

BBC
BOOKS

KERI DAVIES

WHO'S WHO IN
The
Archers
2006

NEW EDITION

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The
Archers
2006

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BOOKS

In memory of Joseph Dowe, gentleman.

This book is published to accompany the BBC Radio 4 serial *The Archers*.
The editor of *The Archers* is Vanessa Whitburn.

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The moral right of the author has been asserted.

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Commissioning Editor: Vivien Bowler

Project Editor: Cath Harries

Designer: Sarah Ponder

Production Controller: Peter Hunt

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Events in Ambridge are constantly changing, but we have done our best to make *Who's Who in The Archers 2006* accurate at the time of publication.

Official Archers website: bbc.co.uk/radio4/archers

for *Archers* episodes in Real Audio, including an audio archive of the last seven days. The site also features daily plot synopses, news, information, a map of Ambridge, archive moments, quizzes and chat.

Official fan club: Archers Addicts

Tel: 01789 207480 Website: www.archers-addicts.com

The author

After 11 years in Ambridge, Keri Davies gave up the role of senior producer of *The Archers* to spend more time at the gym. When not there, he runs the BBC's *Archers* website, writes scripts for the programme, and is occasionally let back into the studio to direct episodes for which no-one else will take the blame... er, credit.



WELCOME TO AMBRIDGE



To my great pleasure, our handy guide to the characters and locations in *The Archers* is now in its seventh edition.

It was originally conceived as something we all wanted when we first started to listen to the programme: a bit of background to the people we heard on-air and a helping hand to explain some of the intricate relationships. But we have found that even established listeners find it an entertaining volume to keep by the radio or (as we suspect is more frequent) by the loo.

So if you ever wonder ‘what is the name of Izzy’s dog?’ or ‘when was George Grundy born?’, this book is for you.

Vanessa Whitburn

Editor, *The Archers*



RED NOSES IN AMBRIDGE



In February 2005, *The Archers* took part in an appeal for the Comic Relief charity. Four celebrities – Stephen Fry, Ewan McGregor, Ian McKellen and Liza Tarbuck – campaigned on-air for listeners' votes. The winner was to appear in a spoof *Archers* episode written by Victoria Wood.

Numerous *Archers* actors and staff gave their time freely for the event, which raised more than any previous Red Nose initiative on BBC Radio 4. But for us, the greatest delight was to discover how highly these eminent names revered the series.

It was perhaps fitting that Stephen Fry won. He has long been on record as wanting a regular part in the programme as the long-lost offspring of landworker Bert Fry, in an echo of the fondly-remembered relationship between the rough-as-rust Walter Gabriel and his bizarrely well-spoken son Nelson. Stephen's brief appearance may be the closest he will get to that long-held ambition.

The creator of *The Archers*, Godfrey Baseley, devised the programme as a means of educating farmers in modern production methods when Britain was still subject to food rationing. Five pilot episodes were broadcast on the BBC's Midlands Home Service in Whit Week 1950, but *The Archers'* official birthday was on 1 January 1951, when for the first time the 'dum-di-dum' of Arthur Wood's maypole dance *Barwick Green* introduced episode one to a national audience. Episode 14,734, broadcast on 1 January 2006 makes this comfortably the world's longest-running radio drama.

The Archers lost its original educational remit in the early 1970s, but it still prides itself on the quality of its research and its reflection of real rural life. The editor, Vanessa Whitburn, leads a nine-strong production team and ten writers as they plot the complicated lives of the families in Ambridge, looking ahead months or sometimes years in biannual long-term meetings. The detailed planning is done at monthly script meetings about two months ahead of transmission. Each writer produces a week's worth of scripts in a remarkable

thirteen days. To retain listeners' attention in the early years, *Archers* writers drew on the tradition of the 'cliffhanger' which was so much part of its predecessor, the thriller serial *Dick Barton, Special Agent!* The modern equivalent is a blend of stories carefully planned and structured to captivate today's sophisticated audience.

Actors receive their scripts a few days before recording, which takes place every four weeks in a state-of-the-art studio at the BBC's premises in central Birmingham – the Mailbox. Twenty-four episodes are recorded digitally in six days, using only two hours of studio time per 13-minute episode. This schedule means that being an *Archers* actor is by no means a full-time job, even for major characters, so many also have careers in film, theatre, television or other radio drama.

The episodes are transmitted three to six weeks after recording. Listeners occasionally hear topical events reflected in that evening's broadcast, a feat achieved through a flurry of rewriting, re-recording and editing on the day of transmission.

With nearly five million listeners every week in the UK alone, *The Archers* is the most popular non-news programme on BBC Radio 4 (92–25 FM, 198 LW).

I'm pleased to say that, despite the efforts of Radio 1's Chris Moyles, *The Archers* is routinely the most-listened-to BBC programme online. Those who don't listen may think the show is stuck in the 1950s. Those who do know better; we've survived by adapting and developing to a world in which a laptop is as likely a route to Ambridge as a transistor radio.

Keri Davies

Transmission times: 7pm Sunday to Friday, repeated at 2pm the next day (excluding Saturdays). Omnibus edition of the whole week's episodes every Sunday at 10am. The website also holds an archive of episodes from the previous seven days.

