

# BRIDGE COTTAGE

## Built in the 1820s?

Glenham was built in *c.* 1815 in the corner of the former Green leaving an obvious plot of land between it and the river that was quickly exploited by a speculative builder. No early papers exist for Bridge Cottage among either the Bristol or the Biddell archives and it has therefore to be assumed that it was put up by an outsider. Neither does any clue remain as to its actual date of building. The first record of its existence does not appear until the Tithe Apportionments of 1844



**Bridge Cottage viewed from the Cricket Meadow; the bridge was replaced in 1894**

although it is most likely to have been built somewhat earlier than this when pressure on housing was at its highest.<sup>1</sup> But unlike Glenham, which was to a large extent constructed from wooden materials from the former barracks on the Woodbridge Road, Bridge Cottage was built entirely of brick and, very strangely for a property of its status because of the cost, it was built as a single dwelling and not as a pair.<sup>2</sup> For over a hundred years it was let out to tenants the earliest on record being Elijah Amos, a shop keeper, whose landlord was a Pettitt Wilson who was also a likely builder.<sup>3</sup> The house has remained in single occupation throughout its existence, the only alteration to its structure being its considerable enlargement in the late 1930s when it first became an owner-occupied property.

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<sup>1</sup> In 1831 Playford's population peaked at 299. It was at around this time that other cottage properties in the village were sub-divided into much meaner, smaller dwellings.

<sup>2</sup> Ordnance Survey map, 1881.

<sup>3</sup> SROI, FDA196/A1/1a, Playford Tithe Apportionment, 1844. *Ipswich Journal*, 14 October 1848. However, when Sink Meadow cottages were put up for sale four years later, Elijah Amos was declared as one of the tenants there.

## **Pettitt Wilson, beerhouse keeper turned agricultural labourer**

Pettitt Wilson was born in Grundisburgh in 1791. At the time of the Tithes Apportionment, where he is recorded as the owner of the cottage, he ran the Rose beerhouse in the Hamlet of Wicks Ufford then a part of Rushmere.<sup>4</sup> In the Census of 1851 while still an innkeeper, he was also farming 3 acres of freehold land which in his will dated 1854 he describes as being in two fields with a cottage and outbuildings lying in Rushmere.<sup>5</sup> No mention is made of any property in Playford and, from the deeds of the house which become available from 1862, it is found that Bridge Cottage had become part of the Bristol Estate.<sup>6</sup>

It is possible that Wilson sold one property in order to buy another for by 1854, the year in which he wrote his will, he had come out of the pub trade and become a jobber doing casual or occasional work on a self employed basis. He may well have been doing this in addition to his farming activities for in the general election of 1857 he had the vote which, without the land and property, he would not otherwise have had. In that year Wilson gave evidence to the Ipswich Election Committee then enquiring into malpractice, specifically whether the seat had been obtained by the unbiased votes of the electors or by a system of 'treating and bribery' and, in regaling his inquisitors on how he spent his election day, he comes over as a man who is enjoying life to the full.<sup>7</sup> But by 1861, until the end of his days, he foregoes the freedom that he had previously enjoyed working on his own and become an agricultural labourer living to the great age of 86 and dying of a heart attack in 1883.<sup>8</sup> His will, written thirty years earlier, remained unchanged and, but for some minor codicil that he had added only three years before his death, might have been considered to have lain forgotten. All his property, whatever that now entailed, passed to his wife who died six years later but her own will made no mention of either land or buildings merely stating that all effects were to be sold and divided equally between the children.<sup>9</sup> From this it is assumed that Wilson had hung on to his smallholding in Rushmere and that he had let it out to a third party opting for the security of full time work over the uncertainty that he had experienced during his time of self employment.

