

Robert Winnicott – Interview Notes

Interview Date: 9th Aug 2006 Interviewer: Sonya Teale
Location: 14 Greatfield Way Interview no: ST-18

00:28 Robert was born 27th June 1939 at home in Cosham and family stayed in holiday home on Hayling Island until outbreak of war. Family also owned Deerleap which had been bought for development. Family decided to live in Deerleap – safer than living in Cosham or Portsmouth. Only recollections are of Rowlands Castle.

01:20 Recalls being disturbed by air raids during night and using the air raid shelter in the Deerleap basement. Adults watched air raids, children not allowed out.

02:15 Recalls plane being shot down in Stansted. Uncle was staying with them and was in police force in Southampton. Uncle went to investigate.

02:55 Went to a school called the Tweenways in Havant at 2 1/2 to 3 yrs old. Caught bus from village green to Havant and walked from bus stop to where school was which is now Whiteladies. Remembers walking down East street and the aroma of coffee from a coffee shop on the way. Remembers Havant and a shop opposite the bus stop where library is now. It was empty with just a picture of bananas in the window.

04:20 His strongest recollections were around lead up to D-Day. Tanks would park underneath Deerleap wall. Soldiers used to practice in the brickworks area and used to come through the garden and climb over Deerleap wall. Although not supposed to talk to soldiers, children climbed into tree near wall to talk to them. He talks of rides in tank given by soldiers along the green to the chapel end and back. Was offered chance to drive the tank but troops were gone when the time came. D-Day had started. Lots of debris left behind. Remembers shoe polish in toothpaste type tubes.

07:38 To School on bus. Children brought back on bus by one of the staff, some of children very small – some of them in a pram. At school children went to air raid shelter in the basement. One child who was too young to walk properly fell between stairs. The children had bunks in shelter.

08:50 After war school moved from Havant to Bedhampton, children still went by bus. Recalls prank where one lad, Bill Taylor, from the village fell asleep on the bus and they left him on it without waking him. He enjoyed his time at school and stayed there until aged 7 or so. He had a tutor for a while before going to Dunhurst school at Steep and stayed there until he was 11 or 12 yrs old. He then went to Bedales as a boarder until aged 17. He enjoyed school life.

11:30 Joined family building business in Copnor Rd Portsmouth as an apprentice in the joiner's shop and then went on to the building sites. Then went into the office and worked his way up. Robert took over running of the business on his grandfather's death in 1971.

12:15 VE Day – great celebrations in the village. There was bonfire at the hardware shop end of the green. Faggots (sticks like bean poles) were taken from Burt Royal's bakers shop for the bonfire and there was no bread the next day because there were no faggots for the oven. The fire bell which was next to where the hardware shop is today was rung consistently all evening during the celebrations. Children didn't have to go to bed and could do what they liked.

14:00 Queen Elizabeth's coronation. Bedales didn't normally have holidays but they were given 3 or 4 days off. Friend from Wales stayed with family. Parents erected scaffolding behind Deerleap wall to watch procession and events. Family got a TV specially to watch the coronation. In evening went to Petersfield Square where there was an ox being roasted.

15:50 VJ Day – Tea party for children on forecourt of the Fountain Inn. There were street parties in Portsmouth.

16:45 Robert remembers someone in the RAF bringing bananas back from abroad. Tasted bananas for first time – not that impressed.

17:20 The company was involved in much of rebuilding in Portsmouth after the war eg Connaught Drill Hall off Stanhope Rd. Talks about other post war building projects the company was involved in. Drill Hall and Nuffield officers club nr Guildhall opened by the then princess Elizabeth. Robert's father was introduced to the princess twice. Followed by a dinner where no one was able to start first course. Other projects mentioned including Navy, Gas board, Brickwoods etc.

23:30 Winnicotts carried out much work at Stansted House and the Estate, they built the swimming pool and Theatre which has now been converted to offices.

24:15 Living in Deerleap was great fun as a child, 27 or 29 rooms and had great party games.

24:45 Grandfather was Lord Mayor of Portsmouth in 1946/47. He held receptions for the American Navy in the garden at Deerleap. These were adult events with few children allowed.

25:10 Conservative Party fetes were held in Deerleap for many years, the tennis court accommodated the tea tent. There were a variety of games eg coconut shy. There was also a main marquee housing the garden produce, prizes were awarded for the roses, potatoes etc.

26:15 With 10 acres of land the family was almost self-sufficient for vegetables. During the war there were numerous chickens, ducks and geese. The area that is now the hardware shop was a farmyard where they kept pigs which went over the road to be slaughtered at the butchers. Part of the yard area was used by Portsmouth Aviation who employed village ladies to make camouflage. "We weren't supposed to speak to them but we did".

27:10 Business – After war father opened branch of Winnicotts at Rowlands Castle in the farm area and after a couple of years, knocked hole in flint wall and put shop window in.

28:15 After grandfather died in 1971 the family decided to move the business entirely to Rowlands Castle and in 1975 built the joiners shop and developed a lot of the yard. The current building, consisting of a shop with offices above, was opened in October 1976.

29:45 Family – Robert married Jacqueline Fielder in 1962. Her family had shops in Portsmouth. They have two sons, Adrian and Paul. Adrian runs the retail business with branches in Rowlands, Emsworth and Romsey. Paul runs the construction side of the business.

30:55 The Post Office moved into the Hardware shop one month after the interview, in September 2006.