick, of course, for so long we applied for welfare but the man who came said 'Well, you've got a piano. Sell that.' And we didn't get any help from the welfare at all.

S1: Gosh!

S2: Yeah. So ... We didn't sell the piano because it was a lifeline, you know. Christmas time was lovely because we'd all get together and sing all the carols and everything. You know. So yes, a happy life.

S1: Yes.

S2: And due to me mum and dad.

S1: Well, thanks ever so much. That's just so interesting to us. Lots to think about. Thank you.

Colton History Society

All Our Stories



Dorothy Bradbury's story

Dorothy Bradbury.

S1: Marion Vernon

S2: Dorothy Bradbury

S1: This recording is being made for Colton History Society. Marian Vernon is interviewing Dorothy Bradbury on Thursday, 15 October 2009. Right Dorothy, would you like to tell us something about your family, when and where you were born.

S2: Well, I was born here in this house at Bank Top Cottage. My own family consisted of my father and my mother and my sister, Marjorie, who was just over ten years older than me. My grandparents, in the time of my childhood, lived in the village in Clerks House. My early memories. The very earliest memory I hold is of being taken to see a very old lady. I couldn't name her, but I can only guess that it was Miss Eleanor Parker because I know by 1941 she was well in her nineties. I do remember, of course, the 1941 bad winter. But previous to that, in the year before, incendiary bombs had fallen in the area around Colton. I do remember that one Saturday evening there was a slight panic in the house. My father heard noises and rushed outside and saw a great glow in the sky to the north of us. He made the assumption that the bombs had fallen on Manor Farm. He rushed back in to put his wellingtons on and tipped a bucket of coal over in the meantime. But fortunately as he and our neighbour, Bill Leek, walked across the field onto the peak of the Hilliards. They could see that the light in the sky was much farther away and it was around the Blithfield area that the other bombs had fallen. On the Sunday morning I felt very pleased with myself because I went with my father, with Bill Leek, and his son Tom, who is three years older than me, on a walk round the fields to see what we could find. I was very proud that I could go in my wellies but I'm quite sure I was carried for most of the way. I had a gas mask. It was a Micky Mouse gas mask, and when I started school I took it on my back every day.

S1: Where would it be kept in the house, Dorothy, the gas mask?

S2: I presume it would hang up in the passageway. It was in a little box, and other than practices I never actually wore it.

S1: [Laughs] A little brown box.

S2: Yes. I remember the black-out, of course, and having to be extremely careful that we didn't emit any light. Albeit we only had oil lamps. There will be more about electricity later. It was far away from the Bank Top area of Colton. Although, by then, before the war had come even, the village—even the lower half of Hollow Lane—did have that facility. But the 1941 bad winter. I remember Mr Hooley coming with a horse and cart, arriving at the top of the hill and delivering us a loaf of bread. He'd taken the horse and the cart to Rugeley to collect bread for us and our neighbours and themselves at the smallholding at Bank Top Farm.

S1: Did you always get your bread from Rugeley?

S2: Bread normally was delivered by the Tunncliffe bread bakery in Rugeley. Tunncliffe's shop was in Market Square. Now there's probably recently been, probably a takeaway or something like that, and nearby has been recently a shoe shop, which of course in those far off days was where we received our groceries from, either by delivery or by purchase. That was a big marvellous shop to me called George Masons. When you paid at the counter your money was put in a little pot on an overhead railway in the shop, a handle was pulled and it whizzed along to the office, was dealt with and then, if there was any change, it whizzed back.

S1: Right.

S2: Although I hated, absolutely hated, shopping in my smallest days, I did like going into George Masons.

S1: And was that near to the Town Hall then?

S2: Next but one to the Town Hall, the clock end of the Town Hall where ... the little bit that stands. In between George Masons and the entrance to the Town Hall ... Market Hall there was the small butchers shop. But I didn't really in the war time go to Rugeley much. I had many happy hours with my granny down in Colton.

S1: Right.

S2: I'll talk about that a bit more as I talk about family. So, and also at that time in the 1941 bad winter I have a memory of seeing my mother in, what I can only term, in mourning. Wearing black clothes. Her father had died on the borders of Wales in the February of that year, and that's my first recollection of seeing my mother, I think it was rather startling to me, that she was dressed all in black. And that would be the first time I'd ever seen her dressed like that.

S1: What sort of colours would she normally have worn?