John Archer m Phoebe

John Benjamin (Ben) m Simone Delamain
27.5.1898-2.8.1972 1900-1929

Frank m Laura Wilson
1.6.1900- 29.8.1911-
30.5.1957 14.2.1985

John (Jack) m Margaret (Peggy) Perkins
17.12.1922- b. 13.11.1924
12.1.1972 m (2) Jack Woolley
b. 19.7.1919

Philip Walter m (1) Grace Fairbrother
b. 23.4.1928 2.4.1929-22.9.1955
m (2) Jill Patterson
b. 3.10.1930

Jennifer m (1) Roger Travers-Macy
b. 7.1.1945 b. 9.3.1944
div. Feb 1976

Adam
b. 22.6.1967
(by Paddy Redmond)

m (2) Brian Aldridge
b. 20.11.1943

Lilian m (1) Lester Nicholson
b. 8.7.1947 7.6.1946- 18.3.1970
m (2) Ralph Bellamy
26.2.1925-18.1.1980

James Rodney Dominic
b. 30.3.1973

Katherine Victoria (Kate) m Lucas Madikane
b. 30.9.1977 b. 1972

Phoebe
b. 28.6.1998
(by Roy Tucker)

Noluthando Grace
b. 19.1.2001

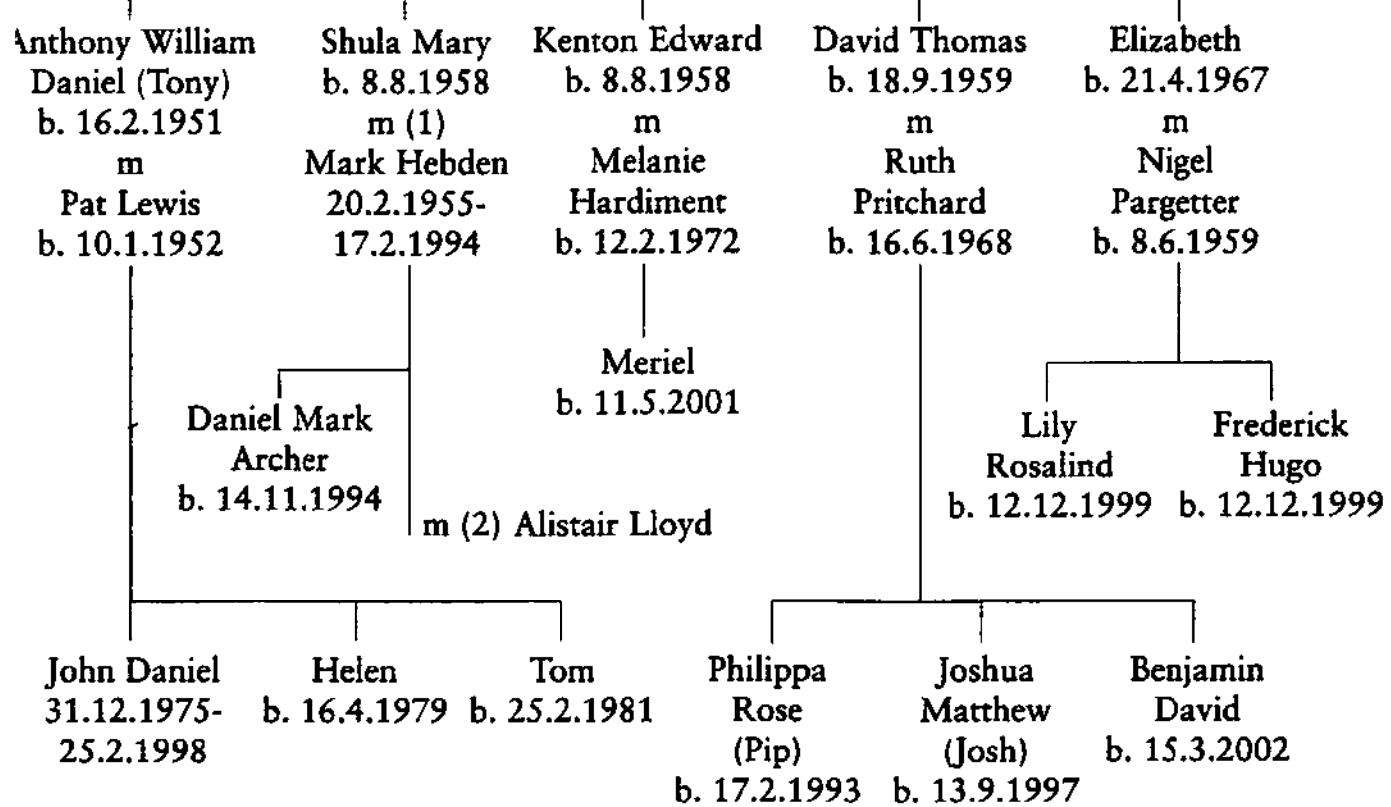
Alice Margaret
b. 29.9.1988

William Forrest m Lisa

| | | |
|--|---|--|
| Daniel m Doris 1.10.1896 11.7.1900 4.1986 27.10.1980 | Edward George (Ted) 10.1.1902-17.1.1920 | Thomas William (Tom) 20.10.1910-5.11.1998 m Prudence Harris (Pru) 27.7.1921-11.11.1998 |
|--|---|--|

| | |
|----------------------------|--|
| Christine b. 21.12.1931 | m (1) Paul Johnson 10.1.1931-10.5.1978 |
| | Peter (adopted) b. 5.9.1965 |
| | m (2) George Barford 24.10.1928-17.1.2005 |

**THE
ARCHERS
FAMILY TREE**





ALICE ALDRIDGE



Home Farm • Born 29.9.88
(Hollie Chapman)

None of the family wanted to scupper Alice's promising GCSE prospects, so mercifully she remained unaware of father **Brian**'s affair. In fact, Alice actually benefited from it, in the shape of guilt-gift Spearmint, a full-size horse that replaced her old pony, Chandler (now sadly deceased). While **Debbie** was in voluntary exile in France, Alice formed a good relationship with her other half-sibling, **Adam Macy**. Alice's second cousin **Shula Hebden Lloyd** took over Debbie's role as riding mentor, and Alice was lucky to find a new friend in fellow horse-lover **Amy Franks**. Just as well, given that in 2005 Debbie left again, for Hungary this time. A few months later – under Amy's influence and against Brian's better judgement – Alice left her posh private school to study A levels at **Borchester College**.



