

Winslow Oral History Project

Interview Summary

Interviewee	Bob Dickins	Sex	Male
DOB	10 April 1939	Place of Birth	Mursley
Father's name		Mother's name	
Father's occupation	Farmer	Mother's occupation	
Interviewer	Sue Stainthorpe		
No of files (tracks)	4	Copyright clearance	Y
Abstract	<p>Bob Dickins recalls growing up on Hanover Farm during and after WW2 and his schooldays in Winslow. Talks about leisure activities after leaving school. Describes working with father and brother on the farm and his feelings after his father died and the family had to leave. Talks about starting his haulage business.</p>		
Keywords	<p>Hanover Farm, Italian POWs, Monkham Farm, Marston Fields, Shalstone, Addington Manor, Oddfellows' Hall, Chandos Cinema, Grosvenor, Hazell's</p>		
Key names	<p>Mr Bevin, Miss Green, Mr Hall, Mr Butcher</p>		
File Bob Dickens 1	<p>Born in 1939 at Richmond Lodge, Mursley, a private nursing home and christened Robert John Dickins at East Claydon Church.</p>		
Bob Dickens 2	<p>Father had a farm at East Claydon (Monkham Farm) and later on a bigger farm at North Marston (Marston Fields). Father had worked at Hanover Farm when young for a Mr Buckingham. When this farm came up for rent during war his father took over as a tenant. Bob doesn't remember moving there but had a very happy childhood with sister, brother and younger sister. The farm had no mains electricity or water. They had a generator but because of rationing could not get petrol to drive it. Most of work was done by horses. All milking done by hand. Herd of 30-40 cows (shorthorns) later moved to Friesians.</p>		
3.20	<p>Bob recalls the Italian POWs coming to farm – Peter, Gino, and one known as “Tom”. They lived in a hut, originally a farm office. Bob's mother cooked for them and they sat round same table as the family. He has lots of happy memories of those days. Recalls how his younger brother was thought to have speech problems but was found to be bilingual in Italian and English. POWs set up an industry making baskets from willows which grew beside brook running at bottom of farm. Another POW was a shoemaker and made leather sandals, which were very popular with Winslow residents. POW camp was at Shalstone nr Buckingham (Camp 55). Bob recalls his mother telling a story about evacuees at Addington Manor. When he was five Bob got tangled in farm machinery and nearly lost foot, one of the Italians took his shirt off and stopped the bleeding.</p>		

	<p>Started school at five years old in 1944. Went to Winslow School in Sheep St. Used to go on United Counties bus from farm which cost old penny. No canteen at school, used to go to Cosy Café in Winslow (now ESG Building). Was transport café which used to do lunches for schoolchildren. Later on he cycled to school (2 miles) in all weathers. His infant teacher was Miss Hall, then went into Miss Green's class (known as Polly Green). Then Mr Hall's class, who Bob thinks later became Headmaster of Adstock School. Children who didn't pass the scholarship exam went into senior school, still in Sheep St. He remembers teachers such as Mr Marriott, who taught woodwork and maths as well. Mr Shaw taught English and put on an annual pantomime at the public hall. Recalls first headmaster (Mr Butcher), then Mr Bevin. Bob was always interested in farming and if he was needed on the farm e.g. during haymaking or if the tractor wouldn't start, his headmaster would send him home. Left school day before 15th birthday to work full-time on farm. Father put him in charge of cattle. Bob did milking with machine, tractor work ploughing and drilling.</p>
13.24	<p>Bob remembers war-time food rationing when corn was cut with tractor and binder. Lots of rabbits would come out and children would catch them to take home for dinner. His mother would also let local children each go and find an egg and then she would cook it for them.</p>
Bob Dickens 3	<p>Talks about leisure activities after leaving school. Every Friday a man would bring van with 2 projectors to the Public Hall in Winslow (then known as the Oddfellows' Hall) to give a film show. All latest films. Thinks it was 1s for wooden chair, 2s 3d for canvas seat. Later on he and friends went to Chandos Cinema in Buckingham. He and his friends took bus on Friday or Sat night to second showing, but had to leave before end to catch bus back. One of bus drivers (known as "General") would go into pub and wait for them. Sometimes Bob would cycle to Buckingham with former Italian POW who stayed on to work for Bob's father after war. Bob tells story about one evening when they were cycling home and the bus came past them and the conductor fell out.</p>
5.55	<p>Got motorbike at 16, despite father's opposition. Used to go to Aylesbury to Granada cinema. Was allowed to hang coat in boiler room to dry out.</p>
7.04	<p>Later on got Austin A40 van and he and friends used to go to Social Club in Park St for Saturday night dances. Recalls meeting his wife there. Recalls Aylesbury as being a place with a lot going on, eg roller skating, jazz club (traditional) Recalls seeing Acker Bilk, Cleo Laine and John Dankworth, Terry Lightfoot. 3 dance halls – Grosvenor, Hazell's (High St) , Town Hall and social club in Park St.</p>
11.05	<p>Recalls a time he was caught for speeding doing 38mph on open road. 30mph was then speed limit for light goods vehicles.</p>
12.55	<p>Father died at 52 years old, having being ill for 2 years. They were tenant farmers. Farm was sold 265 acres. 1960. Family had to leave. All stock belonged to his family, who had also had electricity and mains water put in. Sold for £27,000 and money went back into Addington Estate. Bob and brother worked on farm, was hard time for everyone. Talks about his feelings having to sell all the animals. Bob offered job with Miss Manning at Wing, not there very long. Had to settle the estate. Mr Potts who owned Addington Estate told Bob's mother she could stay on as long as</p>

18.36	<p>she needed, but he wanted Bob or his brother to work for him. Only stayed a year, didn't want to go back to milking, but only did 3 days a week. Not happy there though.</p> <p>Friend's father owned haulage company (Dawsons' Transport) and offered him a job. £13 a week basic - £24-£25 pw with overtime. Worked there for 10 years. Drove biggest lorry and did wide loads, long distance. Saved up and bought own house at Whitchurch £3,300 £17 a month mortgage. Left in 1971 and worked briefly for someone else, but then bought first lorry in 1971 (as much as a house!) That was how it started. 3 lorries within four years. Main customer was London Brick Company. In 1976 bought Volvo truck (top of range) and started doing European jobs. First job overseas was in Libya (had never driven on other side of road). 28 days round trip but good money. Italy, Belgium, Holland, France as well as UK. 3 lorries most they had on road. When he reached 60 dropped back to one lorry, at 69 sold up but still doing occasional work for others.</p>
Bob Dickens 4	<p>Bob talks about two ladies (Czech ladies) who lived at Addington House. (now Park House?) where an assassination plot against a German was organised. Remembers going to fete there as a child. Recalls a Czech Society and tells of Czech govt donating a bus shelter at Aston Abbotts and probably Wingrave too.</p>
2.10	<p>Talks about his mother phoning her order to Mr Thomas, butcher at Whitchurch. Butcher would put it on the bus. Bob and siblings would go to farm gate and catch package.</p>
3.46	<p>Tells story of pet lamb running after school bus.</p>