His evidence to the Election Committee would seem to confirm this as a George Farthing, a master butcher from Rushmere and another witness, describes himself as Wilson's tenant. The statements provided by the two men give an interesting insight into prevailing voting practices at a time when election days were times of great jollification especially for those able to take time off work. At the General Election of 1857 Wilson, then still self employed, was collected that morning from Martlesham, where he was working, by George Farthing in his horse and cart strongly suggesting

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<sup>4</sup> 1841 Census. The Beerhouse Act had been passed in 1830. It allowed anyone to brew and sell beer on payment of a licence costing two guineas, its intention being to increase competition among brewers. Playford's first beer house was the White Horse Inn, later called the Eel's Foot, which stood in Church Lane where the present council houses are. It was demolished in 1872 and replaced by the Blaring Dickie, also known as the Kicking Donkey, which formed part of the Barrack Cottages in the corner of Archway Field facing into Church Lane. Wicks Ufford stretched approximately from Rushmere church to the top of Spring Road in Ipswich. The Rose beer house lay near the Greyhound, now known as the Garland, in Humber Doucy Lane.

<sup>5</sup> SROI, IC AA2/153/105.

<sup>6</sup> Deeds of the house in private possession. Transcribed by the occupiers.

<sup>7</sup> *Ipswich Journal*, 1 August 1857.

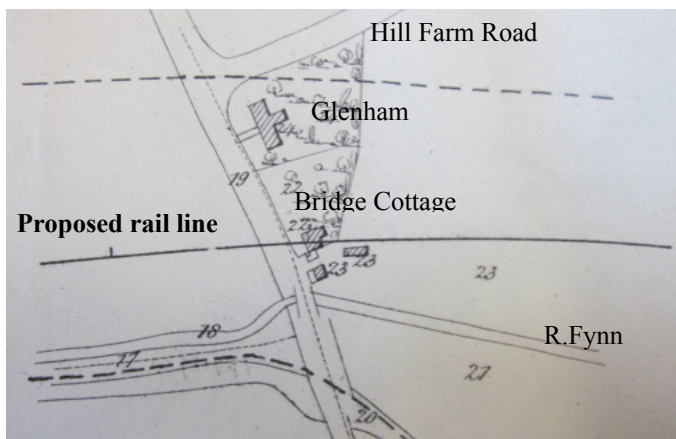
<sup>8</sup> SROI, C8/8/298. Coroner's Inquest, 26 January 1883.

<sup>9</sup> SROI, IC AA2/159/215. Will of Sarah Wilson, dated 30 January 1883, made less than a week after her husband's sudden death.

that Farthing was an agricultural rather than a domestic tenant of Wilson. At the hearing Wilson admitted to receiving half a sovereign ‘from a gentleman’ to pay for his travel expenses but no money ever reached Farthing who had after all provided the transport.<sup>10</sup> The money was instead spent on beer with Wilson adding that ‘he thought he went home from the Case is Altered’, a pub that is still open on the Woodbridge Road. Wilson would have known Farthing from his days in the beer trade as Farthing’s younger brother Jonathan ran the Britannia in Wicks Ufford and Farthing himself was soon to take on the Ivy Green both pubs being at the Rushmere end of Woodbridge Road.<sup>11</sup> Farthing therefore did not stay long as Wilson’s tenant. A fallout between the two may well have been the reason for his early departure as in 1859 the two families ended up in court.<sup>12</sup>

## The coming of the railway

In 1845, perhaps some twenty years after the property had been built, the Ipswich & Yarmouth Railway presented a plan that showed the proposed line running straight through the house and grounds. The route was intended to pass through the parish on the floor of the valley immediately to the north of the river before re-crossing it soon after Hill House.<sup>13</sup> Later plans in 1846 and 1847



**Railway Plan 1845 showing proposed route through Bridge Cottage**

show the line where it is today though not taking full account of the problems that would be faced in crossing the Mere.<sup>14</sup>

