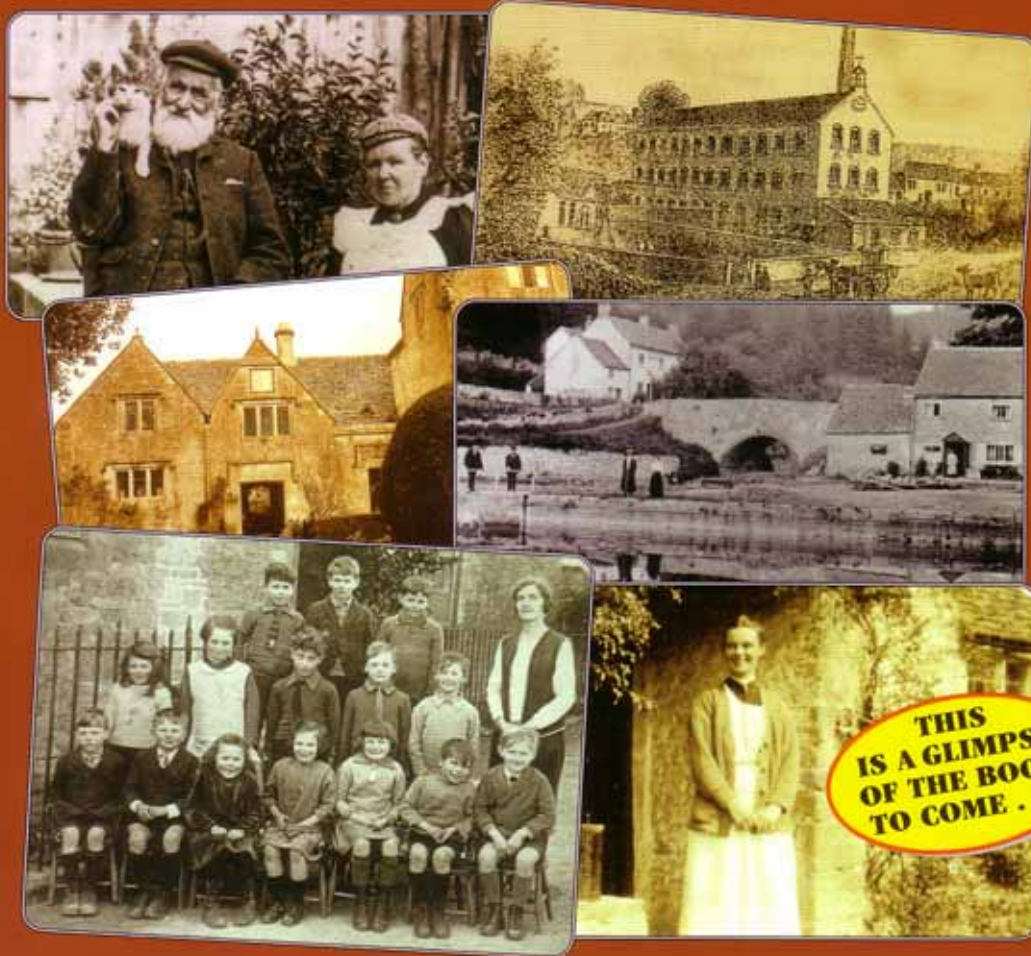


OAKRIDGE

A HISTORY

SW00049



PAT CARRICK AND JULIET SHIPMAN

A social history of Oakridge and its surrounding hamlets of
Far Oakridge, Waterlane, Bournes Green, Tunley and Daneway

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Cover photographs
clockwise from top left

*Fred Hale and his wife,
who lived at the old Mill
House.*

*The Silk Mill in
Oakridge, demolished
in the 1890's.*

*Dameway wharf with the
former Bricklayers Arms
in the background.*

*Mary Bucknell at
Dultons, a cottage near
Winerlane, in the 1930's*

*Pupils and teacher at
Oakridge School in the
1930's.*

Dameway House.

Right:
*The Whitenside
procession in Oakridge
c. 1900*



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CIP catalogue records for this book are available from the British Library and the Library of Congress.