- S2: She wore a lot of navy-blue. And believe it or not so do I. And sort of creams, and greys. White. In fact, I've still got a button box with buttons off a beautiful navy and white coat that she had.
- S1: Right.
- S2: I started school in those early war years, and of course to Colton School I went. I walked in the morning down to school. Initially being taken by Tom Leek and later on walking with the other children from the Hollow Lane area. We started school at nine o'clock and on pain of death it was if we were a few minutes late because school was quite, quite a trial shall I say, and immense hard work but it got me to the career that I was intending.
- S1: What happened when you were late?
- S2: You were smacked. And girls were smacked on the hand, on the arm quite hard for the slightest misdemeanour and boys were caned—including, I remember, a boy who accidentally dropped his desk lid and it made a bang. And he was sought by the headmaster, come out to the front and he caned him. And I was very pained thinking that he'd ... it was all an accident and yet he'd received the cane. It was a hard life under Mr Broughton's regime, but he was, I must admit, a very good teacher.
- S1: Did he teach all the children?
- S2: He taught all the children from the age of eight upwards. The younger children were taught in the other classroom. Those that now stand as you walk or ride past the school, on the frontage, on what is now, if you're looking at it from the road, on the left-hand side of the entrance door. The modern entrance door. But although there were four classrooms the other two were not used. In fact, the north room was used as the wood store for Mr Broughton's fire at home. We only had one cold-water tap and I'll leave it to your imagination what the toilet accommodation was like. Very, very antiquated. It did date from 1862 and it had not been altered in 1942.
- S1: And were the toilets across the yard?
- S2: They were outside and it was a very difficult way to get into the school garden because you went down an alleyway, which was enclosed, between the boys and the girls' toilet. It was not a pleasant journey down that little corridor. In fact you ran through holding your nose.

- S1: But there was a nice garden to go after ... were you allowed to play there or was it for growing vegetables?
- S2: No. I don't think... the garden was used for growing vegetables. I can only assume for vegetables. Certainly they were not eaten by the school children. Those who travelled a distance to school took sandwiches and all the children from the village, including myself, had to come home at lunchtime for their lunch and be back again for one o'clock.
- S1: That was quite a walk for you, wasn't it?
- S2: Yes. It took about fifteen minutes to get here and fifteen minutes to get back. So I'd basically got half an hour when I got home. If I was lucky and hadn't dallied on the way. I formed there great friendships with the children from Hollow Lane, some of whom, thank goodness, are still here today. Two of them, or three of them really, two brothers and a sister still living in Colton who I see regularly. The other friends have either moved away or, unfortunately, a great friend, Mary Hardcastle, died a few years ago. In 1947 again we had an incredible bad winter. A winter where the children from the outlying areas, and also from Blithfield parish who had started to come to Colton in the early '40s because their school at Admaston was closed due to an accident that the teacher had sustained on a Saturday evening, the children were moved to Colton en block on the Monday morning. And it must have been a terrible experience for them, to come from a happy little community school, shall I say, at Admaston to face a long journey on the bus, bringing their sandwiches and also the regime of Colton school must have been much harder. But some of them certainly survived and went on to great things. So it didn't harm us in anyway.
- S1: How many children were there?
- S2: From Blithfield, there would be only a small number. There might have been twenty, I can't really remember. But I do remember that day being concerned that they were so far from home and the little ones wouldn't even have a chance to go home at lunchtime. Because I was very small myself at the time, I had much empathy with them.
- S1: And were they mixed in the classes with you? Did they ...?
- S2: Yes, we were all together. To go back to the 1947 bad winter, it was quite a pleasant time at school. For most of that January to probably March, those who could got there for the usual nine o'clock and obviously we were registered and I assume we were given some work to do. But about 10:30 I would think, Mrs Broughton, the head's wife, appeared with a jug of cocoa. We all had cocoa and then were

dismissed for the rest of the day. Which was lovely but Dorothy had homework to do, and when I arrived home I used to sit by the fire in our small sitting room, mum had prepared a beautiful coke fire and it was lovely and warm. I did my homework as quickly as I could because my whole intention was to get out and play with the others in the snow. There was ... the road beyond Bank Top Farm was completely blocked with snow drifts, no one actually traversed the whole of the lane in those far off days because the road was blocked completely. I often remember now and visualise the very beautiful snow drifts but it was an horrendous time for the people who had to go to work or had to go shopping.