While it is fortunate for later inhabitants of the village that the earlier proposal was not taken up, the plan has left welcome details of the property that would otherwise not have been available. It shows that the premises did not then extend up to the river and that Bridge Meadow (23 in the drawing) was left with a remnant of frontage on to the Ipswich Road that it had had in the days before enclosure.<sup>15</sup> The property was considerably more extensive than might

have been imagined and included ‘yards, stables, sheds, pig styes, cart shed and out buildings’ and even, amazingly, a stack yard. Pettitt Wilson is confirmed as owner and Elijah Amos as occupier but Amos is also recorded as occupier of Bridge Meadow, which is probably incorrect. No acreage of the meadow is stated in the accompanying schedule and Amos’s tenancy could merely have referred to the sheds that stood in the field which had been given the same numbers of identification. It is

<sup>10</sup> The ‘gentleman’ was Mr Chevallier of Aspall. Wilson and Farthing voted for John Chevallier Cobbold, the Ipswich brewer and one of two successful Conservative candidates. Cobbold’s mother was a Chevallier.

<sup>11</sup> The Britannia was demolished in 1910 and the present Lattice Barn pub built on the site.

<sup>12</sup> *Ipswich Journal*, 10 September 1859. Pettitt Wilson’s son Arthur went to the Ivy Green, broke down the door, knocked Farthing and his housekeeper to the ground threatening to murder them as they had been witnesses in a case earlier in the day of damaging a fence.

<sup>13</sup> SROI, 150/2/5.67. Railway plan, 1845.

<sup>14</sup> *The Coming of the Railway*, Herman Biddell, c. 1914. Private possession.

<sup>15</sup> The 25 inch OS map, 1927, shows that narrow area planted with trees which presumably were not cleared until at least ten years later when the house first became owner-occupied and access to the river added an attractive feature to the garden.

more likely that Arthur Biddell, the lessee, was the rightful occupier of the land.<sup>16</sup> The large scale Ordnance Survey maps show that the sheds were still there in 1880 but had been removed by 1902 suggesting that they were taken down when Elijah Amos retired and that they were probably used for storing his goods.

## **Elijah Amos, shopkeeper and long term tenant from the early 1840s to 1887**

Elijah Amos's father Samuel came from Lavenham and had travelled east first to Westerfield and then to Rushmere where he brought up his family. Sometime after 1825 he moved yet again, this time to Playford where the family finally put down roots.<sup>17</sup> All four sons lived on in the parish until they died: two stayed on the farm and two branched out in other ways.<sup>18</sup> Of the two who stayed on the farm, Elisha became farm bailiff while his younger brother Elias, described as 'a very intelligent labouring man', left his mark for posterity in a deposition he made to the *Report of the Select Committee on the Malt Tax* in 1868.<sup>19</sup>

Samuel junior, the oldest of the brothers, in later life became a carrier in the village. He was the father of David who worked for eighty years as errand boy, groom, coachman and manservant for three generations of the Biddell family. When Herman Biddell retired from farming and built Archway House for his family, he built Archway Cottage for David and his wife. A full column obituary appeared in the *East Anglian Daily Times* on his death in 1930 at the age of 87.<sup>20</sup> But it was as village shopkeeper for some 30 years that Elijah, the second of the four sons, proved to be the most successful of all the brothers.

Elijah continued to live on with his parents at Colonel's Cottages until he married in 1844.<sup>21</sup> He married Sarah Garrod, then twenty-five years old, who had been left to look after her three younger siblings and was running a shop to support them.<sup>22</sup> Her parents had married in Playford in 1813 and, apart from the father working briefly for Arthur Biddell in the 1830s, no trace has been found of

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<sup>16</sup> SROI, 150/2/5.70. *Ipswich & Yarmouth Railway: Book of Reference* containing the Names of Owners... and Occupiers of Property in or through which the Railway is intended to be made'.

<sup>17</sup> The record correctly states that they moved to Little Bealings, in fact to 'Colonel Pogson's Old Farmhouse' on Lux Farm, now Colonel's Cottage which is accessed from the Martlesham Road. The property then lay in the parish of Little Bealings and remained so until recent times when it was transferred to Playford in the boundary changes of 1984.

