

1500 The High Street circa 1890



This is probably the oldest photograph that we have of the high street, although it undated. For reasons given below it was probably taken in the 1890's. It shows the first Post Office in the village run by the Diffey family. It served in this role for over a century and despite it's recent conversion to housing will probably retain its name as the 'Old Post Office'.

It is a poor quality picture. There is a large sign over the entrance on the upper storey and a smaller one to it's right but it is not possible to read them. There is no sign over it's door. In the shop's entrance wearing a white apron and black waist coat is possibly even the owner. To his left is a male customer and a young boy at the helm of a hand cart loaded with parcels and a basket that he is shortly to distribute in the village. The house next door has a 'Georgian' style porch, since demolished.

It is probably a pleasant summers day as two young women are out with their babies. They clearly do not fear the traffic as both are standing in the middle of the road. There is a particularly fine view of the woman nearest the photographer who is looking at him. She wears a splendid sun hat whilst her baby can be seen clearly in what appears to be a very narrow perambulator. Further down the street the other lady is also facing us but can be less clearly made out. Behind her is a cart of some sort the hat of the driver being made out but little else about it.

Owner: not recorded

1501 View of high street c 1890

This picture is a Francis Frith picture and comes with all sorts of warnings that the person to whom it has been sold may not reproduce it and that it contains hidden features that will identify it if it is copied.

There seems to be no reason not to describe it however because it is a fine picture. The view looks up the High Street from the left hand side of the road in the distance on the right can be seen the school.

In the left foreground an empty two wheel horse cart stands out of use. It may have been the one seen in the distance in the previous picture. Behind, the cart rising above a hedge, is a motley collection of trunks and branches stacked on end. It is not clear what purpose they serve. In front of the cart a sledgehammer stands on it's end. The presumptive owner of the hammer stands just to the right of the cart. It is not clear what he is engaged in but on the ground behind him are numerous wooden laths. The high street itself appears more like a farm lane, an appearance enhanced by the droppings of an earlier horse. Across the street from the workman stands 'Rowland Grocer & Provision Merchants', 'Baker & Confectioner'. It's windows display a fine collection of tinned good. It is advertising Fry's Chocolate for sale and a brand of tea 'PAN ELLA' which I have not heard of before. In the doorway of the shop a young boy, perhaps 14 or 15 years of age stands. He is a shop assistant and very smartly turned out in short sleeved white shirt, black waistcoat, tie and brilliantly white apron. To his right stands another young man, of similar age. He gazes confidently at the photographer with his hand's on hips. He is dressed in 'normal clothing' of jacket, waistcoat, knickerbockers trousers and long socks. In the middle of the picture are two young women with babies in prams they have been joined by a girl in her teen age years but is now becomes apparent that the women and the babies are the same as those in 1500. There is a very clear picture of the baby in the pram. If it is a boy he is almost certainly one of the village boys that will serve in WW1. For the moment all is peaceful and he is well protected in a very ornate pram and splendid sun hat.

In the middle of the picture stands the School House to the front of which is a tall brick wall on top of which perch two young boys with another two looking over it from the school yard. A tall pole rises from the school, probably a flag pole but nothing is flying today. In the far distance we can see the thatched roof of what is today Monk's Yard.

1510 Looking down the High Street



The date is unknown but probably similar to 1501 above. Taken outside the National School with two little porches [the doors are on the side. Either side of the porch is a playground, one for the boys and the other for the girls. Judging from the pictures that we have it would appear though that the long brick wall was purely a male domain on which generations of village boys perched [see 1501].

On our left is a pony trap with a mustachioed trades man in a white coat and fedora. Next to him is another mustachioed man with a bicycle and then a much smaller trap with two people in. It is possibly drawn by a donkey. On the far right are two little girls.

By the hedge stands a man whose face is not clear but is blackened whilst his hands are white. It is difficult to know what to make of this as the effect does not appear to be an artefact. Possibly he is the blacksmith outside the old forge.

In the background is Percy Rowland's stores, [now demolished] and on the right is Monk's Cottage with Diffey's stores beyond [obsured].

Owner: Kevin Pearce

1502 The High Street date unknown



This is a somewhat later picture and was taken by B Diffey, Child Okeford PO. It is postcard number 9 in his series. The building opposite Diffey's will eventually be demolished but looks to have been an agricultural building of some sort. A man outside of this building is a cyclist and is looking down the street to another cyclist coming towards him. Although some way down the road it appears that the newcomer is a delivery boy as the cycles' basket appears to be full of parcels. Diffey's itself has now acquired a sign over the entrance which says 'Diffey's Stores Est 1845'. The large sign has gone to be replaced by a small one which says 'Public Telephone'. There are now two telegraph poles in the street each with eight arms holding 32 insulators. Oddly no wires appears to go to the store even though it acted at one time as a sub-station. The building on the left appears to have a wire reaching it but this may be a scratch on the picture itself. The village noticeboard can be seen attached to the wall and the store is replete with signs. Tea is the big sale item. Lyon's and Lipton's are advertised on metal signs on the end wall alongside Colman's mustard whilst in the window of the shop Typhoo Tea and OXO are prominent. Gazing out of the stores window there is a rather jolly looking lady holding what appears to be a basket. It is probable that she is a cardboard model rather than a real woman. A baby has been left in a pram outside the stores her mum presumably in the shop. There are numerous newspaper hoardings on show but none are readable.

Owner: not recorded.

