

VILLAGE LIFE

The Story of Bridgham in Norfolk

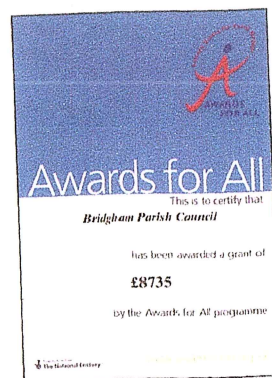
DAVID O'NEALL AND TONY DOBBIN



1007-2007

Bridgham's millennium of known village history

The idea for a year of celebrations (rather than just a day as in 2002) came from the research undertaken for this book. The 18th century antiquarian writer on Norfolk, Francis Blomefield stated incorrectly that Bridgham was given to the monks of Ely by Æthelwold, Bishop of Winchester around 970 AD. Most writers have repeated this error without checking. The authors of this book could find no evidence of such a gift and are grateful to Peter Barry (part-time resident of Roudham and a keen researcher into local history) who, in 2004, identified a 12th century document listing Ely receiving Bridgham



as the dying wish of a wealthy Anglo-Saxon widow, Ælfwaru. Further research revealed she died on 27 February 1007 and this was the earliest fact we knew about Bridgham.

Realising that in just three years Bridgham would reach its millennium of known history, it seemed a wonderful opportunity to celebrate the village's heritage.

David O'Neale reconvened the Bridgham Millennium Group and persuaded the Parish Council to support the application for funding from the National Lottery Awards for All. Bridgham Parish Council received £8,735 and, as a result, the village had a fantastic year.

Far top left: *Jan Francis and Tim Reeder 'Pirates of the Caribbean'.*

Far top right: *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Bridgham Band.*

Far centre: *'Casablanca' with Humphrey Bogart.*

Far bottom left: *Russian refugees making their way to freedom 'Georgic Hayes'.*

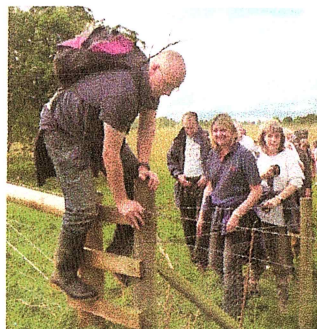
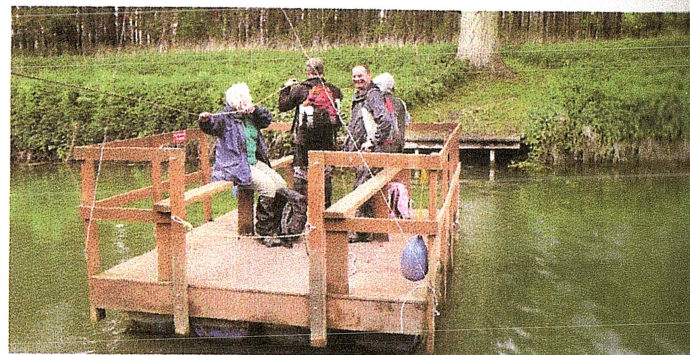
Far bottom right: *Lynn and Tony Fry.*

Left: *Ely cathedral photographed on the day of Bridgham's visit, 10 March 2007.*



The photographs and list of events tell much of the story except for recording the names of those who contributed to the year's success. Most villagers were involved in one way or another and in one or more events, if only as participants.

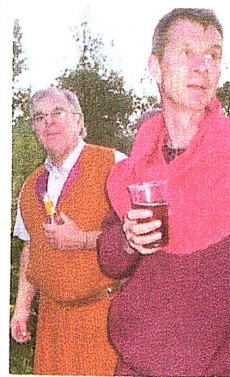
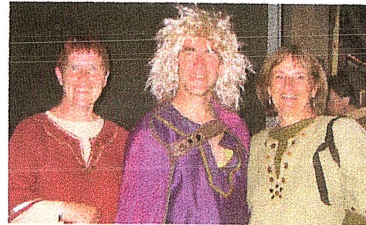
But it was a stalwart crew of around 50 who made sure that everything happened as planned. It would be difficult to mention everyone by name, just recording the practical support is an exhausting list in itself. Nothing would have