S1: What was the school like inside? Was it really cold? How did they keep it warm?

S2: It was either coke or, I think it was possibly coke-fired central heating.

S1: Oh, central heating.

S2: By the time I was there. When it was built, and still then there were the fireplaces in situ. But it was large-bore central heating pipes and very antiquated, to me, radiators around the rooms. It was actually very warm.

S1: Oh good.

S2: The caretaker came and stoked the fire on a regular basis and kept us very warm in the winter time, probably even too warm.

S1: Why do you think they sent you home then if it was warm there? Because perhaps it was warmer there for the children than lots of their homes were.

S2: It must well have been, but I think it was that was Miss, the other member of staff who didn't live in Colton couldn't get here and half the children were missing anyway.

S1: I see.

S2: Some of my friends, I believe, didn't go to school for six weeks. It didn't actually harm their education. When I think of at least two who are in the History Society today, two of my closest friends, who I will talk about in a few minutes.

S1: For six weeks the snow was here?

S2: Probably more than six weeks, yes. In the whole ... but the roads were actually blocked in the outer areas for six weeks. At the age of eleven, and this is why I now in retrospect realise while I was given the homework I took the 'Eleven Plus', and in my year I was the only one—there weren't many of us admittedly—in my year I was the only one who passed and I went to Stafford Girls High School. Subsequently two others followed me two years later who have remained friends throughout my life. And in previous years others had passed to go either to Rugeley Grammar School if they were boys or to Stafford Girls High School if they were girls. We travelled by train from Rugeley Trent Valley. We left Colton at about 7:40 in the morning on our bicycles and arrived in Stafford at about 8:30, if the train was on time. Many times we were late but we considered to be 'late excused', and I do remember once arriving at eleven o'clock when there was severe fogs. When I started my journeys it was steam pulled but by the time I had left some seven years later the railways had changed to diesel-pulled trains. And so I saw the emergence of the diesel on the railway and the demise of steam on the local traffic.

S1: Was that quite frightening to go down off to school ... did you go on your very own on the very first day?

S2: Yes. But of course along ... on the way to Rugeley I was able to catch up or was caught up by the others. The head's daughter, youngest daughter, Helen, who I still meet and speak to even today, was in the sixth form and there were two other girls from the village, Barbara Lycett and Monica Mellor, who were also making that journey.

S1: Right.

S2: And so I wasn't alone. And when we got to Stafford we had quite a long walk along from the station to the high school in Lichfield Road, and we were not allowed to go in any shops. No high school girl ever was allowed to go in a shop in Stafford. We were allowed to purchase whatever we could, be it a newspaper, a magazine, or if we had the material as ration books, sweets at the railway station. And when the train moved we could take our hats off.

S1: What did you wear? I was going to ask about the uniform.

S2: Navy, dark green and white. Our shirts were white. My gym-slips, or skirts when we reached the sixth form, were navy blue and our blazers were a lovely shade of bottle-green with the white fleur-de-lis on our badge pocket, which was the emblem of the school. And the school motto was 'Nisi dominus frustra', Accept the Lord build a house etc from one of the psalms. We travelled for those seven long

years, eventually joined by two other girls from Colton, and we had great fun on our journeys and formed a very close bond of friendship.

S1: So no boys went? Into Stafford grammar school at all?

S2: No, the boys went to Rugeley grammar school.

S1: Oh, there was a grammar school in Rugeley.

S2: Rugeley Grammar School had been founded in the time of the Elizabeth I and still continued to be a boys' school until the early 1950s and so my only regret in education is that I didn't go to the school where my father had gone. He also passed a scholarship from Colton school to go to Rugeley Grammar School in 1913, and I would have loved to have thought, now in years of old age, that I was educated in the same school as my father. But it wasn't to be. However, when I finished at the high school I trained as a teacher near Warrington and commenced work in 1957 at a primary school in Brereton. Today the juniors would be called Key Stage Two. I want to talk about the people who surrounded us: our neighbours and our friends. Close by our house were four cottages and those neighbours were immensely supportive to us and us to them in the years of my childhood. Up above us further along the lane the Hardcastles lived. Mr and Mrs Hardcastle and their children, some of whom were older than me, but their youngest daughter Mary became a very close friend. At the farm above at Bank Top Farm lived the Hooleys, incredibly good friends of ours to this day, in that occasionally I still see their son and it is a great joy when we meet. And we were also very, very close to the Mellor family at Manor Farm, something that has been retained right to this day; in that we are still in touch and still feel very close to the Mellor family, albeit now they are scattered about England and places far away. Our own house. This house Bank Top Cottage, where I was born, was first lived in, in my family, by my grandparents who moved here in 1906 with my father as a small boy. He too was educated at Colton school from 1906, albeit he had been to the infant school in Talbot Street in Rugeley. The school that still exists in Talbot Street was in those far off days the infant school and not the girls' school as it became in later years. My great-grandfather Cooper also came to live with my grandparents towards the end of his life, and so if we move forward to our son Andrew, five generations of the same family have lived in this house. A much loved house by all of us. And I have upstairs many photographs of the family and of the house. My parents moved here in 1930. They had been married in 1925 and my sister Marjorie was just about to start school when they moved here. We had a flush toilet from the day of my parents moving in. Albeit the water tank above was actually rainwater. The mains water came to Colton in the early '30s and our house was the first house to have mains water in the whole of the village, because my father fitted it himself.

