

The Archive

In carrying out the History Project, it is important to maintain a comprehensive archive. Data is held in electronic form on both CD and magnetic disk media. All photographs and documents are scanned to high resolution and originals are returned to their owner. Versions of the archive are located in at least three different places for added security. During the past few months we've generated over 900 photographic and sound files, taking up about 4.5 Gigabytes of storage space. We're looking forward to adding to this!

From Frank Fisher's collection



We're not sure what this school event was. Can anyone remember?

How Can You Help?

We are interested in anything connected with Ridgeway Village, and this can range from an amusing tale to ancient documentation. Your contribution can be kept anonymous, if you wish, although we would be very pleased to acknowledge the source of all new material. If you have photographs or documents that are precious, we would be able to arrange for you to visit the web site office, where we could make copies while you waited. If you would like to meet and talk about your connections with Ridgeway, then please get in touch with us.

We can be contacted as follows:

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The History Newsletter is edited by John Bennett. If you have any comments to make about this issue, please contact John on 01246-415892, or e-mail him via john@ridge-ways.org.uk

RIDGEWAY VILLAGE HISTORY NEWSLETTER

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New Projects Get Under Way

The past twelve months have seen a big revival in village history activities. Ridgeway's new website (www.ridgewayvillage.org.uk) provides internet access to a developing history section and enables historic local documents to be downloaded. An exhibition of "Old Ridgeway" was staged during the summer and attracted many visitors who were very impressed by the displays.

Who's Doing What

Several people are currently involved in aspects of Ridgeway History. Graham Bagshaw, who, with others, runs the village website, has helped to set up meetings with local people and takes part in these with John Bennett. Janet Poole and Anne Thompson organised the recent "Old Ridgeway" History Exhibition. They will be transferring this as a permanent display to one of the Craft Centre units. John Bennett develops the history pages on the web site, maintains the Archive and visits the local Record Offices to find further information.

Meetings have taken place with local people, to hear of and record their own unique memories of village life. E-mail contacts have led to the acquisition of extensive new material about Ridgeway's past. Finally, an electronic archive has been established to store securely all information received.

For more details about the very successful "Old Ridgeway" Exhibition, please see the latest Sports & Social Club Newsletter, which can be downloaded from the village website.



Thanks to Brian & Celia Atkin for this view of Ridgeway showing the state of the road a hundred years ago. Horse-drawn vehicles were certainly in use!

Meetings

One important project involves making contact with those Ridgeway people who have memories of past life in the village, or have photographs and documents which may be of interest.

Graham and John had a very useful meeting with Albert Clayton, who has a wide-ranging knowledge of Ridgeway. Albert provided a supply of interesting anecdotes and suggested the names of many people who we should talk to about village history. He has also promised to let us see his Ridgeway photo collection, together with cine footage which we hope to transfer to the website. Albert has also arranged for John to study the Memorial Minute Books from 1920 onwards.

John met up with Brian and Celia Atkin, following a suggestion by Albert Clayton and Susan Shaw. Many memories were recalled during the afternoon, and we were given a set of very interesting photographs. (Look out for these in future Newsletters). Brian's father, Frank, was born in Kent House, which was three dwellings in those days, and had a front like a farmyard. Celia's grandfather, Arthur Fisher, lived at Birley Hay and was the Water Bailiff at Ford. Celia remembers well the oil lamps which were still in use at Birley Hay when the rest of the village had electricity.

Graham and John also talked to Cyril Milner, who has family connections with one of Ridgeway's most important villagers – Willis Fox. Cyril, who married Willis's daughter Margaret, gave us an insight into the contributions that Willis made to Ridgeway. We must thank Willis for keeping our walks open and for writing a unique history of the village. He also held many negotiations with the Council Planners to ensure that the traditional character of Ridgeway was preserved.

As part of the Ridgeway Archive project, John has been in contact with Frank Fisher and has transferred his extensive files on Ridgeway into electronic form. Many of Frank's records were also copied by Janet and Anne for use in the "Old Ridgeway" exhibition.



Part of the 1766 Indenture made between John Webster of 'Cold Aston' and Thomas Renshaw of 'Jeer Lane'.

From Tony Rippon's collection.



Match of the Day

We were very pleased to receive an e-mail via the history website from Tony Rippon, now based near London, whose father and grandfather were both Managers at the Phoenix Works. Since then, John has been in regular e-mail contact with Tony, who has provided a substantial number of photographs and documents. Among these is the above picture, which shows a group in Ridgeway House during the early part of the last century. In the centre, wearing a butterfly collar, is Tony's grandfather, Walter, who lived in the Lion House at that time. The men have been listening to a BBC football commentary, on what was probably the only radio in the village. On the table is seen the football pitch, with goal-posts and numbered squares. As Tony says, there were two commentators, one describing the action and a second simply calling out numbers to indicate the position of play. Hence the expression "back to square one".

Bobby's Outside!

If you take a closer look at Celia and Brian's photo on the front page, you'll see a figure outside the Swan, who is shown magnified here.

He's the Village Policeman and lends credence to the classic cry we used to hear at closing time in the Swan during the 70's, when Anne North would shout (usually in desperation) "Let's have your beer off — it's well after time. Bobby's outside!"

