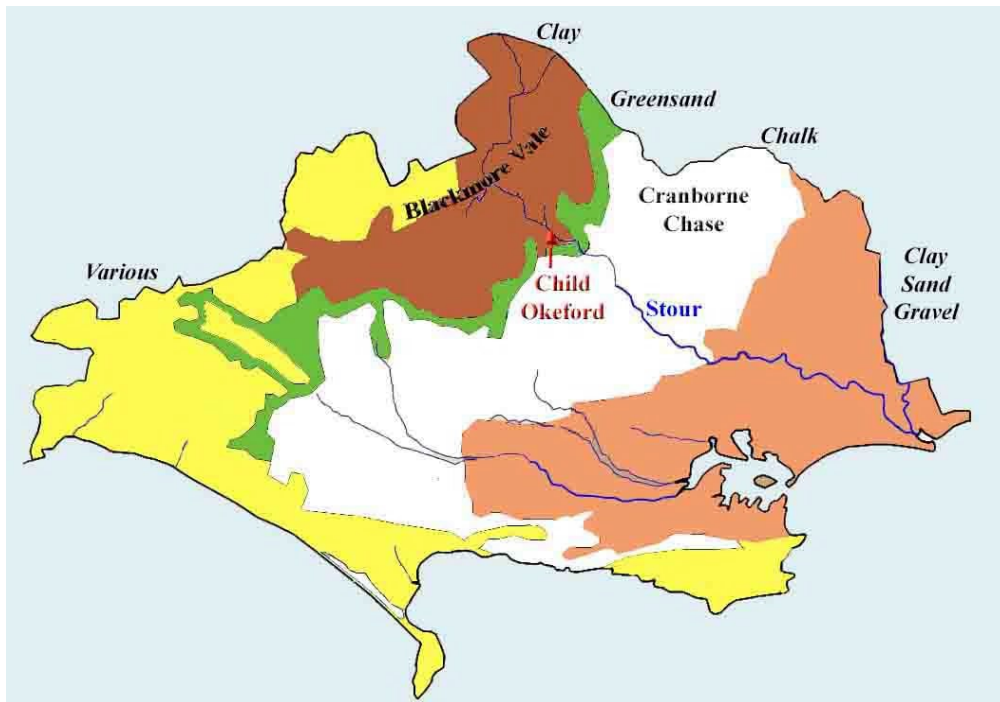


Hayward Bridge & the River Stour 1300 series

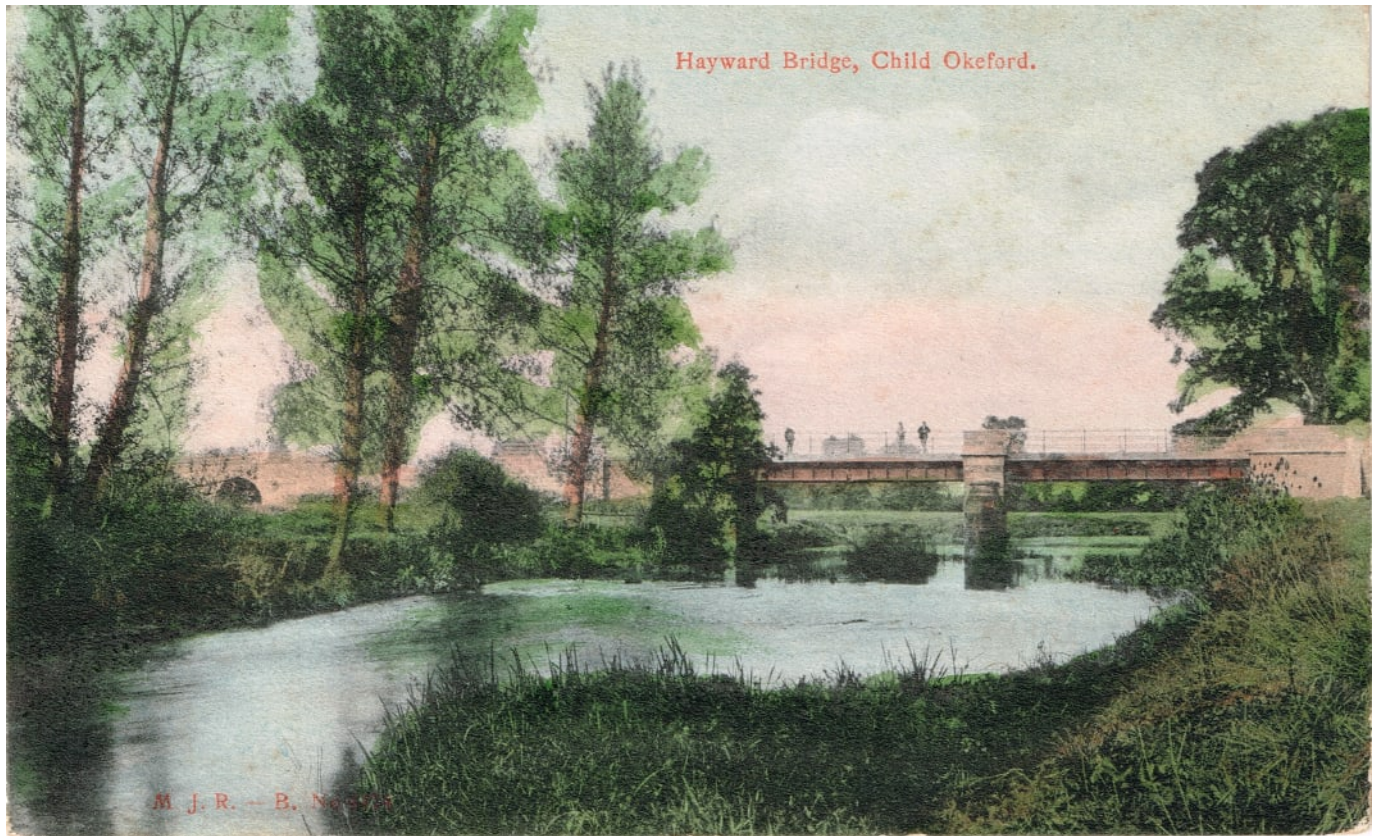


Of all the Dorset rivers the Stour is the only one to arise outside the central mass of chalk which runs into the county from the Wiltshire downs. Child Okeford lies on the junction between the Blackmore Vale to the north and west and the chalk to the south and east. It is an area rich in fords to cross the Stour. Between Sturminster and Blandford there are no fewer than five fords [Fiddleford, Child Okeford, Enford, Durweston and Stourpaine]. After Blandford the next one is at Wimborne.

The earliest reference to a bridge at this site comes in the year 1268 when it is called the “pontem de Hayford” and for most of it’s history up until the 18th century at least it has been referred to by some variant of that name. However, Haifordesbrigge, Heward and Hewood have all been applied to it at some stage.

During the 18th century the name settles down and become Hayward Bridge. A D Mills attributes the name to Anglo-Saxon Heg [Hay] ford [Ford] and Brycg [Bridge] and gives the meaning ‘Ford used at haymaking’. Unfortunately the name also gets confused with hege-weard [hedge keeper] a 15th century term used for the parish officer whose job was [as you might have guessed] to look after the village’s boundary hedges. There have been at least five bridges at this site and probably many more.

1301 Hayward Bridge circa 1906



So far as is known all the bridges prior to this one have been conventional stone 'arch' bridges. Hutchins in his first edition from 1784 describes it rather imprecisely as having six or seven arches. By the early 19th century the structure he described was in serious need of repair. Indeed it proved impossible to repair it fully and in 1822 a new one was built.....only it was so badly built that it had to be knocked down and another one built in 1825. This too proved problematic and for the time vast amounts of money were spent on it. Indeed for many years it was the most expensive bridge in Dorset.