As a young child in about 1940 I can remember him fitting the bath in the bathroom. By then we had a hot-water cistern, albeit the room was being prepared when war broke out but it took almost two years to get it all together. My father worked in a reserved occupation through the war and he worked for, initially, Rugeley Gas Company which became part of West Midlands Gas Board after nationalisation in 1947. And again I have many happy memories of my family in those years.

S1: So did your father ... how did he learn his plumbing?

S2: He had worked in the building trade. Having been very much a hands-on man, although he was educated at Rugeley Grammar School and was, if you read the log books at Colton school, a very, very clever young boy. He worked in an office when he started his life of work in the world and he hated it and he wished to work in the open air. And so he joined his uncle in the building trade—his uncle had his own business—and he worked for many years with his much-loved uncle. One of my granny's brothers. And towards the beginning of the war I would imagine that my great uncle retired and obviously building businesses were not probably the best thing at that time. And so he, my father sought work and he found much to his great joy that he was taken on as the lorry driver for the gas board in Rugeley, Rugeley Gas Works. When he was interviewed, looking very smart—and he often laughed about this in later life—the gentleman who interviewed him said did he mind hard work, and the answer was 'no'. And he worked extremely hard but had a very happy career with the gas board. In our life in this village probably the most major feature of everything we did revolved around the church. My father had been a choirboy from the time he arrived here in Colton. My grandparents worshipped here too and my grandfather in 1930 became the parish clerk of the church, which position he retained until he died in 1944. He was a very, very committed Christian like his wife too, and they had brought my father up in the same vein. And my mother had come also from a church-going family. My mother was much involved in the Mother's Union and with many activities in the church. Brass cleaning and flower arranging were her fortes, I think. My father did much work for the church. He became a member of the church council the night before I was born and retained that position until his death in 1961. My grandfather had become one of the first members of Colton Church Council when it was inaugurated in, I think, probably about 1920 or 21 and so there had been a continuous line of the Cooper family involved in the church from the administrative side. My father also was the instigator, the architect of, and one of the chief workers in the laying out of the church grounds as we see them today. For myself, I went to Sunday School. My Sunday School teacher was Miss Rotchell, the village post lady, who was a legend in her life time really. A single lady who lived in a little cottage in the middle of Colton which had not moved into the twentieth century when she died some seventy years after the century had begun. And she not only delivered the post but she led the smaller children at Sunday School. The older children were taught by the rector's wife.

I, myself, became a member of the PCC (the Church Council) in 1961, a position I remained a member of until the early part of 2000.

S1: Just to come back to the Sunday School Dorothy, when was it held? Was it in the mornings, the afternoons?

S2: The Sunday school was held in the afternoon each Sunday and we met in the part of the church that is now called the vestry. The southeast corner of the church which is the oldest portion of the church along with the tower. We were taught there and my memory is of singing 'All things bright and beautiful', 'Loving Shepherd of thy sheep', and hymns like that.

S1: Would you have been accompanied?

