

## **ORAL HISTORY TRANSCRIPT**

Interviewee: **Doug Humphries (DH)**

Date: 16<sup>th</sup> October 2025

Interviewer: Ju Mackrell (JM)

Location: Odd Down Sports Ground

Other people present: None

Audio files: Doug Humphries oral history 1, Doug Humphries oral history 2



Note that the following is a verbatim transcript of what was spoken in the recording. Our best efforts have been made to capture and represent the interview in its entirety, though there is the possibility of error.

### **Audio file: Doug Humphries oral history 1**

JM: So this morning we'll say hello to Doug Humphreys and I'll let him introduce himself and tell his memoirs of Odd Down.

DH: Thank you very much. Okay well I was born in Wansdyke Estate in 1950 and lived in Odd Down for 25 years and my parents continued living there till their death in the early part of this century. So, I wanted to talk about my memories, starting at the Wansdyke Estate, and then moving clockwise around Odd Down, referring to memorable occasions. So, Wansdyke Estate, built in the fifties, post war growth in Bath. Banwell Road backed onto a field, which backed onto the Wansdyke, and hence Wansdyke Estate and the field eventually became a park with goalposts and swings and slides. The goalposts were made the metal, which didn't help much, but it was good fun to meet up there. Prior to that, we used to play football, hopscotch, 40-40 in the road, because there's no cars, no buses, and all good fun then. And Fosseway School, I went to, catered for youngsters from Foxhill Estate, the Wansdyke Estate, and what we called the prefab estate, Chelwood Drive, Winscombe Road. And yeah, the field, memorable occasions, because we were called the new estate and the old estate we referred to that as Shickle Grove, Vernham Grove, etc. And I often recall that on bonfire night, we used to have bonfires in our field. And the old estate did as well. And we used to do raids on each other's bonfires for a bit of, was it fun?

JM: Before health and safety, sure.

DH: It was certainly memorable. And yeah, the estate was built on an old quarry. And I recall in the sixties or seventies that one of the houses started subsiding and had to be demolished. So going back to the old quarries of Bath. Moving on down to Combe Hay Lane, often our dad used to walk me and my, it was five of us all together, I had a brother, sister, younger sister and brother, and walking down Combe Hay to get us out of the house so Mum could do the housework, etc, cook the lunch, and used to go as far as Combe Hay, sometimes along to and up to Southstoke. And Mum and Dad knew Bert Whitmore, who had the farm

on what is now the park and ride. And I remember going up there to help them do some haymaking and I had this pitchfork and this cow started chasing me and I was running for fear of my life. But the treat was afterwards going over to the Burnt House and I'd be outside with my sisters having crisps and lemonade and Mum and Dad would be inside having a stout, something like that. And then Jack Trapple took the farm on from Bert Whitmore and his stepson and I used to go up there and help with the haymaking as well later on in life.

DH: Further down Combe Hay Lane, Odd Down Football Club, and often, I think Easter or thereabouts, they used to have Greyhound racing and I used to go along picking up all the old coloured cards that the bookies used to use for giving out the receipts for the bets. And then farther down again was Fuller's Earth. And I remember going in there with my friends into the old shack, although it was a working place, and getting the old carbide lamps working, so it's brass lamps, carbide in the bottom, mortar dripping at the top, giving off a gas, which we set fire to, and that gave the light. So it was a bit of a science lesson there. Also, I remember with the Burnt House, having to go up outside and meeting a chap called Chip Fowler, who was the bookies runner, and laying a bet or two for the parents. So it was interesting times there!

DH: And then going out towards, say, the Radstock Road, past Kilkenny. There was a council tip there, and me and my mate used to go there and you know, look for scrap metal, copper, aluminium, brass. And when we had a sack-full, we used to phone this chap from Clandown, and he came in and give us a, he used to weigh it all out and give us our due returns. That was some good pocket money. Of course, nowadays you think of all these kids in Brazil going through the tips and trying to make a living. And then Kilkenny Lane, memories down there. The first one was there was an old shaft from Fuller's Earth at one time came out there. But my mum used to take us down there when it came to Fosseway School fete because they had a wildflower and grass competition. She took us down there and all the little fun flowers, the primroses, all the wild grasses. And often we used to win prizes at school, thanks to Kilkenny.

DH: And then moving around to Old Fosse Road in the late 1990s, one of our neighbours organised a Wansdyke Estate reunion at the Culverhay Rugby Clubhouse. And I met so many other people from Cranmore Place, Lympsham Green, and we'd all grown up, changed, had kids, and it was such a wonderful occasion. And I said to you about, we're thinking of organising another one, but this organisation's come along. And so we've got a virtual reunion now as opposed to a real one. But one day we may meet again.

JM: We'll make that happen.