BRIAN ALDRIDGE



Home Farm • Born 20.11.43
(Charles Collingwood)

Does restless Brian have a psychological need to stir things up? He's flirted with danger in the past, mainly by flirting with women – and it's often not stopped there (just ask **Caroline Pemberton**). But Brian got a lot more than excitement when one conquest – **Siobhan Hathaway** – became pregnant with his son Ruairi. The bombshell almost destroyed Brian's marriage with **Jennifer** and his relationship with step-daughter **Debbie**. But as soon as Debbie was reconciled, Brian started pitting her against her gay half-brother **Adam Macy** for influence on the farm. After Debbie's departure to Hungary in 2005, Brian helped re-launch **Tom Archer's** failed sausage business. This made Adam even more convinced that Brian had problems with Adam's sexuality.



DEBBIE ALDRIDGE



(formerly Gerrard, née Travers-Macy)

Home Farm • Born 24.12.70

(Tamsin Greig)

In 2005, Debbie took a job running a farm in Hungary for a consortium involving her step-father **Brian Aldridge**. **Alice** in particular missed her elder sister, who is the daughter of **Jennifer Aldridge** and her first husband Roger Travers-Macy. It was the fourth time Debbie had left home. She cut short her French studies at Exeter University because of an affair with lecturer Simon Gerrard, who later pursued and married her. But he turned out as much lecher as lecturer and the marriage collapsed in 2002. Six months later, unable to accept Brian's own extra-marital affair, bruised Debbie fled **Home Farm** for a job in France. Her return in 2004 generated continued friction with half-brother **Adam Macy**, as Brian played power games with the siblings. As a human boomerang, poor Debbie has yet to find lasting happiness.



JENNIFER ALDRIDGE



(formerly Travers-Macy, née Archer)

Home Farm • Born 7.1.45

(Angela Piper)

Four children by three fathers? What council-estate Chavette is this? Well, put your prejudices on hold and meet Jennifer Aldridge; elegantly dressed and spoken, former teacher and writer, keeper of the **Ambridge** website, splendid cook and loyal wife. Pregnant by a local farm hand, unmarried Jennifer gave birth to **Adam** (now **Macy**) in 1967. She later married Roger Travers-Macy, who adopted Adam. They had a daughter **Debbie**, but the marriage didn't last, and Jennifer wed **Brian** in 1976. They had more daughters: **Alice** and **Kate** (now **Madikane**) who by the age of 20 was taking after her mother, with two children by two different fathers (Jennifer regularly looks after **Phoebe**). Although devastated by Brian's affair and the discovery of his son, doughty Jennifer fought for – and kept – her husband.



PHOEBE ALDRIDGE



1, The Green • Born 28.6.98
(Scarlett Wakelin)

Although she seems to be part of a stable nuclear family in the loving care of **Roy** and **Hayley Tucker**, Phoebe's surname indicates a situation in the style of many 21st century familial tangles. Roy is Phoebe's father, but her mother is **Kate Madikane** (née Aldridge), whose early New Age leanings led to the child being born in a tepee at the Glastonbury Festival and named in a ceremony on Lakey Hill. Young Roy bravely cared for Phoebe following Kate's departure to Africa to 'find herself', and it fell to Kate's now husband **Lucas** to persuade Kate that Phoebe had a home with Roy and Hayley and couldn't be collected like a lost umbrella.



AMBRIDGE



*Ambridge, Ambridge
You must be blind
If you don't have sweet Ambridge on your mind*

*Though we don't much like Grange Spinney
Since it was built in 2003
Stand by The Bull and you can see
The duck pond and the Green*

*Ambridge, Ambridge
It's always been
Just a pint of Shires keeps Ambridge on my
mind*

Lyric fragment by **Eddie Grundy**.



AMBRIDGE HALL



It's a wonder there aren't more accidents on the way to Penny Hassett, as drivers' minds are boggled by the incongruous sight of two llamas contentedly grazing in a roadside paddock. Wolfgang and Constanza were notionally a present for **Robert Snell**, but they are really **Lynda**'s babies. So too are the landscaped gardens of this six-bedroomed Victorian house, featuring a Shakespearean section – using only plants named by the Bard – and a low allergen area, to which Lynda can retreat when her annual hay fever descends.



Harcourt Road, Borchester

With business rates and other overheads – and the ubiquitous supermarkets moving into organics – **Helen Archer** has felt the pressure at the shop she manages for her parents **Pat** and **Tony**. With the help of **silent** Anja and **Kirsty Miller**, former girlfriend of her brother **Tom**, Helen sells the farm's yoghurt, ice cream, and vegetables, plus a whole range of bought-in organic produce. But for how much longer?



MARJORIE ANTROBUS



The Laurels • Born 1922
(Margot Boyd)

After a lifetime of independence and service – initially to the Empire as a colonial wife in Kenya and elsewhere, and later to **Ambridge** through the church and parish council – Marjorie finally moved into a nursing home in 2003. Although physically frail, mentally she is as sharp as ever and organizes her fellow residents much as she used to her pack of champion Afghan hounds.



BEN ARCHER



Brookfield Farm • Born 15.3.02
(Thomas Lester)

Dark-haired Ben caused quite a panic when he arrived at **Brookfield** before the midwife. It was lucky that father **David** had helped with plenty of births before – even if they were of lambs and calves. The new arrival caused some anxiety for **Josh**, who worried that Ben was some sort of replacement, but his parents were eventually able to persuade Josh that he wasn't to be sent to market. Even David's sister **Elizabeth Pargetter** managed to bury her sibling rivalry, agreeing (with **Alistair Lloyd** and the departed Dr Tim Hathaway) to become a godparent.