S2: Mrs Goodin after 1946, Mrs Holmes was the rector's wife before then and I don't really remember much about those years from the point of view music. But Mrs Goodin played the harmonium which still sits in church today, looking rather tired and old but I'm sure is probably 150 years old. And it is no longer played, but we've moved on somewhat with music in the church. But she played the harmonium for our singing. And we had a prize giving at Christmas and a party at Christmas even at the end of the war. Through the goodness of our mothers we had a little party in the Reading Room, which is a story in itself. Which I can't go into today but I will mention it again in a while. The Reading Room was, to all intents and purposes, the village hall—more about that later in my memories. The church certainly played a great part in our lives and still does today. We are still much involved. I say we, meaning my husband and myself, David and myself and our family, is still very much involved in the work and the worship at Colton church. The worship in church has changed, thank goodness, much in my lifetime. When I was a child, very small child, I would say to my sister, 'How many more pages? Show me how many more pages,' looking in the prayer book because I could count but I couldn't read when I was saying this. I must have been about four. But services were not, shall we say, exciting in anyway. They can even be boring, I suppose, to little people today; but thank goodness children are much more encouraged now than they were then. And so I'll think about our activities within the village. My father became, just after the war, a member of the parish council and through that he served as a member of the Parish Lands Trust, the Reading Room Trustees and also the School Trustees. The Reading Room. The place of gathering for the people of Colton. I believe in 1937 at the coronation then there was a party and food and a meal held, I think probably on a rota system, for everyone in the parish but certainly for the 1953 coronation it was the centre of our activities. We started there in the afternoon by having a meal prepared by the ladies of the village and then in the evening we danced the night away. In the meantime, having seen the coronation service on the television, we also made our way to the top of the Martlin to a giant bonfire. It was a very cold day for

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a June day, that day so long ago now, but I remember it with great affection. The Reading Room had struggled to maintain a financial balance through my girlhood. My father being a member of the trustees had to help organise fund-raising events to keep the place going and remember working at many whist drives. I didn't play whist, my parents did. But the ladies would prepare the food, serve the food, play whist, and it was a great gathering place.

S1: How much would you pay to go then, Dorothy, do you remember?

S2: Probably two and sixpence!

S1: Yes.

S2: Or something like that. Twelve and a half pence today. But my father once won a set of saucepans and I can see him now walking along the room saying he hoped he didn't get crowned with them when he got home.

S1: And who would provide the prizes?

S2: Ourselves! The trustees would provide the food, play whist and provide the prizes, and the raffle prizes.

S1: But that was quite a big prize, wasn't it, a set of saucepans.

S2: Yes. Yes. And I can see the joy on his face. He'd learnt to play whist as a child with some neighbours here in Colton but he didn't actively play whist outside until those years after the Second World War. But, as I say, he did win first prize and he was very amused by it. And so I move on to thinking about myself in those days when I was a young teacher, post 1957. I became a church warden in 1967 and as being church warden for that year, the people's warden, it also made me a member of the Reading Room management trustees but only as peoples' warden. The following year I became rector's warden and relinquished that post. But that did not stop my own activity within the Reading Room. I joined the then Entertainments Committee in 1962 and remained a member for the next ten years. Through those years were the years when we raised much funds including the years when we had the traction engine rallies here and at the county showground. And it was due to those rallies that we were able to afford the money to purchase the field on which the present hall stands. And of course it was those self-same years when I met and married my husband, who was a member of the traction engine club but worked with us to raise funds and share the profits.

I was a member of the Flower Club for the whole of its years of existence and since the beginning of the history society I have been a member of the History Society albeit I have been brought up with a great interest in history, having trained to teach geography. I am a geographer by training but a historian by love. I have been a member of Rugeley's local history society, the Lander Society, for some forty years and at this present time I am the vice chairman. I have been the chairman of that society. But my love of history is innate because of the love of history of my father and my knowledge that he had gained through listening and talking, through my mother's knowledge of the history of Colton also, and through my grandfather as well, who had somehow acquired the first edition of the great academic work of the Reverend Parker, the book is entitled *Something of the History of Colton*, shall I say *Colton and the DeWasteneys* and that is still our bible, shall we say, that we rely upon today for much historical fact about this place. In my lifetime I have obviously given many talks on history. I, through the inspiration of my parents and grandparents and their interest and knowledge, and I am a part author, a third part-author of the publication of the history society from last year and also of several of the leaflets that we produced some years ago when the history society first began its run of publications. I wrote the pamphlets certainly on the church and on the charities and some of the pamphlets as well. In conclusion I would like to say that I had an extremely happy childhood here, both in this house and amongst the friends that I made then and continue to see and love. I still enjoy thoroughly living here in Colton amongst the people that I love so much.