DH: And then going on along Old Fosse Road, where it meets Rush Hill on the right hand side, a triangular grass area, field. And I remember when I was uh, 8 or 9 and going into a, whether it was a church fete or a school fete, but it was a scorching hot day and I sat there and got sunburnt, and a member of this band playing from a Jack to a Queen. And it was a memorable occasion, obviously, as I still recall it. Then going on, then opposite was St. Philip and St. James. And I went to the youth club there and had some good times. And then on Saturday evenings, they used to have dances and Dot Biggs, whose son I was very friendly with, Abby Biggs, we used to go there and you know it was the old Gay Gordons and Paul Jones and all these sort of country dancers or even the waltz, et cetera. And yeah, some good times there. And the adults were more than happy to dance with us as boys. And I know Doc Biggs is featured in a number of your documents as well.

DH: Of course, you can't forget Noad's Corner with Noad's Bakery and all the good shopping there. And then along to Odd Down playing fields, where I used to play cricket with Abby Biggs and so on. And that reminded me of the, when that book came out, Watch Out Burfy's About, a very similar childhood to cycling all over the place and making trolleys out of prams and going down the various hills. And then inevitably, anyone from Odd Down will remember back in the 60s, every six weeks, that Saturday morning, going to Archie Bridges for your short back and sides, and if you're lucky, a square back and sides.

DH: So, and back up to Odd Down, the chip shop was always a favourite meeting place and having a little mini feast there. And then looking at the Wellsway, the shops on Wellsway, Wilcox's paper shop, well known, and Don Wilcox took over from his mum and I used to do paper rounds for them, starting with the Wansdyke estate, then the prefabs and the old estate, and then Sunday mornings I was collecting money etc, and waking people up to get their weekly dues. And further on from that was Russell's. It used to be a general store because I remember a penny getting broken biscuits and all that there, but then it became Russell's hardware store and getting various things from there. Then going down to what is now a garage opposite there was a footpath next to Fosseway. the junior school, which went up to Lympsham Green. And then on the right hand side, there's this concrete tombstone, which turned out to be the workhouse graveyard, which we didn't know at the time, but very interesting things have happened and been discovered since the 1950s when I was walking up and down there.

DH: Then on to Odd Down Corner, well known for its buses, because at the time we didn't have buses coming on to Wansdyke Estate. And with Odd Down Corner, we had Sam's cafe opposite, and just down the road a little bit was the cobblers. But I remember on a Saturday, going down to the Odeon on Saturday morning, greeting everybody with a smile as they sang, and coming back, I was like five or six, and got on the bus to Odd Down Corner, and the conductor came to get my fare, and I couldn't find it, and I'd lost it. And he kicked me off just at the bus stop before the Bear Flat.

JM: Oh, no.

DH: And I thought, I'm five or six. I know I've got to walk uphill. I walked about 100 yards or so. And this old lady came up to me and says, "here's threepence for your bus fare".

JM: Ah.

DH: And yeah, it's so touching that she got off at the Bear Flat and walked back and was my saviour. So good old people back then, well, still nowadays as well. And then coming up to uh, from Odd Down Corner, uh, up to the Glasshouse. Um, Dave Weston and I went to, or David Weston and I went to the Tech school and every Thursday was games day up at the Glasshouse playing fields. And so, uh, they had to get the bus back to school, uh, in time for people to depart. So I was able to leave, leave the Glasshouse at, well, 2 45.

#### **Audio file: Doug Humphries oral history 2**

DH: So moving on from the Glasshouse, one of my part-time jobs was at the Rockery Tea Gardens as a bit of a gardener or a waiter or doing odd jobs. And I met Sue Newman who lived at the pre-fabs. She was a mother of some friends of mine and she used to play bingo with my mum down at the Forum. So good old family ties in those days. And likewise I played along Combe Down, played rugby for them in the 60s and 70s and met a fair few

people, including the Jenkins family from Vernham Grove and Wilcoxes from next door to me. And then back along to, uh, towards the Cross Keys with the Wansdyke, we used to go in the Packhorse regularly to play crib, sorry, [unintelligible], to play shove ha'penny. At that time there, a load of students got down there singing, so it was a bit of a sing-song place as well. And then coming back, we used to take the Wansdyke from the Cross Keys, the fields back along to the park and down into the Banwell Road. And again, one of my memories from my youth is my mum used to take me up there and we used to do blackberry picking from the Brambles on the Wansdyke itself, but then the field going over towards Sulis Manor, for the mushrooms in September, because of the mushroom compost they used on the fields. And so a complete circle from going south, or starting on the south side of Odd Down all the way around, a big circle to have many memories, happy memories from.

JM: Sounds like an idyllic childhood!

DH: It was, thank you.