

KINGSLAND ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Interviewer: Jackie Markham

Interviewee: Ali Davies

Age: 90

DOB: 24.12.1928

Date of interview: Across visits in February, March and May 2019.

SUMMARY PARAGRAPH: Ali was born in 1928 at The Brook, Kingsland. He moved to Cobnash and then The Angel Inn as a child then when married lived at the Post Office before building 'The Orchard' on land belonging to The Angel, now known as St Michael's Avenue. He married Hazel Harris and they had two children, Richard and Sally. He and Hazel later moved to Kington where they ran Kington Post Office and on retiring they came back to Kingsland after a few years in Eardisland.

His grandfather, father, Ali and some other family members were all blacksmiths, his father building the blacksmiths at Cobnash. In the conversation he describes his father's experiences in the Dardanelles, his friend Geoffrey Bright, The Angel Inn, the Post Office, the telephone exchange, the start of the Old Luctonian's Rugby Club, shoeing horses, his schooling at Kingsland and Lucton School, Kingsland grocery shop and bakery, the second world war, management of sewage in the village, Freddie Fox the jockey and the Aga Khan, delivering post and telegrams to Croft Castle and Gatley Park and making a set of ornamental doors for Leominster Priory.

TIME CODED SUMMARY

TIME CODE	CONTENT
00.00	Born by The Brook on the same day as Russell Cooper who lived nearby, then moved to Cobnash. Told he moved from Cobnash to The Angel Inn when his parents went there to manage it. Description of his father, a blacksmith in Cobnash who built the blacksmiths around 1924. Description of the blacksmith's location.
03.05	Description of people going to Leominster market and billeting horses at the Black Swan in the early 1920s. Father a good friend of Mr Bright the estate agent, both at the Dardanelles. Description of a letter to his mother from the government about his father being torpedoed at sea and missing/dead. Two and a half years later she was told he survived along with Jack Bright. Description of their experiences in the Dardanelles.
05.18	Description of what his father told him about being in the Dardanelles. Description of his father meeting Jack Bright at The Angel to chat about it. Description of house sales then going on for 4-5 days. His memories of one sale, the Arkwrights at Kinsham Court which lasted for 5 days. Description of Neville Chamberlain (Prime Minister) fishing from there to Mortimer's Cross.
07.11	Description of siblings and family of 4 boys and 4 girls. He was the 7 th child. Description of George who went to Australia then returned and worked for Captain Evans of Eyton as a carpenter. Properties owned by Captain Evans – Sodgley, Oaker Wood, White House at Aston and others.
08.49	His father shoed captain Evans's hunter horses. Also Street Court's, at least twelve. They were the main blacksmiths in the area though a couple more in the village but they didn't shoe horses. Their blacksmith would shoe 14-15 horses on a wet day when the horses couldn't work. They'd also shoe horses going from Wigmore/Aymestrey area to Leominster.
10.07	Description of the iron coming from Worcester. His father being the fastest horseshoe maker and how he did it. His Uncle was head blacksmith at Ansell's Brewery in Birmingham. Description of the 48 shire horses at the brewery. Memories and description of beer coming to Kingsland Station in the 1930s.
12.21	Bill Mytton lived on Yarpole road on way to Sodgley Farm [think Forty Acres]. His brother owned it but sold on.