S1: And just before we finish Dorothy, I'd love you just to look back and tell me just a little about how Christmas was celebrated in your childhood. These days all the children are always talking about 'well I'm going to have this Christmas, I going to have that' and it has changed so much. Can you think back to what Christmas was like when you were little?

S2: I had a stocking and when I reached the age, I hope this won't be listened to by small children, when I reached the age of doubting Father Christmas I deliberately lay awake one night and only fell asleep when I'd proved who Father Christmas was. In my stocking would be very small toys. Remember I was a child of the war and to have a little packet of crayons was absolute heaven and probably a few sweets and perhaps a bit of money in the bottom as well.

S1: Oh right.

S2: That was my great joy. I do retain one very, very treasured present from 1940 and that is my teddy.

S1: Yes.

S2: He still sits upstairs and I absolutely adored him, to the point where I thought he was alive. And one day I was caught with the scissors cutting his hair. So the front of his forehead is very bald because I'd trimmed his hair because I thought it would grow again. And I cried and cried when I was told it wouldn't.

S1: And was he called Teddy?

S2: Yes.

S1: And was he in your stocking or sitting ...?

S2: He was sitting at the end of my bed. And I had prayed for him. Because, as I explained, our church background, like my parents who prayed beside their bed every night, I was taught the same. And Christmas Day 1940 was on a Wednesday, and although I was very small I knew numbers and I could count, I could even count backwards because I used to say and it's only so many more Wednesday till Christmas because I knew I was going to have, I hoped, this teddy and he was just all I ever wanted.

S1: And did you have a special meal at Christmas?

S2: I can't remember that far back. We decorated the house with evergreens.

S1: Right. Gathered from...?

S2: From the garden basically.

S1: From the garden, yes.

S2: And also, obviously we must have had Christmas cards—I can't really remember much about that. But I can remember fetching the chicken from Hooleys and often I would go with a brown carrier bag to collect him and he would be dispatched at the point when I'd arrived. And I remember once carrying him along the drive and he must have some kind of a wriggle in death and I dropped the bag and screamed! That was sort of probably in the late '40s 'cause we had our milk, and might I say possibly quite illegally, our eggs from Hooleys during the war time. Previously having had our milk from Manor Farm, from the Mellors, but when Hooleys began supplying the neighbours with milk we had our milk from Hooleys because it was easier to collect.

S1: How did you collect it?

S2: In a milk can, ladled out into our can. And on the day we fetched the eggs we took an extra milk can so it looked as if we were carrying two cans of milk.

S1: Yes.

S2: And so that was why I can only assume that it was a secret that we actually had bought eggs from the Hooleys. So we did have a chicken and we still continue, if we eat here, at home today we would have a chicken but since our granddaughter was born four years ago we now have our Christmas meal in Cheshire and this year we have two grandchildren to share that meal with.

S1: Yes. Would your mum have made pudding or something like that? I know it was difficult times during the war.

S2: She made a cake, I think. And always on Boxing Day we travelled by train in the war time because our car—I've omitted to say my father had a car before I was born.

S1: Yes, I was just going to ask that.

S2: One of the first other than ... the only other man to have a car when my father acquired his in 1935 was Mr Broughton, the head teacher. And my father was the second to have a car of, shall I say, the ordinary men. I don't think there were any other people in Colton at that time with cars. And it was, as I say, before I was born. The car was put away in the garage through the years when we couldn't use it during the war, and so we travelled by train to Stafford to visit the uncle who I referred to earlier who employed my father in the building trade, and we always had a very happy day with Uncle George and his wife and her niece.

S1: And how did you get to the station? Did you all walk?

S2: We walked.

S1: Across the fields?

S2: We walked down the bottom fields, as we call them. Not often these top fields to the station. We walked down into the village and went in by the war memorial.

S1: Yes.

S2: And because of my father's friendship with the foreman of the goods yard we often cut through the goods yard. We didn't actually go right round by the blue wall.

S1: That was useful.

S2: ... and up the steps, which don't now exist. Up the bank. That was the official way, but we often walked through the goods yard.

S1: Yes. That was good. Yeah. And so, just coming back also to shopping. You were talking about food in Masons. Where would you have bought clothes and things? I know also you had to have coupons for clothes during the war, but where do you remember getting clothes or did your mum make things?

