

## Winslow Oral History Project

### Interview Summary

<b>Interviewee</b>	<b>Bill Tofield</b>	<b>Date of Interview</b>	<b>21 June 2012</b>
<b>DOB</b>	April 1946	<b>Place of birth</b>	Winslow
<b>Father's Occupation</b>	Bookmaker		
<b>Mother's Occupation</b>	Parlour Maid		
<b>Interviewers</b>	Barbara Capstick & Ginnie Long		
<b>Key names</b>	Peter Tofield, Mary Tofield, William Tofield, , Mrs Thrower, Percy Thrower, Marjorie Joan Thrower, Barry Tofield, Brian Tofield, Mr Bevan, Polly Green, Mr Marriott, Reverend Barnes, Gene Autry		
<b>Key words</b>	Park Rd, Station Rd, BBC, Whitchurch, Great Horwood, RAF, Sheep St, Winslow School, Claydon House, Coronation, Church Walk, St Laurence Room, Food Office, Rocket Propulsion Establishment Westcott, Bletchley Grammar School, The Swan Pub, Granborough, Illings Grocery Shop, Redfield Nursing Home, John Laing Construction, Red Cross centre, bookmakers, Avenue Rd, Winslow Hospital.		
<b>No of Files (tracks)</b>	2	<b>Copyright status</b>	Cleared
<b>Abstract</b>	Bill Tofield was born and has lived in the same house in Park Road for 66 years. He tells the story of being educated, living and working in Winslow and his social activities in the town. His mother's brother was Percy Thrower. His grandmother had a greengrocery store in Great Horwood. His father worked at the Rocket Propulsion Establishment at Westcott. His grandfather ran an illicit bookmaking business.		
File 003	My name is Bill. I was born in Park Road. My brother, Peter, followed two years later and my sister, Mary, two years after him. My father, William, divorced his first wife in the early 1930s and moved into Park Road as a tenant with his two young sons. He worked as a bookmaker with his father who lived in Station Road, opposite the police station. In 1939 my grandfather died aged 54 and my father gave up the business. Shortly afterwards he employed Mrs Thrower from Little Horwood to help him run his household. She had five children including Percy who became the well known BBC gardener, and a pretty daughter, a parlour maid named Marjorie Joan. In 1944 Joan, now a machine operator in an armaments factory in Whitchurch, became my father's wife and later my mother. My father was now working in the local food office running the wartime food rationing scheme. Granny Thrower left Park Road to live in a rented cottage in Great Horwood where she and her younger son started a fruit and vegetable business selling in the local villages from their van and Granny's front room doubled as a shop. As my father's family grew there became less room at Park Road. My half-brother, Brian, left to get married and Barry joined the RAF.		
02.38	Our formal education started in the school in Sheep Street. We walked to school and worked hard. School dinners were adequate, the cooks excelling themselves with their apple crumble and custard. School facilities were basic with outside toilets. Apart from the three Rs, sport featured prominently in the curriculum and the Civil War seemed to appear every year. Trips included Battle of Edgehill and the Royalists at Claydon House which greatly improved our understanding of the Civil War.		

	<p>We grew vegetables and flowers on a patch next to the school. Mr Bevan was our headmaster, Polly Green my first teacher and Mr Marriott my woodwork teacher. The event I hated most was the annual visit of the mobile dental service. Treatment was carried out in a trailer full of instruments of torture, also the dreaded nurses with their bags of needles and phials of vaccines for protection against TB, Polio, etc. Good times at school included sports days, prize giving days, carol services, May Day dancing, Coronation celebrations and a fancy dress parade. Sadly I recall the death of my friend Jimmy who was knocked down by a car as he crossed the road in front of his house.</p>
05.06	<p>Outside school I joined the Cubs and later the Boy Scouts, belonged to the church choir, which practised on Fridays and at weddings and funerals we received a fee. At the youth club in Church Walk I learned to play snooker and billiards. Before it moved to the St Laurence Room, it was in Church Walk on the site of the old school. When Reverend Barnes ran the youth club, there was no billiards! We eagerly awaited travelling fairs and circuses. I played football and cricket in the streets or fields near us.</p>
06.10	<p>The Food Office closed when rationing ended in the 1950s so my father went to work as a technician at the Rocket Propulsion Establishment in Westcott until he retired in 1972. He didn't own a car and had to catch a bus each day from outside the Swan pub.</p>
	<p>In 1953 my father bought a 9" Bush TV. Football matches, films, Billy Bunter stories and music entertained us. Each Friday evening a man and woman would arrive in Winslow with a large van and set up a screen in the old public hall. For 1/- each we watched Tarzan, Roy Rogers, Gene Autry and many other films. I remember trips to London Zoo, shopping by train to Oxford and holidays at Margate, Clapton and Bognor Regis but there were few family holidays. Sometimes we stayed with my aunt at her farm in Granborough and helped with the milking.</p>
07.58	<p>At the age of 13 I went to Bletchley Grammar School with an enlightened headmaster and several excellent teachers. I learned to play rugby although my passion was for football. I travelled by train each day to school. To finance my social life I did a paper round and weekend work at Mr Illings' grocery shop in Horn Street. My half brother who had a carpentry business offered me work during the holidays. My father spent his free time in the garden, allotment, betting shop or cooking. His mother loved to dance. After five years at the grammar school I left with five O levels and three A levels, but not high enough grades to get into university.</p>
09.50	<p>My mother took a job as a kitchen assistant at Redfield Nursing Home. This former country house was very large and it took an army of local men and women to care for the residents and maintain the grounds.</p>
10.00	<p>My career was in quantity surveying. My first job was in 1964 at John Laing Construction in North London. My employers sponsored me to study at a college in Brighton. I travelled home most weekends to play football for Winslow. In 1970 I moved back to Winslow and resumed my carpentry work. In 1971 I went hitchhiking in North America and returned home in 1972 after my mother had suffered a stroke. In July 1974 my father died. After this my mother's brother Harry, a retired butler, came to live in Park Road to help care for my mother. He died in 1980. My mother's 15 minutes of fame came when she appeared on TV in This Is Your Life celebrating the life of her brother, Percy Thrower. She had improved in</p>

	health and attended the Red Cross centre in Winslow.
12.10	In 1980 I set up a business as a self employed carpenter, which I still do today. Over the years my mother and I took holidays in Wales, Cornwall and Norfolk staying in rented cottages. We were able to shop locally as Winslow offered so many different shops, including greengrocers, butchers, ironmonger, blacksmith, electrical showrooms, outfitters and hairdressers. Everything we needed. My mother died in 2004.
13.40  End 15.00	Once a social and commercial hub of this area, Winslow is now a changed place. In some ways it's become a smaller town, where people passing through stop for refreshment before continuing their journey. For the residents it does mean using the car or bus to do the main shopping out of town. A threefold increase in the population in my lifetime has changed the character of the town but it remains an attractive, friendly place. We may no longer have the travelling picture house but the local drama group, music groups and societies flourish.
File 004	My grandfather ran his bookmaking business from Station Road. He travelled each day to a racecourse and set up his pitch. Off course betting was illegal but my grandfather offered a "hush hush" betting service, collecting bets from around the town using runners. On one occasion my father, acting as a runner, was caught by the police and had to appear before the local magistrates.
00.51  End 01.26	Travelling circuses were set up in a field at the end on Avenue Road. Fairs were set up on the old recreation ground where the public hall car park is. Winslow hospital cared for patients with severe mental problems and from Park Road, we could often hear them crying out and the scout hut was the present guide hut in Church Walk.