1504 High Street post 1929.



This picture is of some interest. The date is not known but certainly after 1929. The sign over the entrance says 'Diffey's Stores Est 1845', and the signs in the window are the same as in 1502. The telegraph poles have acquired an extra arm and now hold 40 insulators. In the background is a car parked in the same place as in 1503. On the other hand the power poles on the left have appeared as has a telephone kiosk which does not appear in any of the other pictures. The Post Office introduced a range of telephone boxes known as the 'K' series in 1920. In 1929 they introduced the K3 box and this is the one shown in the picture. Unlike the earlier and more expensive K2 box, which were made of metal, they were made of concrete. The picture has been hand coloured and the artist has not got it quite right for whilst the box itself was a creamy white colour the window bars were red. It does not seem to have lasted long.

The sign between the upper windows says 'Telephone' rather than 'Public telephone' but now we can read two small signs which simply say Child Okeford Post Office.

Owner: Merv Wareham

1503 The High Street again post 1935



HIGH STREET, CHILDE OKEFORD

The scene is more readily recognisable to the modern viewer as now a car has appeared parked further down the street. Within a few decades it will be bumper to bumper. Diffey's original sign has now been replaced by one saying 'George W Diffey'. According to Kelly's Directory the stores was owned by Bertie[William] Diffey in 1931 but by 1935, the next one we have access to, it was owned by his son, George. This picture therefore dates from after this time. Although the end wall cannot be seen in full the Colman's Mustard sign has been renewed. More poles have appeared in the high street. Those on the left [looking towards Hanford] appear to be power lines whilst those on the right are still telegraph poles although now reduced to just two arms on each side with only 8 conductors on them.

Owner: John Davies

1509 The Post Office Road 1950's



An undated card showing the Old Post Office and entitled 'Post Office Road' - the first and only record that we have of the high street being called this. The shop is still in the hands of George Diffey so we know this picture was taken after 1935. The Millennium Book notes that the store was run by George's son Geoffrey after the war. George Diffey died in 1970 and Geoffrey retired in 1997.

Although the left hand side of the picture is out of focus we can see telegraph wires and on the second chimney from the left a television aerial. This makes it likely that the picture was taken in the early 1950's. A hedge, which does not appear in any of the other pictures, separates the shop from it's neighbour and the telephone box has gone although it may simply have been moved. Apart from a sign for Wall's Ice Cream, a part full waste bin and a bicycle propped against the shop wall there is little of interest in the shot.

Owner: not recorded

1505 Post Office and Stores 1999



Post Office and Stores, 1999

With Geoffrey Diffey's retirement in 1997 the business passed out of the family after 150 years of ownership. It was taken on by Colin and Sue Silsbury until at least the Millennium.

Owner: Millennium Book Committee

1506 The High Street looking north 1949



This picture has been dated to 1949 and a second card sent to Mrs Adams confirms this general period as it bears a George VI stamp but though we know the date in that case, 17th August, the year is not visible.

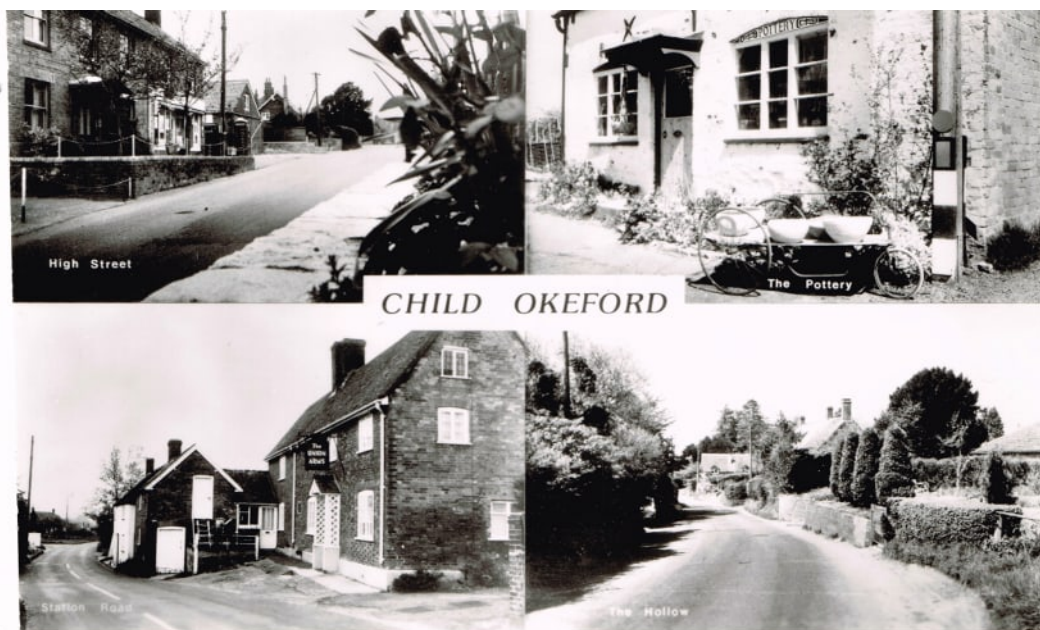
It is a bright sunny day, although the road is wet indicating recent rain. The photographer is looking up the high street and has included two signs attached to the wall of what today is Rosemary cottage. Only part of this cottage is seen but Redcot, Crofton, Hod House and Clock Cottage are clearly seen. The latter cottage is said to be where John Arnold the clock maker had his business. There is no motor traffic to be seen but there is a fine collection of telephone poles and wires on both sides of the road.

Owner: John Davies

1507 Looking up the high street - date unknown



This is a crop taken from the card below. It shows the old Post office. Little detail can be seen but the telephone box which we first saw in 1504 has been moved to the other side of the shop and is now an all red K6 box designed in 1935.



Owner: Jane MacBeth