<sup>18</sup> SROI, FC22/67/4. List of Labourers above 18 years working for A Biddell, undated but c. 1834. Three Amoses are listed, Samuel senior, Samuel junior and Elijah, among a total of 44 men.

<sup>19</sup> *Parliamentary Papers* 1867-68, 2 July 1868, 412. *Ipswich Journal*, 25 July 1868. Elias Amos was no doubt set up to do this by his employer Manfred Biddell whose brother William was active in Conservative politics in West Suffolk. William's opposition to the Malt Tax was supported by both landlords and tenants alike and resulted in his adoption as candidate for the West Suffolk seat which he won in 1880. Amos's submission to the Select Committee sheds interesting light on home brewing practice then carried out by agricultural workers. The tax, which restricted the demand for home-grown barley, was not repealed until 1880 at which time it was transferred to beer. Private possession. The benefits resulting from the removal of the tax are spelled out at local level in some detail by James Frost in his commentary on the improved conditions of working people in the 1880s. *Ipswich Journal*, 9 May 1891. Elias Amos received an award from the Suffolk Agricultural Association. for his 54 years service on Lux Farm. In the days before the state pension, he most likely completed a total of 61 years before his death in 1898 at the age of 74.

<sup>20</sup> *East Anglian Daily Times*, 16 December 1930.

<sup>21</sup> He married on Christmas Day, a not uncommon choice of date throughout the 19th century.

<sup>22</sup> 1841 Census. The children were then aged 15, 11 and 9. *Whites Directory*, 1844.

them. Some time in the 1850s Elijah left Lux Farm to help his wife in the shop and, by the time of the 1861 Census he is classed as a stock dealer and grocer.<sup>23</sup> When George Clarke, a market gardener from Epping, relinquished the tenancy of the field behind Copyhold, Elijah took it over and is then described as a ‘farmer of four acres employing one boy’. The business had expanded for in 1871 he had become a retail grocer and pork butcher with both his wife and twenty-one year old daughter working in the shop.



**The brick shed, left, was used by Amos both as a store and an outlet for his produce. On his retirement in 1887 the purpose built shop, centre, was set up on an empty piece of land, a prominent corner site adjoining Copyhold**

Throughout his years of married life, Elijah lived at Bridge Cottage, a man of some standing in the village whose status further increased when he took on the land in Church Lane. Now a tenant farmer, he was to become one of only five electors in the parish qualified to vote under the occupation franchise of 1885.<sup>24</sup> It is not known where the former Sarah Goddard had her shop in the 1840s nor indeed if it was in Bridge Cottage after her marriage but in later years it was in the building that still stands to the north of the former Post Office Stores on Butts Hill. When the purpose built shop

adjoining Copyhold was opened in 1887 the new tenant, Samuel Oxborrow, also took over the ‘land lately occupied by Elijah Amos’. Now in his seventies and recently widowed, Amos went to live with his daughter in Hasketon. He was buried in Playford churchyard six years later.<sup>25</sup>

Elijah Amos has one other claim to fame. With his brother Elisha, he was in his younger days an active member of Playford Cricket Club that used to play ‘in a meadow near Playford Hall kindly lent by Mrs Clarkson’. The ‘Cricket Meadow’ still exists as a field to the south of Brook Lane but was thought to have gained its name from the summer evening knockabouts that villagers enjoyed between the wars. The existence of a regular team and active club in the 1850s puts its dating back very much earlier.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> *Ipswich Journal*, 24 October 1857. A case of embezzlement at the Suffolk Michaelmas Sessions informs that Sarah Amos, Elijah’s wife, bought malt from Edmund Oxborrow who rented a maltings at Rushmere. No indication is given however whether it was for her own use or for resale. Oxborrow was a friend of Pettitt Wilson and indeed an executor of his will in which he is described as ‘miller, maltster, baker, confectioner of Great Colman Street’ so giving an indication of the social circle in which Wilson moved. Home brewing was still carried on in farm cottages between the wars, the malt then being supplied by Barnard Bros of Woodbridge Road who still trade there as suppliers of pet food.

