



## Cleeve Prior Chroniclers

### Jack Ankers - Memories of Old Cleeve

---

Jack Ankers was born in Cleeve and lived in the village for over 80 years. His grandparents kept the village pub, which was a free house then & later sold it to the brewery.

The family then moved to Lynwood adjacent the pub, and the orchard and field behind provided them with sufficient land to farm. His father died of pneumonia aged 39, leaving Jack his mother, brother & sister. They kept cows, horses, pigs & sheep and his mother grew asparagus and strawberries on land along Evesham Road. Jack was 9 when he lost his father and he then had to



work on the farm in a small way, leading in a short time to virtually taking over the farm duties. Work was hard, 7 days a week and in later life his wages were 1 shilling a week. He tended the animals at first, the cows grazing in Quarry & Hoden Lane and at the age of 9, Jack used to drive them along to graze at 4.a.m. The dawn choruses were marvellous with numerous nightingales, peewits, and skylarks.

The quarrying in Quarry lane was an important means of livelihood for various villagers. The stone was quarried from four holes, one being where the sewerage pump now is. The Vickeridge Brothers worked the quarry in the millennium field, all by hand. After taking off the top soil and carting it away, they then extracted the stone with crowbars.

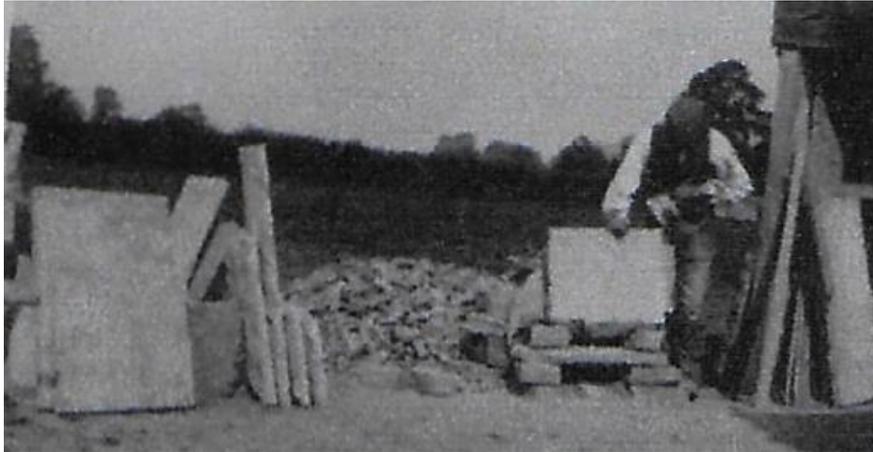


## Cleeve Prior Chroniclers

### Jack Ankers - Memories of Old Cleeve

---

Some of the stone quarried was chiselled away on site by a man for local gravestones.



A villager on the Evesham Road had a horse and cart and used to cart loads of stone away, as far as Broadway. As a boy Jack remembers one of the old quarry holes filled with water and full to the brim with frogs, but he and some of his friends discovered a pit of snakes and as the frogs disappeared he is convinced they were all eaten by the snakes.

He attended the village school, when the original old stone building was curtained off in order to teach the younger & older children separately.





## Cleeve Prior Chroniclers

### Jack Ankers -Memories of Old Cleeve

---

Desks seated two children, and he remembers a glass fronted cabinet housing the school cane. Teachers were very strict, one used to wear a thimble on her finger and go behind the children in class and bang the back of their heads with it. He was caned more than once on his hand, once for catapulting.

The school playing fields were then 14 or 15 allotments with a number of fruit trees & vegetables being grown by the villagers as Cleeve Prior used to be virtually self-sufficient. Jack remembers the asparagus being cut twice a day for the market, morning & evening. It was grown from seed and took 3 years to reach maturity, when it was cut. There were many orchards in the village, and many varieties of plum and apple were grown, including magnums, monarchs, Victoria's, purple, egg, newton's, Worcester & pomains. Lorries used to come around the village to collect the fruit & take it to Coventry & Birmingham m. Chips & boxes were left outside the house for the lorry to pick up on its way. During his childhood Evesham Road was cornfields.

### **War time memories.**



Jack Ankers

Every 2 or 3 months Jack had to be re assessed for service, but as he was working in agriculture, which was deemed important, he was never called up



## Cleeve Prior Chroniclers

### Jack Ankers -Memories of Old Cleeve

---

for active service, and his farm was told what crops to grow. During the war the army took over the warehouse and the village hall and he remembers the military lorry's being parked in Quarry Lane and the field behind the pub. There was also one bren gun positioned outside the farm house. Jack joined the Local Defence Volunteers [LDV] and later the home guard, and spent many hours in a van, which acted as a look out post on high ground at the end of Mill Lane. During the war there was a fire service in the village and the firebox was kept on the wall of the warehouse. The headquarters of the home guard, who patrolled the village, was in the vicarage.

Cleeve used to have a very large number of really big trees, mostly elms.



Elms on Hoden lane after  
R/L bend half way to hill on  
LH side

Several were in Hoden Lane, a number at the Manor, there was a huge beech at the entrance to the Close, and a large maple on the green.

There used to be a Cider Mill by the pub, and in later years the actual stone that turned to crush the apples, was transported to Bidford, Grange road. The cider was stored in old whisky and rum casks, which made it lethal with keeping.

A village character was Albert Freeman, fondly known as Captain

### **The river & weir**

The weir went across the river with a foot plank & steel handrail. It was made of large stone pieces which in time had become coated with green lichen, which Jack & his young friends used to scrape off and use for bait for fishing.



## Cleeve Prior Chroniclers

### Jack Ankers - Memories of Old Cleeve

---

Holland's steamer from Bidford used to pull up and take people back down the river to the pleasure gardens for tea. Very popular with people from Birmingham and Coventry, the grassy areas around the mill used to be covered in tents with people camping. You could cross the river by the footbridge and walk over the meadows to Church & Abbots Salford.

Also, the river was very shallow at Foxholes, and with care you could cross the river on foot. On the opposite side of the river there was a wooden building used by a large industrial company for its workers as weekend accommodation, but this ceased to be used once they purchased a large house on the ridge, again for their workers.

The Mill had floodgates and a huge mill wheel. There was a tea room within



the mill where drinks were served by ladies in white frilly aprons. There was a shop of sorts on the river bank where you could buy ice creams and sweets, this was run by the owner of the shop at Squirrel Cottage in the village.

Jack can recall three shops in the village. The bakery was next to the post office. The village did not have a milkman as such, but Jack used to go round with a ½ pint & 1 pint ladle and deliver milk from the farm.

There was someone buried in the churchyard who lived to be 109,

For recreation the boys of the village had Scouts & the football club