DAVID ARCHER



Brookfield Farm • Born 18.9.59
(Timothy Bentinck)

David and his wife **Ruth** have been running **Brookfield Farm** in their own right since 2001. **Phil**'s 'favouring' of David as inheritor was distinctly unpopular with siblings **Elizabeth Pargetter** and **Kenton**, although neither of them ever showed much inclination to get up at 5am to milk the cows. Actually, that's become more of a novelty for David since he expanded the herd and employed **Sam Batton**, one of his many responses to the dizzying changes in agriculture over the last few years. David hasn't always made the wisest choices; shooting a badger was never going to be a career move for a parish councillor, even with the farm paralysed by TB. But he is a devoted husband and father, determined to pass Brookfield on in the best possible shape to **Pip**, **Josh** or **Ben** – if they want it, that is.



HELEN ARCHER



Bridge Farm • Born 16.4.79
(Louiza Patikas)

Helen looked set to carry on her mother **Pat's** pioneering work, taking an HND in food technology, developing **Borsetshire** Blue cheese and managing the farm's shop **Ambridge Organics**. But Helen struggled in a difficult relationship with local gamekeeper Greg Turner who, faced by one setback after another (including despairing Helen walking out), eventually took his own life in 2004. The grief and guilt were almost impossible to bear. Despite the support of Pat, **Tony** and brother **Tom**, Helen's need for control manifested itself in a life-threatening eating disorder. She was lucky to be admitted to a specialist clinic, which was slowly able to turn tortured Helen round and return her to her grateful family.



JILL ARCHER



(née Patterson)

Glebe Cottage • Born 3.10.30

(Patricia Greene)

Through more than 40 years of marriage, Jill has never stopped mothering. She takes a keen interest in the lives of her adult children – **Kenton, Shula** (now **Hebden Lloyd**), **David** and **Elizabeth** (now **Pargetter**) – especially when they aren't behaving like adults. Many villagers, too, have been grateful for her caring and practical nature. Although she and **Phil** moved to their retirement cottage in 2001, Jill still tends the bees and hens in **Brookfield**'s orchard and takes a full part in village life. Outwardly a traditional 'farmer's wife', Jill has a radical streak. She's opposed to hunting and private education, for example. Her strong sense of justice has led her to support several causes over the years, including a campaign to rid the local school of junk food.



JOSH ARCHER



Brookfield Farm • Born 13.9.97
(George Bingham)

When **Ruth** went into labour, keen cricketer **David** was in the middle of the innings of a lifetime, but he was persuaded to leave the field to see his son born. Keen on pigs, and a good painter, Josh attends the local primary school at Loxley Barratt and has made lots of friends, including girls Megan and Lydia. He was worried when he was replaced as Ruth and David's youngest son by the arrival of **Ben**. But when they realized what the problem was they managed to persuade the lad that they weren't planning to send him back to the shop. As he grows up, Josh is obviously taking a fairly traditional route for a little boy. Among his favourite toys has been something called a Killer Borg. Mm, delightful...



KENTON ARCHER



The flat above Jaxx Caff • Born 8.8.58
(Richard Attlee)

If **Shula Hebden Lloyd** is a Cliff Richard single, then her twin Kenton is the novelty B side featuring The Young Ones. After a spell in the merchant navy, with at least two failed businesses behind him, and having been bailed out on several occasions by parents **Phil** and **Jill**, Kenton returned from Australia when his wife Mel threw him out. He was lucky to be able to persuade **Jack Woolley** to give him a job managing **Jaxx Caff**, and doubly so when the new owner agreed to keep him on in 2005. Kenton means well, but he has the attention span of a mayfly. It's probably just as well that his daughter Meriel lives in New Zealand, and that the woman with whom he is involved is the level-headed **Kathy Perks**.



PAT ARCHER



(née Lewis)

Bridge Farm • Born 10.1.52
(Patricia Gallimore)

As daughter **Helen** struggled to deal with the suicide of her partner Greg Turner in 2004, Pat had plenty of help to offer. She knew only too well the effects of bereavement, having suffered clinical depression after the death of her eldest son John in 1998. It surprised many, as Pat had always been the positive antidote to her more moody husband **Tony**. Thanks to her drive they built **Bridge Farm** into a thriving organic enterprise producing its own yoghurt, ice cream, vegetables and cheese (thanks to Helen). They also opened their own shop **Ambridge Organics** in **Borchester**. Once a radical feminist, Pat's now more of a caring capitalist. Like Anita Roddick, but with a bit less money and a lot more yoghurt.



PHIL ARCHER



Glebe Cottage • Born 23.4.28
(Norman Painting)

Born on St George's day, Phil is the type seen by many as the backbone of rural England. The son of yeoman farming stock, he built up **Brookfield Farm** in the sixties and seventies and still lends a hand under the management of son **David** and daughter-in-law **Ruth**. He's a staunch churchgoer – in fact, he's the church organist – and his marriage to **Jill** has been one of the most stable relationships in the village. In his retirement, Phil is very active, looking after Brookfield's previously neglected garden as well as his own; and his piano playing is always in demand for village productions. Altogether an admirable man, then. If he has a fault, his indulgence for granddaughter **Pip**'s musical activities means he occasionally overestimates the actual extent of her talents.



PIP ARCHER



Brookfield Farm • Born 17.2.93
(Helen Monks)

Christened Philippa after **David**'s father and Rose after **Ruth**'s aunt, the eldest **Brookfield** child is universally known as Pip. She inherited some of grandfather **Phil**'s musical talent, learning to play the piano and clarinet and singing enchanting solos at carol concerts. Well... her family were enchanted, anyway; Phil so much so that he pushed David and Ruth into grooming Pip for **Felpersham** Cathedral School. Eventually the pressure of cramming, and Phil's over-eager musical coaching, proved too much for the poor girl. To general relief (except for Phil, obviously) Pip was directed towards the more local **Borchester** Green. But at first it wasn't a happy move. Pip had trouble making friends, until bubbly **Izzy** took Pip under her wing.