13.30	Description of his father running the blacksmiths and The Angel. Blacksmithing in the day, pub open in the evening and cycling between them. Memories of his father ordering beer in WW2 when hard to get it. Memories of airmen from Shobdon drinking all the beer and trying to get more.
14.47	Description of living at The Angel and starting school when Mary Morgan teaching PT, starting with John Davies who was Carl Davies's brother and Jim Allen from Cobnash. Description of PT.
16.03	Description of family – George going to Australia when young between the wars because they had uncles there who he lived with. Sister Dorothy marrying the policeman's son and having a son called Ken. Description of Ken being born and his sister almost dying. They lived at Hollybank.
17.47	Next was sister Edith. Story about his mother receiving the telegram about his father sunk and missing or dead. Mum was working in the fields. Albert Williams owned Holgate Farm and his sisters lived at the Old House. Story about Edith going for tea with them. Discussion of timing of her birth and parentage as his father was missing in action. Gladys born next then Fred, Walter, then Ali and Jean.
21.38	Description of winning a Pierpoint scholarship to Lucton School and joining the choir to get one. John Pierpoint a vintner from London paying for them. Started at Lucton at same time as John Price from Stretford and Jim Hammond. Was a day boy and description of up to 25 boys cycling from the village and what people did if they saw a car in the village. Description of who owned a car.
23.30	Description of Lucton School headmaster Cecil Hodges and memories of him. Starting school the day the war started and how food got to the school and being collected from the station. Description of the horses and their usage at the school.
25.51	Description of evacuees at Lucton School. Description of jobs all the boys did in the war e.g. potato picking at Milton farm near Shobdon aerodrome in the morning, school in afternoon. Description of training glider pilots at the aerodrome and seeing them and planes. Story about the boys throwing potatoes at them. Description of the glider pilots and what they did in the war. France and the bridges. His parents knowing the glider pilots who went to The Angel.
30.05	Talking about doing sport at Lucton School. Description of his boxing and representing the county at The Albert Hall. Being in the rugby team and who they played. Description of getting to rugby matches in an old bus and going to Aberystwyth.
32.20	Leaving school wanting to go in the Army but welding had come in and he had won welding competitions. Description of welding competitions at shows.
34.40	Leaving school and working for his father the blacksmith. Shoeing big farm shire horses. 14-15 coming in on a wet day. Later on also doing a post round to keep fit. His parents owning the Post office [current one] which had the telephone exchange in the front room
35.57	Description of the telephone exchange and how it worked and how people made phone calls. Mr Sid Williams running it 24/7. Description of his sudden death and the manager coming from Shrewsbury. Himself and Sid Williams and the rugby club mentioned. Sid calling rugby players on a Friday night if they were short for the team. Description of Sid's help with the rugby team. Description of starting the rugby club [Luctonians] from the Post Office.
39.09	Geoffrey Vaughn with Ali down at the river. Brian Vaughan had been picked as England captain and description of talking with Geoffrey about how to start a rugby club. Description of using the hut at The Angel as the changing rooms for visitors. Home team changing at Dr Vaughan's, his parents and The Angel. Description of how good the team was, who was in the team and who else they played for.
41.52	Geoffrey going back to Cambridge leaving Ali as secretary. Descriptions of Bert Crump, John James. Trevor James playing and helping John James with his sheepdogs at weekends. Description of John and the Baptist Chapel at Shirlheath. Description of the 4 chapels in the village and where they were.
43.58	Description of Harold Gough the wheelwright and what he did and the blacksmith putting the iron on. Description of the process in the blacksmiths. Description of the blacksmith's location and size.
45.15	Talking about and describing Harold Gough and stories about him and Lady Ward and Miss Ward at Shrublands. Miss Ward leaving Shrublands and the house contents sale.
46.51	Description of Luctonians when it started – where they played in the village in a field behind the Angel. Kingsland Sawmills gave them the posts.
48.20	Description of wanting to marry Hazel but property being too expensive to buy. Description of Mrs Sid Williams having to run the telephone exchange after Sid's sudden death on her own. 70 telephone numbers to run. Description of the PO starting to build the automatic exchange [current one] and Mrs

	Williams having had enough and moving back to Liverpool 10 days after Sid Williams' funeral. Description of the problems with the exchange in the [current] PO. Deciding to move in and Hazel running the exchange for a year until the new exchange was built. Description and stories of how they ran it 24 hours a day.
53.16	Description of making tickets out for each call and how people were billed via the Shrewsbury office.
53.47	Description of having no bathroom and toilet and how sewerage worked in the village. Most houses having an outside toilet with a bucket. Digging a cess pit at the back of the Post Office when he moved in. Eventually put in a flush toilet which was very modern for the village.
55.22	Discussing his brother Fred and being called up to RAF. Fred being posted to Enniskillen in Ireland. Description of the British merchant ships coming from America and the German U-boats torpedoing them.
57.37	Description of brother Walter in the Navy and story about him falling in the sea in freezing Russian waters. Ali being too young to sign up.
58.23	Description of parent's friendship with Geoffrey Bright estate agent [Russell Baldwin and Bright that became Brightwells]. Mr Gibson and daughter running the village grocery store [now Edgefield] and getting in a state with rationing/coupons and on verge of bankruptcy. Walter and Fred in Leominster working in the grocers and ironmongers and Mr Bright suggested they run the grocery and they took over. Description of the attached bakery and deliveries. Story about Ernie Cross's father from Mortimer's Cross having a grocery business in S. Wales and helping them. Description of them building up the shop and bakery.
61.13	Description of Fred being unhappy and moving on to RAF at Credenhill because he knew the commander who was in Enniskillen. Was secretary to the commander. Sold on the grocery shop. Description of owner Jimmy James getting in a mess with the shop and nearly closing it. Selling it to the 'firework people'. Walter working in a furniture shop.
63.51	Sister Jean working at the shop and Angel after the war. Description of the difficulties running a business after the war.
64.22	Story about Freddie Fox who looked after the vicar's horse and his father/the blacksmiths shop. Discussion of his unknown parentage. Discussion of him being sent abroad to learn to be a jockey and him winning The Derby twice on the Aga Kahn's horses and being his head jockey. Story about him arriving at the blacksmiths in a Rolls Royce.
68.34	Being at Yarpole church at a funeral. One of his grandfathers being estate manager at Croft Castle. Says about it in one of the Yarpole church stained glass windows.
69.50	Description of his mother buying the Post Office – was first in a hut at The Croase, then in a hut behind the Angel. Same hut then used for visiting rugby teams and showers built for visiting teams. Description of all the things the hut was used for. The boys sleeping in the hut when guests needed rooms at The Angel. The rugby club using rooms over the village shop [Edgefield] for changing too.
72.17	His grandfather living at a house in Cobnash. His grandfather having 8 boys and 1 girl and all becoming blacksmiths in Kington; Leominster; Kingsland; at Alexander and Duncans.
73.41	Description of how the post and phone was dealt with when Hazel and Ali moved into the Post Office. Description of only 3-4 cars in the village and Markham's old green bus. Description of the telephone exchange board and how it changed and expanded from before and during WW2
77.45	Description of them taking over from Sid Williams and the contracts. Talking to the telephone manager. Description of having 7 postmen and area they covered. Description of Sid Williams helping with the rugby.
81.13	Description of a rugby trip over Clows Top and pushing the bus. Using Markham's bus for several years.
82.05	Description of why there was friction between the rugby club and The Corners Inn who had the football. Story about driving Dr Vaughan's new car to transport players to play for Ludlow rugby club. Derek Vaughan driving and a flood and car damage.
84.50	Description of Dr Vaughn's helpful relationship with the rugby club. Players changing in their bathroom. Hamlyn Williams having 6-7 players changing at his house. Others changing over the village shop and at back at the Post Office.
86.23	Further descriptions of the telephone exchange in the war and who had phones. Repeat of the story of him and Hazel taking over. Delivering post round Gatley, Shobdon and Pembridge. The Post Office