ISBN 0-9540306-2-1

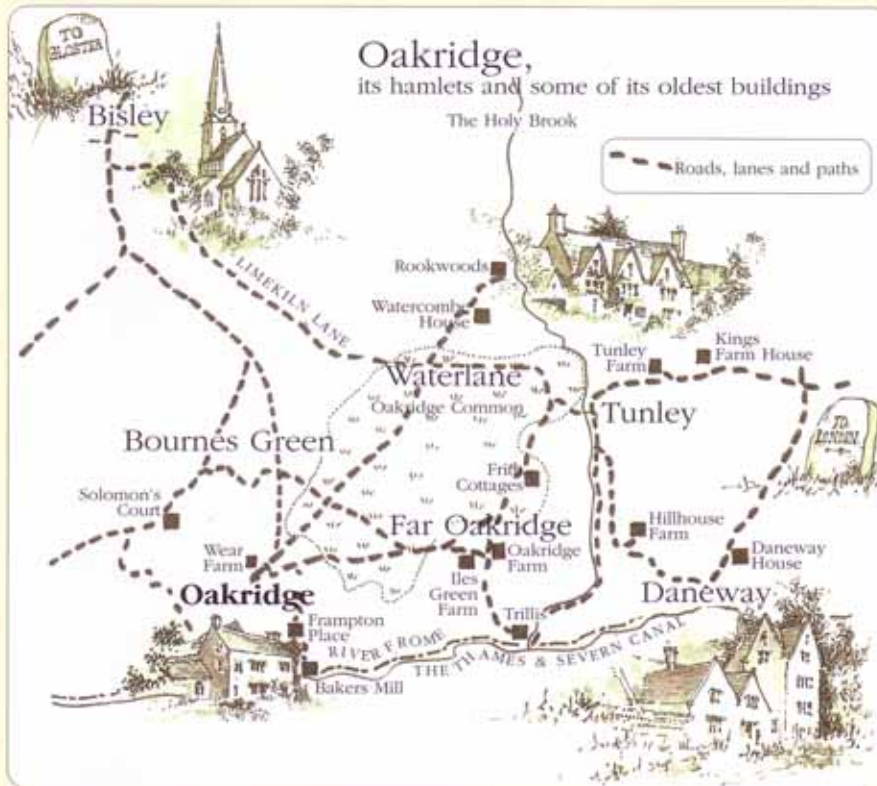
Acknowledgements

We would like to thank all those who lent us their old photographs.

Modern photographs were taken by Katrina Thacker

Map drawn by Peter Westley

We would also like to thank residents who helped us by sharing their memories with us. In this booklet we have included some reminiscences by Mr Ken Bucknell. We will include many more memories in the main book.



Foreword

Pat Carrick

For many years I compiled issues of *What's On* (Village magazine), and was always especially fascinated by the contributions of the older villagers. I felt this was an area that justified much closer examination; indeed the whole history of Oakridge, and its surrounding hamlets, was worthy of research – so to write a book on the subject became a lifelong ambition.

Three years ago, this history project was lucky enough to be awarded a Heritage Lottery Fund grant and The Oakridge

Historical Research Group was formed as a result. Meanwhile, Juliet Shipman, who has written and researched many local history books, brought her energies and enthusiasm to the project.

So now this summary marks the launch of the Oakridge book project. There are so many wonderful memories of schooldays, holidays and village life that it is impossible to include everything in this small introductory booklet but we hope that what is here will whet appetites for the final book.

The Oakridge Story

Juliet Shipman

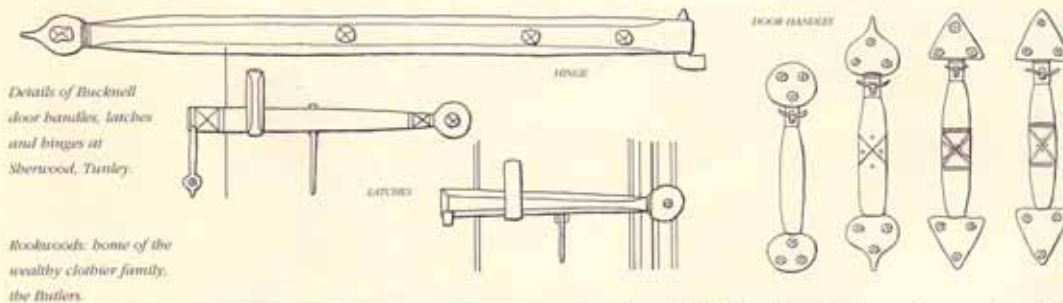
Introduction

We offer you here, a glimpse of our work. We have uncovered so much interesting material; so many old photographs, so many deeds and documents and had such vivid interviews with the older residents, that we are almost overwhelmed with the weight of our research. We have decided, therefore, to produce a few chapters of our work so that you can see some of our discoveries.

Linda Hall, an architectural historian, has surveyed, dated and photographed fifteen cottages and farmhouses. She has photographed

the larger houses; Watercombe House, Daneway House, Frampton Place, Hillhouse Farm and Kings Farm. We have researched much of the history of these houses and during Linda's investigations, she discovered three previously unknown medieval hall houses in Oakridge and Avenis Green.

We include here in our first chapter, Daneway House, one of the most beautiful houses in the area. Its history and those of the other medieval houses will be told in full, in our book, which will be published in November



Details of Bucknell door handles, latches and hinges at Sherwood, Tanley.

Rookwoods: home of the wealthy clothier family, the Butlers.



2004. Linda has also drawn the many beautiful arts and crafts latches, hinges and door handles that she found at Solomon's Court, Sherwood House, Iles Green Farm, Stokyes Close, Sherra and The Old Smithy.