RUTH ARCHER



(née Pritchard)

Brookfield Farm • Born 16.6.68
(Felicity Finch)

In 1987, agricultural student Ruth Pritchard arrived in **Ambridge** from Prudhoe in Northumberland looking for farming experience and a good reference. She found a husband (**David**), a home (**Brookfield**), and a workplace for life (hopefully). The arrival of **Pip** and **Josh** didn't stop her working on the farm, particularly with her much-loved dairy herd, but she had to take much more of a back seat when struck by breast cancer in 2000. A mastectomy and punishing chemotherapy were successful, and after five clear years the threat of a recurrence is a slightly less-present worry. After the arrival of baby **Ben** in 2002, Ruth's done less of the practical work on the farm, concentrating more on the management. Never make the mistake of calling this dedicated farmer a 'farmer's wife'. Oh, noooo...



TOM ARCHER



Bridge Farm • Born 25.2.81
(Tom Graham)

Tom had something of an *annus horribilis* in 2005. His organic pork and sausage business (which he'd built up since his brother John's tragic death in 1998) collapsed when Tom's biggest customer summarily de-listed him. And to add insult to penury, Tamsin – the woman for whom Tom had chucked long-time girlfriend **Kirsty Miller** – de-listed him romantically as well. He was lucky on two counts. His uncle **Brian Aldridge** helped Tom's tentative attempts to rebuild the business – although Brian's hard-nosed business instincts caused friction with Tom's more idealistic parents **Pat** and **Tony**. And a friendship grew with **Brenda Tucker**, the sister of his friend **Roy**. But it will take a long time before the young entrepreneur is surfing on the heady wave of ambition and achievement that he enjoyed before his crash.



TONY ARCHER



Bridge Farm • Born 16.2.51
(Colin Skipp)

Tony's sisters **Jennifer Aldridge** and **Lilian Bellamy** may have married money but Tony married brains, in the shape of **Pat**, and it's been an effective partnership. As the back-room boy, Tony produces **Bridge Farm**'s raw material – high quality organic milk and veg. Pat and her dairy workers turn the milk into yoghurt and ice cream, and daughter **Helen** converts small amounts into cheese. The veg is sold to a co-op, through their own box scheme and at the farm's shop, **Ambridge Organics**. Tony is one of life's plodders but, like the fabled tortoise, he's not done too badly overall. And he would proudly point to his classic MG Midget as evidence that he's still 'got it' – whatever 'it' is.



ARKWRIGHT HALL



This large Victorian house with a 17th-century core has served as a community centre 'with soundproofed room for rock and roll' and later a field studies centre, but for a long time it remained unoccupied and unloved. The owner **Jack Woolley** eventually decided to lease it to the Landmark Trust. Architect **Lewis Carmichael** supervised the building's restoration to its Victorian splendour and it is now available to holiday-makers looking for a location with a difference. As housekeeper, **Freda Fry** cleans the place between lets.



CHRISTINE BARFORD



(formerly Johnson, née Archer)
Woodbine Cottage • Born 21.12.31
(Lesley Saweard)

Phil **Archer**'s younger sister – always known in the family as Chris – was forced to move in 2004 after the horrific firebomb attack on her former home, The Old Police House. Not the sort of retirement she had in mind two years previously when back trouble forced Chris to sell her riding stables business to her niece **Shula Hebden Lloyd**. Arsonist **Clive Horrobin**'s target was really Chris's second husband George, who sadly died of a heart attack before they could move into their rebuilt house. Chris chose to stay in Woodbine Cottage, which she bought from nephew **David Archer**, and faced up to life as a widow again. Peter, her adopted son from her first marriage, travels a lot as an administrator with a symphony orchestra, so the family rallied round as Chris adjusted to her new circumstances.



SAM BATTON



Rickyard Cottage, Brookfield
(Robin Pirongs)

Kirsty Miller had been attracted to sporty Sam for a while, and it didn't take long for them to get together after **Tom Archer** dumped her. A Devonian, herdsman Sam arrived at **Brookfield** in May 2004, as part of their plans to expand the dairy herd. He does the milking six days a week and is responsible for the herd's health, welfare and nutrition. He's not employed directly by Brookfield, but by a contract company: Paxley Milking Services. Sam is obsessively professional, and very quickly brought the latest thinking to Brookfield. Unfortunately for **Alistair Lloyd**, Sam insisted that the high-tech world of dairying needed a specialist veterinary service. Despite his reluctance, **David Archer** was forced to sack his brother-in-law, with seismic consequences.



LILIAN BELLAMY



(formerly Nicholson, née Archer)

Nightingale Farm • Born 8.7.47

(Sunny Ormonde)

Oh, the embarrassment that Lilian causes her siblings **Jennifer Aldridge** and **Tony Archer**. Lilian spent many years as a tax exile in Guernsey after the death of her second husband Ralph, the last real squire figure in **Ambridge**. At least her excesses there (usually involving alcohol and pretty young men) were unlikely to be broadcast on the **Village Shop/Women's Institute** sub-ether band. But when in 2003 Lilian returned to Ambridge – unfeasibly nipped, tucked, botoxed and lifted – her exploits with the married **Matt Crawford** were enough to keep the gossips on double time, at least until Matt moved in with her after his divorce. Lilian's son James (born in 1973) paid her a rare visit in 2005, but sadly his main objective was getting a shedload of money to shore up an over-ambitious property deal.