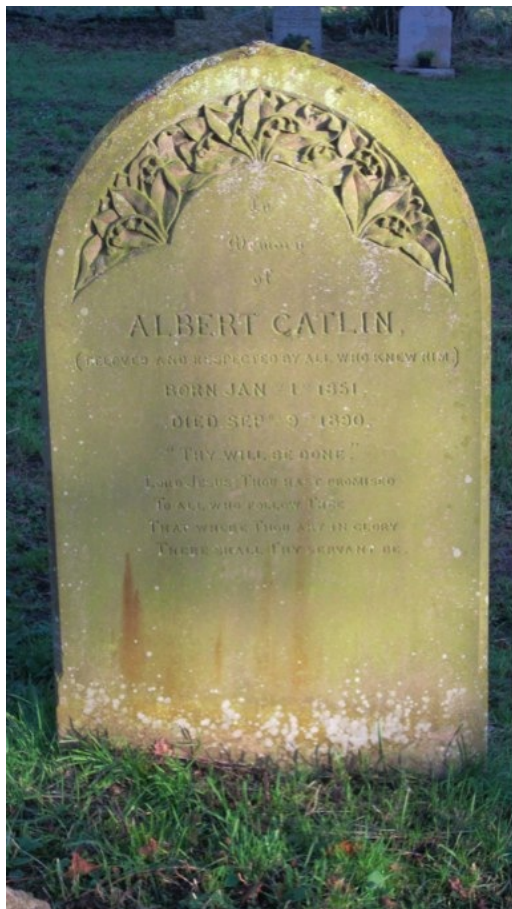
<sup>24</sup> The others were: Herman and Manfred Biddell farmers of Hill and Lux Farms respectively, Joseph Bromley owner of Playford Mount and the Revd John Freeman who qualified under the parson’s freehold. Tenant occupiers were eligible at a rent of £50 and above.

<sup>25</sup> SROI, FC 22/D1/6, Playford Burial Register 1813-1976. His wife Sarah died in 1884, three years before the new shop was opened.

<sup>26</sup> *Ipswich Journal*, 22 June 1850. In this particular two innings match played on a weekday summer evening, Playford beat Kesgrave by 13 runs. It was noted that the Playford Club numbered some 25 to 30 members ‘composed of labourers headed by a few other individuals’. The reporter was ‘very gratified to see with what interest the labouring classes take up this game when facilities are afforded for their enjoying it’.



## Anna Catlin, widow of a Playford Hall gardener, occupier 1890 - 1900



The fine headstone to Albert Catlin adjoining the Crisp family vault in Playford churchyard

As already mentioned, Bridge Cottage was acquired by the Bristol family in 1862. It was a surprising purchase as the sitting tenant Elijah Amos, a self-employed man, was allowed to continue his tenancy. Following his wife's death in 1884 and his subsequent move to Hasketon, he was succeeded as occupier by Anna Catlin the widow of a gardener at The Hall. Anna's husband Albert had been born at The Grove in Little Bealings, his first employment being as a live-in gardener at Hill House in Playford for Herman Biddell from where he moved to work for the Crisps. In 1877 the couple married and by 1881 were the first to occupy the newly built lodge cottages. Both for his employer and in his own right, the Ipswich Journal records Albert Catlin winning numerous prizes at all the local shows covering a wide range of flowers and fruit and vegetables but after barely ten years service and at the age of only thirty-nine he died after a very short illness.<sup>27</sup> As a mark of their respect and affection, the Crisp family erected an ornate headstone in the churchyard next to their own family vault at the north-east corner of the church and found accommodation for Anna and her four young daughters in Bridge Cottage. Anna was also found a job at The Hall as charwoman or cleaner but by 1901 had moved to Kirton. Here she became housekeeper to a bachelor farmer while Kate, her elder daughter and now seventeen, became housemaid. In 1909 she married again.<sup>28</sup>

