

I'm at present in the home of Derek Fawke who lives at Bridge Lodge on the corner of Bridge Hill and Bourne Parke Road.

Derek, how long have you lived in the village?

Since 1968.

Where did you come from originally?

London.

Why did you choose Bridge to live in?

We saw several houses and we liked this one. It was semi derelict at the time and it had been empty for two or three years. So, we decided on the village and that was it. It was also to get the children out of London.

Of course, at that time you had the main London to Dover road going past here.

That's right, which we didn't know about. When we first visited the house, it was very quiet and lovely. The following visit we found out about the noise. It's the start of traffic going up the hill and braking coming down.

Yes, very noisy. I believe you played a part in the protest against the road.

Yes. The whole village got together. One side of the village didn't know the other side because of the heavy traffic, but we all got together on various occasions and laid in the road and stopped the traffic. The police came along eventually and picked us up. This happened several times. One time we were having a visit from the MP responsible. Anyway, I drove my car up to Boughton roundabout and saw the coach, drove along in front of it and when I got down to the village opposite the garage, I faked a breakdown in front of it. That obviously caused a long queue. There were crowds waiting and Vernon who owned the garage then rushed out to give me a push up and I whispered "Vernon, no." We pushed the car into the garage and the procession carried on but it was one way of stopping them to show them the problems with the traffic and congestion.

Yes, it was really terrible. I remember it. But then I remember the celebrations afterwards. Did you take part in that?

I suppose I did but it's too long ago, I can't remember. We had a big party, I think.

There was a celebration in Bridge Place, I think. I seem to remember in the cellar. Just picking out other events during this period of time, obviously the hurricane of '87, you must have been in the thick of it here.

Yes. We lost approximately 40 trees from the wood and we were housebound for about 5 days. We couldn't get a vehicle out for 5 days. There were trees on this road, the hill and Bourne Park road. We lost both our chain saws, they disappeared and my sons worked on the logging and cutting. I was working in London then so I managed to get the train at Bekebourne. Lots of things happened.

I remember one young girl coming down to get the bus to go to Canterbury and I said, "The buses aren't coming through." She said, "I must get to work."

We were living in Canterbury at the time, I suppose Jennifer got out to the school. Did you have children here? Did they go to Bridge School?

Yes. Two children. I think your wife taught one of them.

You mentioned 40 trees. You've got quite a wood at the back of the house. Was that always here when the lodge keeper was here?

When I bought the house, it wasn't included but I bought the wood and also extra land following that in 1972 something like that.

So obviously it had been the property of the big house and the family.

I think you'll find the big house was a separate estate. I know when it went for sale (it was offered to me actually) with 26 acres of land. I think it could have been a different estate. It had been a Benedictine monastery when I bought this. There was a monk.

Yes, I remember that. They moved out pretty soon after they came in in '69, the year after you.

He used to walk down the road. Then he was on his own. I surveyed the house (that was my job) just after he had gone. He got murdered in Herne Bay. Then it was offered to me with the land for somewhere about 50 thousand. I couldn't afford that sort of money. A chap had bought it and before the ink was dry on the details, he'd sold most of the land back to a local farmer and he kept 6 acres that now goes with the house. The cricket ground, that's part of the house. He sold the house for 75 thousand. He made a lot of money.

This is Bridge Lodge is there another at the top of Frog Lane?

No, there's one at the end of Bourne Park Road. I don't know whether that's called the Lodge. There is another lodge that used to be the entry to the Country Club at the end of Brewery Lane.

It was on the market when we were looking for houses, but we decided not to buy it.

So, there was a lodge gate for Bridge Place there. But there were two lodges for the house. This is bigger than the other one at the end of Bourne Park Road isn't it? Was this the main lodge?

This was the main one yes and we had the bay window where the gate keeper watched the gate and would rush out.

We should make it clear that back in the 19th century or whenever, there were gates across Bourne Park Road.

That's right. I don't know when the road was taken up by the Council, probably in the twenties.

Let's talk about this house. When was it built?

1857.

Older than I thought. It was on the site of an older building?

No. Prior to 1857, the lodge then was more or less where the road is. What happened was, that what we know as Church Meadow was owned then in the 1880s by a Mr Taylor who let the field to a local butcher for cattle. He then, during the mid-80s, 1800s, he decided to build houses for which he had permission. Whether they had planning in those days I don't know. Therefore, Matthew Bell and Fanny Bell had Bourne House and the estate. He decided to straighten the road which in those days was over adjoining the grave yard. They straightened the road out and trees. There is a name.

I can't remember what it's called when you plant trees, there is a name for it. They pulled the lodge house down and they built this house. I read somewhere it took one hour to pull the house down, so it couldn't have been much of a house. They built this house, in this position, so that it could have a garden, because originally, they were going to build it the other side. On the other side, there's no space for a garden by the churchyard. That's why we have a new straight road and the wood. The whole work was in 1857. It took one year to do the whole thing and build the house.

It should be recorded that Derek and I, a few days ago, walked out and had a look at the line of Bourne Park and it is clear to me now that there wouldn't have been much room on the other side of the road before one hit the church wall.

Would the house opposite have been built at that time?