BORCHESTER



This market town lies in the picturesque Am Vale six miles north-east of **Ambridge**. At its heart is a historic clock tower and wool market. Pubs and hotels include the comfortable George, the Tin of Peaches (near **Sir Sidney Goodman's** canning factory) and the Goat and Nightgown (very lively thanks to its proximity to Borchester General Hospital and Borchester College). There's a good range of shops, including **Underwoods** department store and **Ambridge Organics**. Leisure facilities include the Theatre Royal, a three-screen cinema and a municipal leisure centre with gym and swimming pool. Cafés and restaurants range from **Jaxx Caff** to the upmarket Botticelli's, plus the usual range of ethnic establishments and takeaways. Despite these delights, teenaged residents have only one word for the place: 'boring'.



BORCHESTER LAND



'ONE TO WATCH:

*This aggressive property company has made a particular target of the **Ambridge** area. Despite intensive-input farming from a national contract company, the board seemed dissatisfied with the returns from its 1020 acre Berrow **Estate**, which includes business units at Sawyer's Farm and the tenanted **Bridge Farm**. In 2003 BL converted a few acres of agricultural land for a luxury housing development, **Grange Spinney**. Directors include **Brian Aldridge**, who farms in Ambridge, although my source, a regular at the estate's extensive pheasant shoot, tells me there's no love lost between old-money Aldridge and his rough diamond chairman **Matt Crawford...**'*

From the 'Your Business = Our Business' page
of the *Felpersham Advertiser*.



BORSETSHIRE



This charming, predominantly rural county lies south-west of Birmingham and shares many of the characteristics of Worcestershire, Warwickshire and Gloucestershire. The cathedral city and administrative centre of **Felpersham** dominates the east of the county and the second largest settlement is the market town **Borchester**. **Ambridge** lies south-east of the Hassett Hills and falls under South Borsetshire District Council. The main local newspapers are the *Felpersham Advertiser* and the *Borchester Echo* and the area is served by Radio Borsetshire.



BRIDGE FARM



STOCK

85 milkers (Friesians) • 40 followers (heifers/calves)

CROPS

115 acres grassland • 22 acres barley
15 acres wheat • 6 acres potatoes • 2 acres carrots
2 acres leeks • 3 acres swedes
2 acres Dutch cabbage • 1 acre Savoy cabbage
4 acres mixed vegetable and salad crops,
including 2 polytunnels

LABOUR

Tony Archer • Pat Archer • Tom Archer
Clarrie Grundy (dairy) • Colin Kennedy (dairy)

Tenant farmers **Tony** and **Pat Archer** rent 140 acres from the **Estate**, with an extra 32 acres from other landlords. Bridge Farm converted to organic in 1984. The farm's produce – including yoghurt and ice cream made in their own dairy – is sold through a wholesaler and to local outlets including **Ambridge Organics**. In 2005, ambitious **Tom**'s sausage business collapsed, forcing him to start again under the control of his uncle **Brian Aldridge**.



BROOKFIELD FARM



STOCK

200 milkers (Friesians) • 80 followers (heifers/calves)
90 beef cattle (Herefords) • 300 ewes
Hens (small scale)

CROPS

278 acres grassland • 100 acres cereals
29 acres oil seed rape • 15 acres potatoes
12 acres beans • 10 acres fodder beet
17 acres forage maize • 8 acres set-aside

LABOUR

David Archer (managing) • **Ruth Archer** (managing)
Sam Batton (herdsman) • **Phil Archer** (relief)
Bert Fry (casual) • **Jill Archer** (hens, bees)
Biff (sheepdog)

Brookfield is a 469-acre mixed farm incorporating the old holdings of Marney's and Hollowtree. After **Phil**'s retirement in 2001, **David** contracted out the arable work to **Home Farm**, expanded the dairy herd and recruited contract herdsman **Sam Batton**. Brookfield is doing its best to get closer to the customer. High-quality beef from the Herefords is sold at the farm gate, and the lamb is marketed co-operatively under the Hassett Hills brand.



THE BULL



Location: Ambridge, near village green

Appearance: Half-timbered, chocolate box

Outside facilities: Car park, beer garden, boules piste, resident peacock (Eccles?!)

Bars: Public, lounge ('Ploughmans')

Food: Bar snacks and family restaurant.

Menu apparently tarted-up recently.

Beer: Shires, very well kept

Other facilities: Skittles, darts, two computers – internet access, upstairs function room

Entertainment: music nights, line-dancing classes (in function room)

*Management: Free house. **Sid Perks** (a bit on edge?), **Jolene Perks** – wow!*

Inspector's notes from the South Borsetshire Pub of the Year competition.



Lower Loxley Hall (Robert Lister)

Although ‘indomitable’ is an adjective often applied to **Julia**, Lewis is the exception that proves the rule, because he does seem to have more power over her than most people. Charming Lewis officially retired as an architect, but still does the occasional job that interests him, like the conversion of **Lower Loxley**’s shop and café, the refurbishment of **Arkwright Hall**, or the extension of buildings at The Stables to form **Alistair Lloyd**’s veterinary surgery. He also agreed to serve on the committee trying to revitalise the old **Cat and Fiddle** building. But these occasional tasks left him plenty of time to woo Julia, who was delighted (if a little surprised) to become a bride on 26 May 2005. The wedding was held – unsurprisingly – at Lower Loxley.

Lower Loxley Hall • Born 17.8.24
(Mary Wimbush)

Nigel and **Elizabeth** were delighted when Julia's second husband **Lewis** came on the scene, as he alone seems to have the knack of controlling Julia's many excesses with a minimum of conflict. Julia was in denial for many years about her true background: a greengrocer's daughter who'd been courted by aristo Gerald Pargetter as a dancer in wartime Variety (her, that is – Gerald wasn't that sort of chap). Her self-deluding streak contributed to later addictions to alcohol and gambling, now fortunately under control. Will marriage at 80 mellow the *grande dame*? It will be interesting to see if she softens her prejudice against **Elizabeth**'s yeoman ancestry, which tends to blindly favour Nigel's sister Camilla, her posh husband James, and their frightful brat Piers.