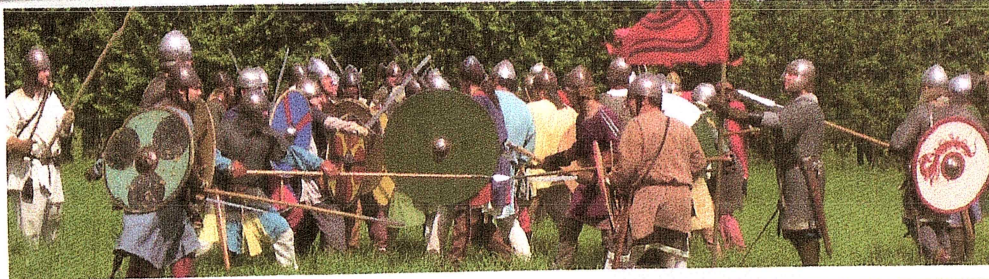


happened without the tremendous support of volunteers and the wonderful community spirit.

Local farmers Ian Chapman, Tim & Ellen Jolly, Paul & Sheila Rackham and John & Pat Wright were especially generous in providing land, labour or financial support; whilst Richard and Katie Wright donated two hogs for the feast even though they could not make the event!

Mention should perhaps be made of those who had the ideas that were then acted upon: Millennium mug – Nita Stammers; Art, craft & photographic exhibition – Tony Dobbin; Open gardens weekend – Dorothy Scott; Vintage tractor display and Millennium football match – Simon Bell; Bridgham Salute Overture, commissioned by George Lawn for the band; Viking longship – William Fairbank; Children's Viking workshop – Valerie Bullard & Mike Brown; BBQ for Vikings on arrival – Fred & Catriona Robertson; signage and car parking provision – Mark Dickenson; Viking re-enactment – Paul Allen of The Vikings! (who tragically died the same year whilst filming a joust for Channel 4's *Time Team* programme); and David O'Neale for overseeing the fund-raising and overall organisation for the year.





Far top and centre left:
Art, craft and photographic exhibition.

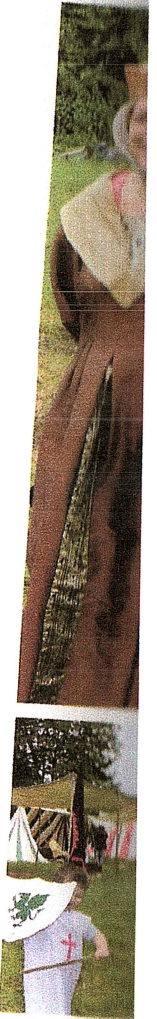
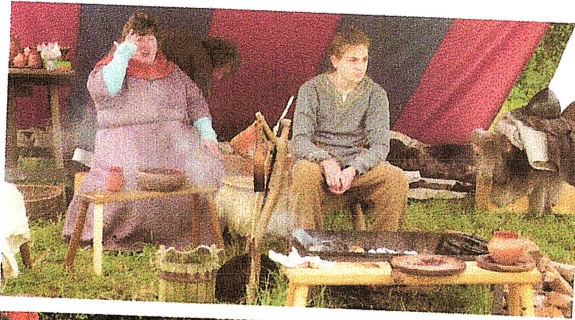
Far top centre: *A warm welcome from Paul Rackham at Manor Farm.*

Far top right: *Thatched Cottage and Garden Cottage: one of Annie Chapman's popular paintings of Bridgham on sale at the exhibition.*

Far bottom right: *The impressive garden of Brian and Maureen Hilton (Krystal).*

Far bottom left: *Peter Boggia driving the tractor-bus between the gardens open to the public.*

Bottom left: *Commemoration of Ælfwaru's bequest to the monks of Ely.*



A 'White Christmas' candle-lit community concert

The year ended with the two Christmas productions. First, the 9th annual concert by Bridgham and Harling Band; secondly, a 'White Christmas' community concert on the last Sunday afternoon before Christmas Day. This was modelled on *Christmas through the Ages* in 2007, but on this occasion all the items were linked by the themes of snow, frost and jingle bells. The church was packed, with over a 100 in the audience and a further 40 adults and children performing in the choir and 'parish band'. There was even dancing in the aisle to Jingle-Bell Rock!