That was built in 1880s – 1890 and there is a photo in the archives of two ladies standing there with bicycles at the gate with that house in the background. That was round about 1900 or 1899. That house had just been built. It does show the conservatory at the side that's still there.

That's extremely interesting and gives us a feel for how this house played a part within the estate.

On the photographs of this house it shows the lead, lattice windows. They're plain now but they were. They still have lead lattices in the other lodge house.

I think Matthew Bell must have been very particular about what sort of buildings were built.

This is very strong. The ground floor is two foot three thick and the brickwork on the upper floor. Very strong with buttresses of course. It was designed by an architect who came from Folkestone. I can't remember his name. The builder was from Canterbury.

You described what happened to the big house which was owned by a religious house, Benedictines.

Anything else about your time in Bridge that you'd like to mention?

The trouble is that working in London for 18 years I was not accepted. I'm not sure I'm accepted now! I've only been here for 50 odd years but there it is. Pleasant enough village.

And you've never felt tempted to move anywhere else?

No. I had a yacht in Conyer and we did live on it for a while. While I did the work on the house we lived on the boat. I used to come over at weekends.

Who had owned the house before you?

I bought it off the estate. That is why I checked the deeds of the property but they only actually start in 1667/68, prepared for when I was buying the house from the estate. So therefore, in the deeds this is all part of the estate, there are no actual deeds for the house. I understand in the seventeenth century there was a pub here, a coaching inn called The Greyhound, I think. There is some foundation work or brickwork just at the back. So, there was a building of some sort here. The Roman road came down and would have been straight through the middle of our sitting room. The line of the road changed. The man to speak to is Michael who used to be at the council. I can't remember his surname, he lives in Riverside Close. Michael Stewart. He did tell me. I was talking to one of the ladies who was surveying the property for Roman ruins (from one of the universities I think). Michael was telling her that the road was changed because the present owner of the big house didn't like to see the traffic going to Dover. This must have been some time in the 17th

century I should think. That was the sort of power they had. The direction of the road was changed. Whether the old Roman road was used I don't know. That's why they sank the road down, so the traffic couldn't be seen.

There is the story that Matthew Bell didn't want the railway seen and had the tunnel built.

It might have been through Matthew Bell. I know he was here in the 1850s but I don't know when it was done.

I must do some research on this. I've heard that story about the Roman road going through the house, so it must have been just on the top of the land.

Old England's Hole, do you know anything about that?

When the Romans came over the first time, as you probably know, the English – they were Gauls basically, they'd moved over from France. That's how they knew how to fight the Roman technique, but the prisoners were herded into a wood and because the Romans couldn't control them, they pushed them into the wood and slowly went in and killed them. That's why it was called Old England's Hole because of the nobility and all the ones who hadn't been killed in the battle were taken prisoner. That's what I understood.

They did find a couple of graves up there about 1937 I understand, of a man and a woman and child and these were Bronze Age. The man and the woman were both over 6 foot which is unusual. They were moved to the Beaney then to London. Since then I don't know what happened to them. When we first moved here in the late 60s early 70s, you could actually see excavations in that wood but then with the sheep and what have you they've gone but there were actually excavations.

Are there any ghosts in this house?

So I'm told. Strange things at times. From my point of view, not so much in the house but outside, cold spots. There's one just outside there which my son Stephen can tell you about when he was a child. His bedroom and there's a cold spot as you come out of the house just walking along the road at the end of our road there have been quite a few times when I went out walking the dog at night, I can feel a very cold spot. The story is that a Roman chariot is seen going up and down. In my job I've surveyed many properties and I've come across so-called ghosts. They don't bother me one way or the other. Whether they actually exist or not - I'm a sceptic.

Steve, about the ghost part. What was it?

(Stephen Fawke) It was strange outside when I was a child. There was a tree there that was a bit strange. There were cold spots there. There was a pussy willow, there always seemed to be somebody watching you at that point. I remember waking up early, it was in October 1969/70 and there were two people in the bedroom with me, looking out the window. They were dressed in a slightly different fashion.

The interesting thing about Old England's Hole and the Roman military history states that Julius Caesar came over the first time and he got to the top of the hill a day's march from the beach and he looked down and saw a river. Between him and the water was this fortified village. So, at that point a conflict started and the village was massacred. That night a messenger came from the fleet saying a storm was brewing in the English Channel and he decided to take some of his troops and horses. I think some of them went back with Caesar to safeguard the fleet because of the storm. He left a contingent of troops here and over the next two or three days all the local villages or tribes formed a

war band. There was continuous fighting for several days and that's why there have been bodies and remains.

This place has so much military history. Troops have been tramping through this village towards Europe for ages.

Mum found a button in the garden digging. It had an insignia on it. I spoke to an expert who told me it was from 1685, Prince of Wales Heavy Dragoons based in Canterbury (Cavalry Fields, I don't know where that is).

(Derek Fawke)

Yes, I didn't mention that. My wife has dug up all sorts of stuff, bits of pots and things.

Somewhere, I've seen an old map, 18th century, and there were buildings around here, a stable.

Not the lodge house. This is where I become confused because I don't know when it became an estate. There could have been a wooden structure here.

Thank you very much.