	and Captain Hamlyn Williams didn't have septic tanks. Having a shed and a bucket like most in the village just after the war. Story about digging a cess pit when son Richard was born and connecting to old village system.
89.45	Sewerage system arriving in village in 1950s or a bit later. Description of Westmead tenant Mr Reg Hamer who worked for Bryan Markham's father. Mr Essex who owned a corset factory in Birmingham making things for the ATS girls bought Westmead. Story about him asking Reg Hamer to supply food from e.g. the orchards for Birmingham and saying no. Owner then sold Westmead to Ali's parents who sold it to Mr Wasdle.
92.19	Reg Hamer and daughter carrying on as tenants. Stories about Mr Essex and Westmead. Selling it to his parents for about £3,000. Opshop [??] William buying Westmead from Mr Wasdle and story about a piece of furniture he has.
95.40	Wasdles modernising Westmead and spending money on it. Geoffrey Bright being an influential person and on retirement buying the house Ali lives in now so he could be close to the Angel and PO and he went to church. Being buried elsewhere.
96.52	Geoffrey Bright and description of Russell Baldwin and Bright and a partner being an MP. Description of Geoffrey Vaughn coming back from Cambridge and being a Liberal. Story about Jack Williams at Kingsland Sawmills talking about the Liberals. Ali, Bert Crump, John James and Geoffrey Vaughn running for the Liberals. Story about Liberal candidate moving to Isle of Man and being prosecuted for homosexuality.
99.07	Story about Trevor James their rugby centre in a high position in the war and coming from Birmingham on a motorbike and picking up Harry Pugh from Yarpole. Difficulty in getting petrol to run vehicles. Description of how good at rugby Trevor James was. Probably best of all who've played for the club. Why he didn't play for England.
103.08	Discussion about Trevor's brother John James, international sheep dog trail champion and his death 9 months ago. Was first rugby captain
104.11	Description of Ali making a set of decorative doors for Leominster Priory and how it came about. Had made the communion rail for Monkland Church. Description of the benefactor Captain Bengough who did his own forging and Ali taught at times. Philip Postings at Orleton did the woodwork. Ali still goes and arranges oiling when needed. Quote was £700 for the ironwork. Description of the job he did and how doors constructed. HM Queen staying at Gatley Park and dedicating the doors.
109.12	Captain Bengough in charge of Cheltenham racecourse and now his son is. Assumed he knew the Queen. Description of recent visit to Gatley area. Description of going to Gatley Park to shoe Dunne's horse, taking mail and telegrams. Description of telegrams. Description of Hazel writing them out and them delivering 100 year birthday telegrams and lots of wedding telegrams. Hazel writing out telegrams for HM Queen at e.g. Croft Castle. Story about delivering a telegram to Lord Croft at Croft Castle when daughter a baby. Lord Croft always wanting his daughter to serve him at the PO.
114.25	Description of suicide of one of Lord Croft's children. Matvin Wright, the illustrator of Andy Pandy living in the cottage in Croft Woods. Story about him delivering telegrams to him. Description of him taking and sending scripts for him.
118.01	Story about Mr Stone the artist in the war and boys evacuated to him including Tim Cotter. Ali and Bryan Markham going in an old car to see Tim in Cornwall. Took 24 hours to get there in the war.
120.05	END