

KINGSLAND ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Interviewer: Jackie Markham

Interviewee: Lewis John Davies Age: 81 DOB: 03.08.1938

Date of interview: 23.01.2020 at Montrose, Shirlheath.

SUMMARY PARAGRAPH: Lewis is the eldest of six children and has lived at Montrose, Shirlheath, Kingsland all his life. His father, Alfred Earnest Davies, came when a child to The Green, Shirlheath with his parents who had been farming at Lye on a farm owned by Shobdon Court.

Alfred was the youngest son and stayed to work at The Green. He built Montrose adjacent to The Green, when he married Mary Morgan who came from Crown Farm, Eardisland. (The Green was eventually demolished and a new house, also called The Green, built in its place).

He talks of his father's work as a butcher, delivering orders, Mother's involvement, rationing, chickens, walking to Kingsland School, the Moravian and Baptist chapels, Kingsland Station, The Sawmills, Maurice Markham, picking apples, sugar-beet, taking over the herd of milking cows and his decision to let them go, sheep, pumping water by hand, the arrival of electricity, Bengrys at Longmoor and at Shirlheath, Kingsland Car Auctions.

TIME CODED SUMMARY

TIME CODE	CONTENT
00.48	Lewis explains how his Grandfather moved down from Lye with his family, including Lewis' Father Alfred, and bought The Green, a small farm in Shirlheath. He tells how the eldest brother of his Father went into the Army after lying about how old he was, as many did in those days. He fought in both the First World War and the Second World War and spent time in the prisoner of war camps. There were two girls and three boys in the family.
02.26	His Father went to Kingsland School but left at about the age of 13. His first job after school was working at Crossways on a small farm and he shares many memories of that time. He initially went to the farm as a young boy. He says his Father had just enough money to buy a bike after his first years wages. After that, he went to Mr. Bengrys at Longmoor. Longmoor then was a bit of farming and butchering where he learnt his trade. In time he brought the butcher business to Shirlheath.
04.37	His Father then met his Mother. She lived on Crown Farm on the way to Eardisland. Lewis talks about the life of his parents on the farm, prior to them marrying and coming to Shirlheath and having Montrose built. Mr. Taylor from Eardisland built the house, and also built Bengrys house, Longmoor. Longmoor was built first and was a bit bigger, but both had the same design. His Father's sister was given a field where Mayfield is and they had a house built there. Therefore, all the family lived close to together, apart from the maternal grandparents.
07.20	Lewis was the first born. His Father used to farm and butcher. Bought cattle in to butcher for Leominster market. People also used to come to Montrose to buy joints at the roadside shop (the little green shop). On a Thursday, Friday and Saturday, he also had rounds in all the villages – initially did the rounds on a bike, but later in a van. He was in competition with the Mitchells and several others in those early days as sheep were cheap, so everyone was 'having a go'. As children, they used to help deliver the meat on the rounds to houses in the villages. Meat would be ordered the week before, delivered on a Thursday and not paid for until the Saturday sometimes, when the farmers were paid. A joint of meat lasted all week.

12.20	Gave up butchering after the Second World War when restrictions were on. Couldn't kill their own then as the animals were sent via the Government. Had to deal with ration books from the villagers and share the little bit of meat out that there was from the Government for everyone. Most farm workers kept pigs so he used to kill pigs for the farmers. Mother helped by doing the weighing of the meat and keeping the books. All this took place in the little green building at Montrose.
15.36	Used to walk from Shirlheath to Kingsland School and back home after school. There were a group of boys together and they often used to get home late because of the activity at Kingsland Station. The trains used to be shunted back and forth and they would watch and forget the time.
16.41	Remembered Bryan Markham's Father, Maurice Markham. He doesn't remember the garage as it is now from his childhood, but remembers the place he had opposite the station. Mr. Markham would provide a taxi service to take people from the trains. Also had petrol and Mrs. Evans used to help with that. Lots of history and memories about how Markham's started and how they spent time there at the garage in the summer.
20.45	Only school Lewis went to was Kingsland School. Remembers both Miss Morgans and also Miss Davis who lived down by The Spout, who used to cycle to school. The boys used to go scrumping on the way home and Miss Davis would tell Mr. Jones who was the Headteacher at the time. He went to school with Gunthorpes and Jones' of Shirlheath and tended to stay with Shirlheath friends. Remember the Bowens too.
24.00	Every Sunday they would go to the Baptist Church and the children would go to Sunday School. There was also a chapel by the Car Auctions and they used to go there too. Didn't used to go to the 'big church' in the village, mainly because the others were closer.
25.58	After leaving school, he helped on the farm. They had cows by then and the milking was done by hand initially before the machinery was bought. This was after his Father finished butchering. The cows were Ayreshires and they stayed out in the fields all the time. Later on, they kept Freesians and a barn was then built by Mr. Pridey. The milk was sent to Cadburys in 10 gallon churns and still was up to about 5 years ago. Many memories of looking after the cows. Still has cows today and still sells the milk. Talks about changes that have happened with farming cows over the years. Also has some sheep and cattle and continues to drive his red tractor.
36.44	Had chickens and eggs when he was a child. Mother used to collect the eggs, wash and sell them in order to buy her groceries. Remembers the little shop in Eardisland by the bridge. Mr. Harvey would deliver his Mother's order. Remembers getting sweets in a little brown bag. His Mother baked cakes and pies on a cooker (a Triplex) in the back of the wall and that also heated the house. Plenty of trees around and the children used to collect wood to keep the fire going.
39.20	In his Father's time, Bengry's (Theo's Dad) has buses and that was the beginning of the Car Auctions. Memories of how it all started and how it works today.
41.51	Memories of Maurice Markham moving to the middle of the village and going there for petrol. Maurice had a bus to collect children from Shobdon down to Kingsland School. Talked about the one and only bus breaking down!
42.57	The things that have changed most is the way a lot of companies have gone. Bengry's and the Sawmills used to have a lot of people working for them. Kingsland Station had many employees too. Used to help John James load his sugar-beet from the fields to the station. Had an orchard and picked the cooking apples and took them down to the station too to go to apple merchants. Also used to sell apples straight from the trees to greengrocers, sometimes all the way from Manchester.

46.26	Only ever went on a train a couple of times on trips with the school. Have never been away on holiday. However, went to his Granny's at Burley Gate but always wanted to come back home because there was no-one to play with.
48.10	So much has happened over the years. Lots of new houses with new names. Far too many houses being built that young people can't afford. Life is very different now and the houses are very different. In his house he has well water and a septic tank. Didn't have electricity until they were quite a bit older, and no mains water, all pumped water by hand. Had oil lamps. Mr. Davis was the Electrician that put the wiring in for the electricity. So much has changed. Farmhouses are being sold off and land is being sold off to make farms bigger.
53.23	END