By the end of the 19th century the general state of repair of the bridge was causing concern but it had also outgrown it's usefulness. In particular it's narrowness was causing problems for the steam 'locomotive' traffic that was increasingly coming into the village. The parish council in 1899 asked the county council to make the bridge serviceable for locomotive's and in 1901 to widen Hayward lane¹ for the same purpose. Instead the council decided to replace the bridge itself and in 1903 the bridge above was opened.

Francis Frith have a picture of the old bridge dated 1900 and it appears that this bridge had two elongated arches spanning the river.

This is a hand coloured postcard dated to 1906 and is probably the oldest picture of the 'new bridge'. On the far left one of the 'relieving' arches installed in the 1820's can be seen. These were needed to allow flood water in the surrounding fields to flow away 'relieving' the pressure on the main bridge and were installed on both sides fo the river. As a result we cannot be absolutely sure from where the picture was taken.

¹Today's Hayward Lane is a truncated version of the original which was renamed station road at some time.

However for reasons given in the next picture it is probably from the Bere Marsh bank. Three bystanders are enjoying the view and I particularly like the way the artist has coloured the shadows cast by the trees - easy to forget to do.

For the first time the bridge was built with iron and stone pillars.

Owner: Jane MacBeth

1300 Hayward Bridge undated



The date of this picture is unknown but it appears to have been taken from the same position as the previous one. However there are differences. We might expect more trees, for example, on the left bank and the form of this particular tree is different to the tree closest to the bridge in the previous one. Likewise the one on the right bank behind the bridge.

Above the trees in the background we can make out the skyline of Okeford Hill so it would appear that this picture was taken from the Bere Marsh bank of the river.

On the right a large pole of indeterminate function can be seen with a disc attached to it. This is facing away from anyone on the road who might be present to see it and cannot therefore read it. The pole does not carry any wires and it cannot be lowered to prevent access to the bridge.

Owner: John Davies, Dave Wingrove

1302 Haywards Bridge [sic] circa 1937



Note the title, Haywards Bridge. This is an error. The bridge was never named after a man called Hayward, in which case an apostrophe would be needed, or after the post of hayward, in which case it is named incorrectly as few parishes had more than one hayward.

Sent by 'Jack' to a lady in Sturminster Newton the card's stamp is of interest as it is a commemorative stamp of the coronation of George VI and Queen Mary on 12th May 1937. The date on which the card was sent is likely to have been different but the franking mark is obscured.

The perspective is puzzling. The tree on the right appears to be the same tree as is seen on the left in the preceding picture and yet it is behind the bridge rather than in front of it. Even flipping the picture [as might happen if the negative had been put into the enlarger the wrong way round] does not solve the problem. Clearly it was taken in the opposite direction to the previous pictures and was probably taken from the Child Okeford bank looking towards Bere Marsh.

Two pedestrians can be made out on the right hand side of the bridge. They have left their open topped car [visible under the tree] to gaze over the side of the bridge. Telephone poles are now seen but the large pole, with it's disc, seen previously, has gone.

Owner: not recorded.

1305 Opening of the new bridge 2016



On the 14th October 2016 after many months closed the the new bridge was finally opened. An event attended by many of the villagers. Just two pictures of the event are presented here but many more are available.

Owner: Kevin Pearce

1307 The River near Child Okeford



It would be difficult to recreate this picture today. It must be taken from the middle of Hayward Bridge but the bank has grown up so much that you cannot see Shillingstone Station.

The station itself can be seen just to the right of centre and just a little further right is the signal box. To the far right there are at least seven wagons in the goods yard. Four of them stand by at least five provender stores which can be seen to be set on staddle stones to prevent rats getting into them.

There were six signals at the station [aside from ground signals], for the technically minded a home, starter and distant signal in each direction and two of the starter signals can be seen, one is the 'up' signal for trains heading toward Sturminster. At the other end of the station the down starter signal can just be made out. Both signals are set to 'on' indicating that no train is due in either direction. The passenger shelter on the down platform can be seen, with a concrete plate layers hut beyond.