## Col John Cavendish Freeland and the extension of the original cottage.....

The Bristol Estate held on to the property until 1929 during which time it was let out to a succession of short term tenants and was frequently unoccupied. It was bought that year by Rosa and Emma Crisp, the ageing daughters of Frederick Crisp senior who had moved with his family to Playford Hall in 1878.<sup>29</sup> On Emma's death in 1936 ownership of the cottage passed to her niece Dorothy, eldest daughter of her brother Frederick junior.<sup>30</sup> It was immediately sold on to Col John Cavendish

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 13 September 1890. The Crisps included a generous tribute when they placed his death announcement in the paper. Catlin exhibited not only at the local Woodbridge Horticultural Society Shows but at the regional Ipswich & East of England Horticultural Shows as well.

<sup>28</sup> 1901 Census. Bridge Cottage was described as 'unoccupied but inhabited'.

<sup>29</sup> Rosa died in 1931 just two years after the purchase and Emma in 1936.

<sup>30</sup> Dorothy had previously inherited from her father, who died in 1922, Little Wenham Hall near Colchester regarded as one of the most important medieval domestic buildings in England. Her son Major Alan Binny lived there until his death in 1997.

Freeland who came from a military family and who had recently retired from the Indian Army. For the first time Bridge Cottage was in the possession of an owner-occupier and it was at this point in its history that both it and the garden were extended to their present shape and size. Reference to photographs, postcards and large scale Ordnance Survey maps supports this view.<sup>31</sup>



**Col. Freeland relaxing after a game of tennis in the grounds of Hill House, the home of his brother-in-law George Fiske. A painting by Anna Airy**

Freeland's choice of Playford for retirement was in part influenced by a relative, Lt Col James Cavendish Freeland, who lived at Felixstowe but more so by Irene Fiske, his wife's sister, who lived at Hill House and in the years leading up to his retirement he was registered there as an absent voter. Freeland's short time in the village coincided with the Second World War and, with his service background, he was a natural choice for the post of Air Raid Precautions Representative a position he took over after the untimely death in 1938 of the incumbent H F Bond of Archway House. Freeland thus became the contact with officialdom in the outside world and among his responsibilities would receive telephone calls from Woodbridge in the event of an emergency or the requirement of an exercise. He would then liaise with Harold Burch next door at The Old Post Office who mustered all

necessary personnel to a pre-arranged assembly point. Either because of his age or more likely his high rank, he was never involved with the local Home Guard. He was sixty-two when war broke out and would in any case have had to retire at sixty-five. He served as churchwarden with George Fiske and gave unstinting help to Susie Gray the shopkeeper at a time of greatly increased workload brought on by the introduction of food rationing. He died in September 1944 before the war was over.

## **The post war years**

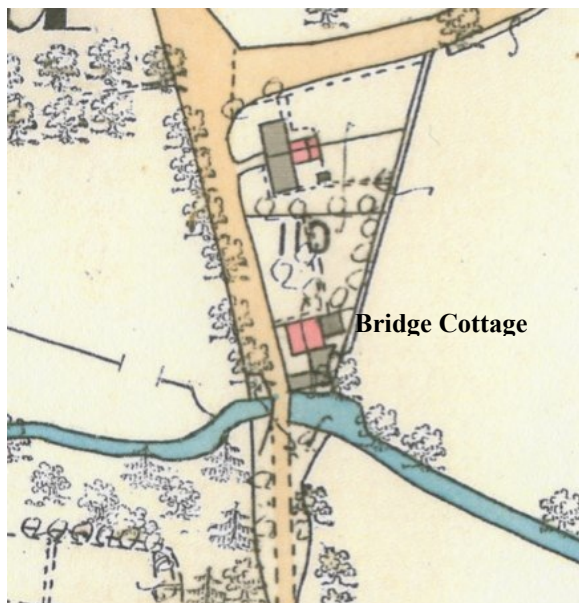
Freeland's widow lived on briefly in the house but, following her death in 1947, ownership passed to their son Lt Col John Freeland. Living in Kensington, he let the property until in 1951 it was bought by John and Phyllis Knights of Ipswich. It was then sold again in 1968 to Edward Collinson, an Ipswich solicitor who had built The Ridge in 1938 and who had later lived at Culpho End. He had been Parish Council chairman during and after the war.<sup>32</sup> He never lived at Bridge Cottage, owning it for just three years when it passed to Albert Hall of Ipswich and then to a John Lockwood in 1983. Its present owner, Liz Entwistle has been there since 1994.