S2: My mum made things. In fact, my 'layette' as it would have been called, my baby clothes for my arrival were actually made by Miss Williscroft who was a fine needlewoman who kept the village shop in the house that is now called Cypress Cottage, well it was called Cypress Cottage then. And she made my clothes for my arrival, I do know; my mother has told me. But my mother was quite a good needlewoman and then if I had new clothes they would come from somewhere in Rugeley. I don't really remember going to buy clothes. But I do have a photograph of myself in a green skirt, well it's a black and white photograph, but I know it's green, the skirt, taken when I was about eleven. And that I know I had for Easter one year because I'd heard about this thing you had to have something new for Easter.

S1: Yes.

S2: Even to this day I perhaps don't have anything new but I always make sure my granddaughter and now it will be my granddaughters have something new as a present at Easter.

S1: And other than that you didn't used to go on the bus into Uttoxeter? Because there were buses around weren't there?

S2: Yes. If you let me talk about the buses. There was a bus to Rugeley on a Thursday, Thursday morning. There were two and sometimes even three buses on a Saturday: one morning, one afternoon, and at one point there was an evening bus as well for people if they were going to the cinema in Rugeley. On a Wednesday there was a bus basically travelling in the opposite direction to Uttoxeter. But it was only really Rugeley that we travelled to—and I didn't travel to Rugeley if I could help it, hating the queues.

As a very small child and then, of course, once we could get our car back on the road after the war,
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which was about late 1947 or sometime in 1947 anyway, the car was back certainly on the road because I remember that incredibly well. We would travel on a Saturday afternoon further afield to Stafford and places like that.

S1: Did you go on holiday?

S2: The holidays in the war time were when my father could manage to escape, shall I say, from work—I'll explain why. The sons of the manager of Rugeley Gas Company were obviously in the forces—one in the RAF and two in the army—and when they came home on leave they would take a turn at working at the gas works and give the gas works staff a few days off.

S1: Right.

S2: And so it was only sort of by chance. My father would suddenly arrive home and say I've got a couple of days off and we would gather ourselves together, catch the train at Rugeley Trent Valley to Stafford, change at Stafford for the line to Shrewsbury, go to Shrewsbury, change again, and go on the line that goes to Craven Arms and on into mid-Wales, catch the train to Craven Arms and then go finally by taxi because it was so outlandish there, even in the war time Craven Arms was allowed to have a taxi. And the taxi would take us to my grandmother who was living on the borders of Wales near Bishops Castle for three, perhaps two, three, four days of respite. I still adore that village today, and we've been twice this year. We always go every year to that village where my grandparents are buried and I've been twice this year, and then more recently I've met a lovely Coltonian who also lives just outside that village and I've been told I must go and see him. And I've explained to his wife, if he sees two wandering people with a Discovery in their farmyard it's only two people from Colton. And so it was only after the war that we started having a week's holiday in Llandudno.

S1: Right.

S2: That was great and I still adore and we still visit Llandudno every year. Albeit for a different reason now; it's for the Victorian weekend when the men play with steam engines and the ladies shop till they drop.

S1: And just one very, very last question. What do you remember about childrens' games when you were little?

S2: We played sort of ball games, skipping games, hopscotch.

- S1: Mainly at school or out of school?
- S2: Outside school as well those. But also we played circle singing games. I'm sure we played the Farmer Wants a Wife and that sort of thing, but we also played a game called The Big Ship Sailed Through the Ally-Ally-Oh where the children pass through an archway of two youngsters holding their arms up to create an arch.
- S1: We used to do that for Oranges and Lemons.
- S2: Yes. We played Oranges and Lemons but we had ... and we also played once something to do ... and the song went something about the bluebells of Scotland but I can't remember much more about that. But that again was a circle game and a singing game.
- S1: Yes. And did everybody get together in the village and play? Was it ... or did you mainly play with the children here?
- S2: I only played really with the children from Hollow Lane because of us being a bit out on a limb.
- S1: Yes.
- S2: And the village being a very linear village, I think the children played with their nearest neighbours and my particular friends were the Jones family from the lower part of Hollow Lane, Mary Hardcastle, and Mary and John Hooley. And once I'd attained the age of eleven also a very, very close and long friendship right till this day with Monica Mellor from Manor Farm—albeit she is no longer with the surname Mellor but she still has an extremely close connection to her birthplace here, and we still see one another occasionally. And with part sadness and part joy we were together only a few weeks ago.
- S1: Well Dorothy I think you've told us loads. Thanks us very much indeed and I'm going to switch this off.

All Our Stories

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