CHRISTOPHER CARTER



Ambridge View, Willow Farm • Born 22.6.88
(William Sanderson-Thwaite)

It wasn't good timing when **Neil** and **Susan** moved the family into a caravan while building their dream home. Not only was Christopher studying for his GCSEs at **Borchester** Green secondary school, but he'd hit that time in adolescence when everything is 'rubbish' – especially parents. He'd certainly no desire to share a confined space with them and **Emma** (now **Grundy**), who arguably liked the experience even less. Chris should be used to sharing a confined space with Neil, however, as they are both bellringers. In 2004, Chris announced that he was set on a career as a farrier. It was a death knell for Susan's hopes that at least one Carter would gain a degree, but Neil was delighted when Chris persuaded **Ronnie** to take him on.



NEIL CARTER



Ambridge View, Willow Farm • Born 25.5.57
(Brian Hewlett)

Neil and his wife **Susan** used to work for **Tom Archer**, until his business had to retrench in 2005. Neil and Susan live in a self-built house on Neil's eight acres at **Willow Farm**. If that sounds a lot of land, you have to remember that it's shared by Neil's outdoor herd of Gloucester Old Spot pigs and the free-range hens which he runs with **Betty Tucker**. Neil's got a pretty low opinion of the **Grundy** family, but he had to resign himself to daughter **Emma** marrying **Will**. After Emma announced that Will wasn't the father of her child **George**, **Ed** was lucky not to find himself hanging from a bell rope at **St Stephen's**, where Neil is the tower captain.



SUSAN CARTER



(née Horrobin)

Ambridge View, Willow Farm • Born 10.10.63

(Charlotte Martin)

R edundant after the collapse of **Tom Archer**'s business, Susan was relieved to get an office job at The Laurels nursing home. She'd often had to take unskilled work in her struggle to shake off the **Horrobin** inheritance, and even went to prison in 1993 when forced to shelter her fugitive brother Clive. Finally accepting that husband **Neil** would always be a pigman, she had hoped that her children would do better. At least **Christopher** has good earning potential once he's qualified as a farrier. But bright **Emma** – first working in a café and then banged up by her husband's brother. You'd think she was doing it out of spite...



CASA NUEVA



The gamekeeper's tied cottage at **Home Farm** is in quite an isolated spot, on a lane bordering Lyttleton Covert. For a few months it was a happy home for **Will** and **Emma Grundy**, until all that unpleasantness with **Ed**. The previous occupant – Will's former head keeper Greg Turner – committed suicide (although not at the cottage) and Emma was initially reluctant to move in. **Brian** and **Jennifer Aldridge** gave it a bright makeover, and Will and Emma christened the place 'new house' in Spanish, in memory of their Mexican honeymoon.



THE CAT AND FIDDLE



The Cat and Fiddle just outside **Ambridge** used to be the place to go for a lock-in and the roughest cider in **Borsetshire**, which is why it was the favourite haunt of **Eddie Grundy** and his mates – especially as they were often barred from everywhere else. For a while the pub came up in the world after new landlords Sean and Peter revamped it with youth appeal and indoor lavatories. But in 2000 their CD jukebox was silenced when the brewery sold the pub without a licence. The development company that bought it found their plans stymied by the building's listed status, and in 2004 **Lynda Snell** formed a Building Preservation Trust with the aim of reopening the 'Cat' as a heritage centre.



IAN CRAIG



Honeysuckle Cottage • Born 1970
(Stephen Kennedy)

Ian had no idea how his life would change when he took a short-term contract as head chef at **Grey Gables** in December 2003. Everyone warmed to this affable Northern Irishman, who soon proved worthy of a permanent position at the hotel. He found what looked like another permanent position too, at the side of **Adam Macy** – although some villagers (especially **Sid Perks**) were deeply discomfited by the happy couple. While Adam was prone to meet the prejudice head-on, Ian preferred a more diplomatic approach, and the differing philosophies led to the first real disagreement between the two lovers. But it was not enough to split them, and as they grew closer they looked for a home together, eventually buying their cottage from **Matt Crawford**.



MATT CRAWFORD



Nightingale Farm (Kim Durham)

‘All over the village like a rash’ as **Joe Grundy** was once heard to say. Matt is chairman of **Borchester Land**, and the driving force behind its dominance of the **Ambridge** property scene. Matt’s fought his way up from the bottom by not taking ‘no’ for an answer, even from district council planning committees, which is how the **Grange Spinney** housing development was eventually built. In 2005, after a messy and expensive divorce from ex-wife Yvette, Matt moved in with former mistress **Lilian Bellamy**, although we suspect that **Nightingale Farm** is not quite grand enough for the pair.



THE ESTATE



More correctly, the Berrow Estate: see
Borchester Land.



FELPERSHAM



*To the east of **Ambridge** village famous
Felpersham is ranged.*

*The cathedral used to be the city's heart, but
that's all changed.*

*There's shops and bars and restaurants and
no-one thinks it's odd*

*That they have tills instead of altars, and the
credit card is God.*

*The girls at Bannisters café bar have blonde
streaks in their hair.*

*Then they move on to Angels nightclub – best
not ask what happens there.*

*Seventeen miles away there's much my Freda
thinks is rum*

*But she'd rather go to Felpersham than scary
Birmingham.*

One of **Bert Fry**'s odes.