The cloth industry left its mark on the architecture and development of the group of villages which we have studied. Here we give you an introduction to the subject and a picture of the weavers' daily life. Much remains to be told, however, especially about the clothiers, how they amassed their wealth and where they lived. Their inventories give a vivid picture of the interiors of their houses, how they were furnished and how they lived. Rookwoods was the home of the wealthy clothier family, the Butlers. Of course, the collapse of the cloth industry brought great poverty and this, in its



turn, led to some notorious crimes; these stories we will tell in detail, as reported in the newspapers of the day. At the same time wealthy landowners were taking up the newly



fashionable hobby of archaeology. There was great interest when in 1841, Thomas Baker, of Watercombe House, discovered and excavated a huge Roman Villa near Bournes Green. It is hoped that a geophysical survey, carried out by Bristol University, will reveal more of the history of this important Roman site.

The building of the canal through the area was similar to the impact of a new motorway. There were protests and acts of sabotage while the opening of the railway brought employment for many villagers. Roads remained a problem for many years. The old white roads maintained with crushed stone can be seen in old postcards until the 1940's.

The struggle to establish schools in Oakridge, both Anglican and Nonconformist, and the difficulties of teachers in the 19th cen-

tury, as they dealt with ill-disciplined children, makes a fascinating story. Children in the 1870's and 1880's frequently played truant and went off to work at the silk mill in Oakridge or walked down to Ashmeads Mill at Chalford. We will also describe the building of the much needed church and chapel in the 19th century.

Up to the 1850's most villagers worked in some aspect of the cloth trade, yet weavers would help out at harvest time and, if times were hard, would find work as agricultural labourers. Farming, therefore, is a central part of the history of Oakridge. Diaries, inventories and wills give an insight into the way of life of the yeoman farmers who lived at Watercombe House, Daneway House and Oakridge Farm. Many farming practices continued from these days to the 1940's and tape-recorded recollections by the older residents give vivid accounts of long-forgotten country activities; coppicing, cider making, pig killing and the cultivation of the water meadows. All this will be included in our book.

Here, we include an introduction to the Arts and Crafts movement. We describe some of its key figures, both those who came from outside

View of Oakridge, showing one of the old white stone roads.

Left: Wesleyan Chapel - rebuilt in its present form in 1894.

The silk mill at Oakridge which provided employment for many women and children during the difficult years of the 1850's. It was pulled down in the 1890's.



*Medieval windows at
Frampton Place.*



*Oakridge Farm. The
1950's metal windows
disguise the ancient
origins of the farmhouse.
This wing contains the
walls and part of the
roof of a small open
medieval hall, dating to
the late 15th century.*



and led the movement as architects and designers, and those who lived locally and whose lives were transformed by the training they received which enhanced their native skills.

We will discuss the impact of World War I and II on the villages and we have detailed eyewitness accounts and photographs of the day, still remembered by many, when a German plane was shot down over Oakridge on 25 July 1940.

Finally, we have a chapter, regrettably much curtailed, on the day-to-day life of villages as described in their reminiscences and photographs. Until the 1940's, it was a time of

self-sufficiency. Every inch of the ground was planted to yield some crop, every tree and bush was harvested for its fruit. Everything was recycled; even old bicycles were plucked from the rubbish dump and put back to use. Nothing was ever wasted. Entertainment was usually home made. At the same time, there was a very close-knit community. A child might have a set of grandparents in one village and another in the next village. Between them were numerous aunts, uncles and cousins. Everyone knew everyone and was probably related too. This world has almost gone now but we have been in time to record it.

A Medieval View

Vast acres of woodland once stretched across the land where the villages and hamlets of Oakridge, Far Oakridge, Tunley, Bournes Green and Waterlane now lie and some of these ancient woods still survive at Tunley and Daneway.

Around the village of Bisley were three immense open fields, known as Battlescombe, Stancombe and Westfield, which together totalled nearly 2000 acres. These great fields were divided into hundreds of long, narrow strips. The farmer might hold three or four strips in each field which meant that his land holdings were scattered through the parish.

Beyond these open fields lay the commons or waste land, covering several hundred acres. There were two main commons; one between Bisley and Eastcombe and the other covered a triangle of land between Oakridge, Far Oakridge and Waterlane. There were also small pockets of common land at Tunley, Bourne's Green and The Trench. Originally wooded, the commons were gradually cleared and by 1730 the last trees had been cut down. Many landowners in Oakridge and the other hamlets had rights of common which were an important asset for them and indeed were vital to their survival: they could graze their livestock, quarry for stone and collect wood.

The earliest recorded settlements in the area were not villages but isolated farmhouses built on the hilly ridges above the Frome. At Oakridge were Weir Farm and Oakridge Farm. Farther to the east was Frampton Place. Near Bournes Green was Solomon's court and in the most eastern corner of the parish was Daneway