

Pen Selwood History Society

Oral History - 7 Oct 2015

The meeting was held at Pen Mill Farm courtesy of Peter & Sarah Fitzgerald.

Charles Buckler introduced farming history in Pen by way of a eulogy.

Charles met **Gordon Green** in 1987 outside Pear Ash Farm. Gordon was then 82 years old. Charles started up a conversation and learned that Gordon had been born in 1905 at Pear Ash Farm and heard tales from Gordon of his early childhood as vivid as if they had happened yesterday. Charles learned a lot about the history of the farm.

Gordon's father, Theophilus Theodore Green was tenant of the Rev. Newton Parsons, Ros' grandfather. As one of Gordons earliest memories he remembers sitting on a bull in the yard. It later went wild and injured a man forcing his father to shoot it over the gate.

He remembered one of three stacks of hay behind the cowsheds catching fire. He watched the fire engine from Gillingham come galloping down the lane and the men pumping handles helping to put it out.

He recalled his mother making cheese, the pig killing in the back yard, cider making and helping take the milk to Gillingham station.

When Gordon was 7 the family moved farms to Swathling near Southampton. He recalled the long drive in horse and trap (after the cows had been walked to Gillingham station and put on a train). They stopped for a meal at Salisbury at 7pm, and again at Romsey at 11pm finally reaching the new farm at 2am!

Throughout his life Gordon regarded Pen Selwood as his home and frequently made visits to visit the church and look at the farm where he was born. If it hadn't been for the chance meeting Charles would have not learned so much about the past history of the farm. Gordon's ashes are buried in the churchyard.

Charles also drew our attention to the Pen Selwood entry in **Kelly's Directory** of 1894 and 1927.

In 1891 the population was 353. John Moldram was the Parish Clerk. Letters from Bath arrive at 7:30am, collection was every day including Sundays. Average attendance at the National school was 44 pupils. Pen Pits extended over an area of 200 acres but once of much greater extent. The chief crops are corn and some land in pasture.

By 1921 the population was 279, the school had been enlarged to 80 pupils, and the land was nearly all in pasture. Motor omnibuses ran within about 1 mile of the centre of the village. Mrs Tryphena Gibbs was the sub-postmistress and letters went via Bourton.

The entries are saved on the website in the History Group.

Renee Bridger provided some old files for us to examine. We divided into two groups to discuss and feedback to the whole meeting.

Save the "Queens Head" Campaign



Clive Bridger and John Moldram ran a campaign in 1975 to stop the closure of the Queens Head. Clive kept a file of the letters and petitions and Renee Bridger had kindly let the History Society examine the file.

The file consists of carbon copies of the many letters and notices which Clive and John wrote between early June (when the proposal to sell the house as a private residence became known) and August (when it became apparent that the sale was proceeding).

Letters were sent to the Vicar, the local MP and local worthies. Telegrams were sent to Hall & Woodhouse (at a cost of £6.84½) and fund raising events were held. Legal advice was taken (which confirmed that it was a matter for Hall & Woodhouse).

Two petitions were mounted; one for local residents which had 120 signatories and one for users of the pub who were not residents which raised 138. Copies of the petitions are in the papers and the names make interesting reading. The Campaign had had both local press and television coverage.

None of this altered Hall & Woodhouse's view that they had said they had accepted an offer and that the pub was uneconomic for both tenant and landlord.

The Campaign raised £84.46 and had £27.80 donations to return, presumably in the pub!

The building of the Bourton By-Pass

There were originally 3 proposed routes put forward for consultation in 1976. The northerly route went parallel to Long Lane and required major excavation in the area of the Mere Fault, a very unstable area, and for this reason and cost was never really a practical proposition. The cost was 50% more than each of the other two routes and of course was in an area of Outstanding Natural beauty.

The middle way was the route adopted and the Southerly route through Silton was ruled out.

When all the objections had been heard, a process that took three years, a meeting was held to present the various conclusions. Peter Fitzgerald alerted Wessex Water to the meeting having reminded them that they had statutory water rights on the land being considered for the northerly route. When eventually they responded to his promptings and attended the hearing, he was told that if Wessex Water had raised the issue earlier the Northern route would have been written off immediately.

The By-Pass was eventually opened in 1988, a great relief for all the local residents as it had become impossible to cross the A 303, in a vehicle from the village at week ends, due to volume of traffic.

Information gathered will be collected on the Pen Selwood website under the History Society on the clubs tab.

You can join the Group discussion at <http://penselwood.ning.com/group/history-society>

[The next meeting is scheduled for 7:30 pm on 2nd December 2015 at Woodlands, the topic is to be confirmed.](#)