The station can be seen to be set in open countryside with Shillingstone itself in the background. There is no housing or industrial development to be seen.

Owner: Dave Wingrove

1309 Shillingstone Station from the River



This is a poor quality photograph looking towards the station. Below the quarry on Okeford Hill the ends of two of the provender stores can be seen and although much of the foreground is out of focus the station itself can be seen quite clearly.

Owner: not recorded

1310 Clearing the Stour



The archive has nine pictures belonging to Nancy Manning that relate to work on the River Stour. They appear to date from the 1930's when the river was maintained by the Avon and Stour Catchment Board. The first three pictures in this series are original photographs about 3" x 2" in size. The remainder are postcard sized, some are original pictures others 1314 – 1316 were in fact turned into postcards. It is not known precisely where this series was taken but may relate to work on the Mill Race serving Bere Marsh Mill.

Owner: Nancy Manning

1311 Men working on sluice ?



The large scale OS map from 1885 shows an extensive set of alterations to the natural course of the River Stour including a mill race serving Bere Marsh Mill which was controlled by a sluice gate. Today the mill race is reduced to an [almost] dried up ditch but in the past it drove the mill. Traces of the old wall lining in it's upper reaches can still be seen. In this picture the men appear to be working at the entrance of the mill race having stopped the water flowing down it with a temporary dam of wooden planks.

Owner: Nancy Manning

1312 Tree clearance



Flooding was a major concern in the 19th century. In 1828 representatives of Shillingstone, Hanford, Child Okeford, Hammoon, Little Fontmell, Manston, West Orchard, East Orchard, Margaret Marsh, Sturminster Newton, Fifehead Neville, Lydlinch, Stock Gaylard, Hinton St Mary, Marnhull, Stalbridge, Fifehead Magdalen, West, Stour, East Stour, Stour Provost, Nyland, Buckhorn Weston, Henstridge and Temple Coombe met in Blandford and agreed to petition parliament to pass an act authorising the "*scouring, cleansing, deepening, and widening*" of the Stour in order to prevent flooding. It came to nought.

In the 1930's the Avon and Stour Catchment Board was established to keep the river clear and it may be that these men were working for them. The clearance was a major undertaking. In this shot two men stand by the massive trunk and tangle of roots of an uprooted tree. Doubtless it was hauled out by horses as a number of ropes are attached to it.

1313 Overgrown river



A not particularly interesting picture of an overgrown river.

Owner: Nancy Manning

1314 Three men and a dog



A Jack Russell type terrier [doubtless named 'Patch' given his markings] is the only one in the picture interested in having his photo taken. The three men in the picture are busy retrieving a tree trunk from the river with a block and tackle. It is hot work as one of the men has gone so far as to remove his waistcoat. His braces hang loose below his waist but his trousers are not in danger of falling down as he, in common with the other men, has a stout leather belt on as well. A 'belt and braces' approach to life was normal in those days.

1315 Four men and a horse



Having had his 15 minutes of fame 'Patch' has now lost interest in proceedings. The men have now moved into action mode. Two of them have taken to their punt and are posing, oars in hand, for the photographer. Waistcoat-less man rests on his axe. They have been joined by a fourth man who is holding on to the bridle of a horse. The horse looks unenthusiastically at the water logged tree that he will shortly have to haul out of the river.

Owner: Nancy Manning

1316 Four men and a punt



On the side of the punt can be seen A & S C B - the Avon and Stour Conservation Board. Otherwise four men clean out the river. Today hi viz and life jackets would be the order of the day.

1317 Our work is almost done



The location on the river is not known but twelve men, one of them wearing a military uniform, stand on a very large sluice gate. The work is not yet complete. In front of the gate can be seen a rubble bank which is keeping the river away from the gate presumably to allow the concrete to set. The gate itself is being supported by a complicated arrangement of wooden braces.

Owner: Nancy Manning

1318 Tree clearance



Eight men, one large rope and we may assume a large tree on the end of it. All that tug of war training finally paying off.