2010 Return of the Vikings!

This re-enactment weekend received grants from Norfolk Community Foundation's Grassroots scheme and Shadwell Community Fund. The Heritage Lottery Fund not only supported the 1949-ers' reunion, but also the Return of the Vikings and this book.

May 5 was the 1,000th anniversary of the Battle of Ringmere (see 11th century chapter), so the first Spring Bank Holiday brought a return of the Vikings for more celebrations. No horses this time, but as well as the Viking living history exhibition and re-enactment of the Battle of Ringmere, popular attractions included Maypole dancing, Hockham Clodhoppers (Molly Dancers), Thunder Mental Dance (stilt walkers & fire poi), Bridgham & Harling Band,



1,000th ANNIVERSARY BRIDGHAM
The BATTLE OF RINGMERE - MAY 1010
The end of an era...

Return of the Vikings!

Admission by Programme
£2 - children FREE

**Sunday & Monday
2 & 3 MAY**
10.00 am - 5.00 pm

Come and see how the Vikings lived... and died!
Two great days of family entertainment:
Vikings and Saxons clashing
in battle; archery, music
and May-time festivities

MILL FIELDS, BRIDGHAM
between Thetford and East Harling
www.bridgham.org.uk
01933 718264

Visit: www.vikingsonline.org.uk BRIDGHAM

IT'S AN ACTION PACKED BANK HOLIDAY CELEBRATING
THE BATTLE OF RINGMERE IN 1010

Sunday 2 & Monday 3 May
10.00 am - 5.00 pm

Viking Living History Exhibition (all day)
Weapons demonstration • Coin minting • Live-2-gun archery
Maypole dancing • Kiddie Vike • Battle of Ringmere re-enactment*

Sunday - Special Events
Children's workshops • Bridgham & Harling Band
The Thunder Mental Stiltwalkers

Monday - Special Events
Medieval Fairs • Village v. Viking tug-of-war
Hockham Clodhoppers (Molly Dancers)

Viking Veterans Association, 1st Battalion The Royal Anglian Regiment

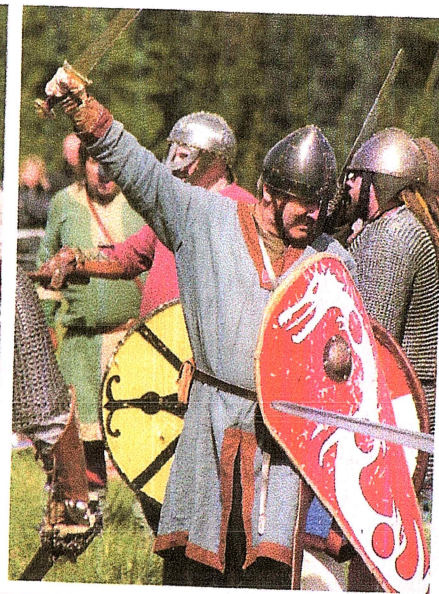
*In 1010, the Danish army sailed to East Angles. Learning their defeat would break the Vikings who then left. The 1010 was a victory with 200 men and 100 horses & their boats with them. The army of the first king of the English, King Alfred the Great, had been in the area for 100 years. The first Anglo-Saxon king.

Ringmere fought... Saxon striking shield
Was a field of death... Hinged from afar
Herdsmen's herds... The living fly
Dark slaughter there... The dead piled high,
From Ringmere field... The most cruel,
The crime of war... Red runs the ditch

where?
Mill Field, next to Chapel Lane and east of Bridgham Village Hall (NR10 2JF). In the east between Thetford and East Harling, off the B1111. Car parking available and designated.

Event sponsor:
HUDSON ENGLISH
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