



Cleeve Prior Chroniclers

Recollections of Frank Vickeridge



Frank was born in the Cleeve Prior & his family have lived here since the 1700's

The Quarry

In the year between the two world wars the quarry was owned by Mr Smithin who lived at Kingsmoor Farm. It was managed by Charles Vickeridge. His brother, Samuel also worked at the quarry. He was a stonemason who made and engraved many of the gravestones in the churchyard. Samuels's son Harry worked with his father. The stone was extracted by hand and was used for building in Cleeve Prior & villagers as far away as Broadway. In the 1920's and 30's Edgar Vellender was in charge of the transport of the stone which was all done by horse & Cart. He was assisted by Alec Sisam. The pond on the millennium green is the site of the last working quarry, [as each site was worked the soil & residue was used to fill the previous]. The quarry finally closed in the mid 1930's



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The School

This was one large room divide by a curtain. Within the two sections the pupils were split into groups according to age. Children received their whole education here and left at fourteen. The building was heated by an old coke stove and so was very cold in winter. Hands were washed under a cold tap in the coke store, and the elder children took it in turns to fetch a bucket of coke to keep the stove going. The lavatories were outside & were of the non-flush type. In the 20's the teachers were miss Roberts & Miss White

Houses

Until the first council houses were built in the Mid 40's the area known as the close was an open field, the name of which was Leys Wall.

In the early 1900's the Long House in nightingale lane was three cottages. Charles Brookes lived at the far end, William Taylor in the middle and a Miss Teague in the one nearest the village

Before the Malt house, which originally belonged to Peacock House , was converted in to a Village Hall and dedicated as a war memorial in the early 1920's, the social centre of the village was the large sitting room of Lilac



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Cottage in Froglands Lane where all the parties, harvest suppers sing songs & entertainments took place.

The Old Coach House in Hoden Lane comprised of three open fronted bays for carriages and two loose boxes. Mr Gould, the wheelwright who lived at a “Pile of Stones”, rented one of the loose boxes for his carpentry work, which included making coffins for the village & the surrounding areas.

He also had another workshop in part of the Cider Mil, where cider was still being made in the 1920's with a horse pulling the large circular crushing stone, round the trough filled with apples.

Lilac Cottage in Main Street was the home of Jack Taylor, the local pig killer. Most families kept a pig, and Jack was called in to kill it when it was considered fat enough to provide the family with meat for the following year. Jack also looked after the boats on the river by the mill, hiring them to visitors. He directed the parking of cars [the mill was very busy with visitors at the weekends] and charged anyone who would pay.

Between the wars the mill was run as a successful restaurant by Mrs Wilshaw, the landlady of the Pleasure Boat public house in Bidford. Dances were also run there. There was a shop in a thatched hut near the mill, which sold soft drinks and ice cream. This was run by Mr Stevens who also had a shop at what is now Squirrel Cottage.

Entertainment

Dances, whist drives & sing songs- Charles Brooks who lived in Nightingale Lane had five daughters. They were a musical family and toured the district as “Charles Brookes and his Nightingales” giving concerts and providing music for sing-songs.



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Transport

There were not so many cars. Most journeys were made by bicycle or pony and trap. Longer journeys were by train from Salford Priors or Honeybourne.

Health

Nurse James, who lived at Pebworth, delivered the babies and “laid out” the deceased as well as ministering to the sick. She travelled the villagers in an Austin Seven, and from the 20’s to the 50’s she was the popular & dedicated district nurse.

Church Bells

Before the Second World War there were only four bells. Three of them were rung by members of the Vickeridge family, Samuel was leader assisted by Charles & Harry.

Work

The main occupations were farming and Market gardening, but as motorised transport Developed lorry driving became a sought after job, no driving test was necessary.



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A number of people were employed at the Gertrude Myers Home. The convalescent home for women in its spacious gardens occupied the entire area from Mill Lane and Sunnyside [now Suncourt]. The coach house at the rear housed the ambulance, with staff accommodation above.

With a blacksmith, cobbler, wheelwright and carpenter, a garage, cider mill, transport yard, egg packing station and animal feeds store, several shops, as well as the 'tourist site' at the river, the village was a busy place