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<sup>31</sup> Bridge Cottage appears unchanged in photographs taken in 1894, 1906 and c.1924. The pictures are supported by evidence from the 25 inch OS maps surveyed in 1881 and revised in 1902 and 1925.

<sup>32</sup> SROI, EG94/B1/2. Playford Parish Council Minute Book, 1948-71. E H Collinson was Chairman 1940-41 and again 1946-55. The vicar, the Revd Charles Houghton, was Chairman 1941-43. There were no meetings 1943-46.

## Playford Bridge



**OS map 1881 showing the original watercourse. In 1894 a new bridge was built several yards to the south and a new channel dug so straightening out the river**

No history of Bridge Cottage would be complete without mention of the bridge. Maintenance of roads and bridges changed from being the responsibility of the parish surveyor to that of the new local authority following the Local Government Act of 1888. Woodbridge Rural District Council was set up six years later and took over the work that had previously been done by two Biddells, father and son, Playford Surveyors for an impressive eighty-two years.<sup>33</sup> Playford Bridge appeared in a short list of bridges within the Woodbridge Rural District that were repairable by the County rather than the District Council and Woodbridge lost no time in passing on liability to them. In May 1894 it ordered that the bridge be repaired.<sup>34</sup>

No record of that work survives but an interesting collection of photographs show the bridge being replaced and built across a newly dug channel a few yards to the south.<sup>35</sup> The old channel was then filled in so transferring a small slice of land from south of

the river to the north and extending the garden of Bridge Cottage.

The bridge was replaced again in *c.* 1965 and the road straightened out.<sup>36</sup> The work involved the removal of some of Bridge Cottage's front garden and a small strip of Bridge Meadow belonging to Hill Farm. At the same time the hump in the road, under which the old mill stream had passed, was also removed.

An agreement exists for the building of a new bridge 'on the highway



**The new bridge, right, nears completion while the old bridge awaits demolition. Looking east from the Cricket Meadow, Hill House (then colour-washed) is just visible in the background**

<sup>33</sup> Arthur Biddell was Surveyor from 1810 to 1843 followed by his son Manfred from 1843 to 1892.

<sup>34</sup> SROI, EF9/5/1/1. Woodbridge Rural District Council, Bridges repairable by the County Council.

<sup>35</sup> The photographs of the rebuilding of the bridge were taken by a member of the Biddell family who left Lux Farm in 1895 following the death of the tenant Manfred Biddell the previous autumn.

<sup>36</sup> SROI, 2051/316-318.



from Culpho to Ipswich' in 1736 but this is more likely to be the bridge near the Wash than on the current main road as it is also described as being over the 'Back River' and near Playford Hall. The main road to Ipswich was diverted to its present route up the hill to Playford Corner by Sir Thomas Felton of Playford Hall in 1708 but the legal people responsible for drawing up the contract may well not have been up to date.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> SROI, HA2/F8/1. Agreement between Abraham Gooding, bricklayer and brickmaker, and the Playford surveyors. Gooding from Brick Kiln Farm in Playford, had to complete the work within one month at a cost of £19.