DEREK FLETCHER



Glebelands

Over of gnomes and hater of cats, Derek Fletcher has made a lot of enemies in **Ambridge** (except among the gnome population, obviously). Since 1979, he and his wife Pat have lived in an ‘executive home’ in Glebelands – the **Grange Spinney** of its day. Along with **Peggy Woolley**, Derek was one of the parishioners unable to accept a woman vicar at **St Stephen’s**. He tried to seize power on the parish council following chairman George Barford’s demise, and has been known to send anonymous poison-pen letters, too. What he must think of **Usha Gupta** living in the village is too ghastly to contemplate.



WAYNE FOLEY



Radio Borsetshire

Broadcasting throughout the county on 87.3FM

(Ian Brooker)

*'Tune into the Wayne Foley Afternoon Show.
With news and views from around the county
and a tea-time guest just after four.*

Win a Radio Borsetshire mug in our What's That Sound? competition – you won't believe your ears!

Something to say? Wayne's waiting for your call.

Every weekday, two 'til five.

If you think life's a pain – you haven't met Wayne.'



SNATCH FOSTER



Prison

Once upon a time, the worst result for **Eddie Grundy** following an encounter with his mate Snatch would be a splitting hangover and a tongue-lashing from **Clarrie**. But Snatch proved to be no friend when he started supplying Eddie with meat ‘from a hill farmer doing a bit of slaughtering’, which Eddie sold at car-boot sales. The meat was actually condemned and finding its way out of the back door of **Felpersham** abattoir. Eddie was fined heavily and was lucky to escape jail. Snatch went down for two years. By a strange turn of fate, Eddie’s godson – Snatch’s boy Bruno – turned up in the village in the care of **Oliver Sterling** and **Caroline Pemberton**. Bruno tried to take revenge for Eddie grassing Snatch up – until he discovered the full story of his father’s duplicity.



ALAN FRANKS



The Vicarage • Born 1960
(John Telfer)

A former accountant who worked as a non-stipendiary minister in Nottingham, Alan was appointed vicar of **Ambridge**, Penny Hassett, Darrington and Edgeley in June 2003. Alan's wife Catherine died of breast cancer in 1995, so his bonds with his daughter **Amy** are immensely strong. Alan believes in living out his Christianity through his everyday actions, and sometimes his passionate convictions can make him less than diplomatic. Many parishioners thought him unwise when he took a heroin addict into his home, and there was little support for his bid to set up a homeless hostel in the area. But, while Alan's heart can rule his head, he is widely admired for his principles. He cuts an unconventional figure zooming around the county on his motorbike, and has formed a strong friendship with **Usha Gupta**.



AMY FRANKS



The Vicarage • Born 1989
(Natalia Keery-Fisher)

Alan Franks' daughter is as much a firebrand as her dad, and can get into scrapes when driven by her highly developed sense of justice. When Alan feels overwhelmed, he sometimes calls on the restraining influence of Amy's grandmother Mabel, originally from Jamaica but a long-term resident of Bradford. Coming to the countryside was a joy for Amy, primarily because she loves riding. She hit it off very quickly with **Alice Aldridge**, who is of the same age and similarly nutty about horses. In September 2005 both girls started A level studies at **Borchester** College, Amy with the eventual intention of becoming a midwife.



BERT FRY



Brookfield Bungalow • Born 1936
(Eric Allan)

Despite passing retirement age, Bert stayed on as a general agricultural worker at **Brookfield**, living in a tied cottage. You'd think he'd want to spend more time on his poetry – oh yes, despite his stolid exterior Bert is an inheritor of the tradition of John Clare (as can be seen by his ode to **Felpersham**) and he once had his own column in the *Borchester Echo*. Bert also serves as a church-warden and cricket umpire and is a devoted husband to **Freda**, with whom he has one son Trevor and a granddaughter Amy. Bert's other great love is gardening. Competitors at the annual flower and produce show must be relieved that he didn't have yet more energy to devote to his luscious leeks and brilliant brassicas.



FREDA FRY



Brookfield Bungalow

Freda and husband **Bert** are the panzer division of the annual flower and produce show, attacking irresistibly on two fronts. While Bert pins down the vegetable categories, Freda dominates the cakes and preserves with maximum prejudice. She gets plenty of practice, putting three meals a day in front of Bert and turning out dishes aplenty for **The Bull's** family restaurant. She also cleans the **Brookfield** farmhouse, and is the housekeeper at **Arkwright Hall**. A busy woman, then, so is it any wonder that she is never heard to speak?



SIR SIDNEY AND LADY MERCEDES GOODMAN



Many **Borsetshire** residents are aware of Sir Sidney, thanks to his food-processing empire, which includes a canning factory in **Borchester**. But this local big cheese is also a *queso grande*, with extensive Spanish interests dating back to the time he fought with the fascists in the civil war. He also imported a Mercedes from Spain – not one with leather seats, but rather one with a leathery complexion, elegantly clothed in the finest couture. Lady Mercedes is a big chum of **Julia Pargetter-Carmichael**.



GRANGE FARM



A working farm – although some may dispute that description – until the bankrupt **Grundys** were evicted in 2000. The bulk of the acreage was absorbed back into the **Estate** and the farmhouse sold with 50 acres to **Oliver Sterling**. He raises a few beef cattle there – as much to keep his hand in as anything – and provides part-time employment for a previous occupant: **Ed Grundy**.



GRANGE SPINNEY



If **Matt Crawford** had his way, **Ambridge** would rival Birmingham for urban sprawl. This **Borchester Land** development of 12 luxury houses and six 'low cost' homes, built in 2003, is a step on the way.



GREY GABLES



As Grey Gables Hotel and Country Club aged along with owner **Jack Woolley**, its velvet upholstery and flounces grew increasingly out of fashion. In 2004, manager **Caroline Pemberton** and assistant manager **Roy Tucker** persuaded Jack that the place needed an *ambience* (as receptionist **Lynda Snell** would no doubt put it) more in tune with the TV makeover age. Newly refurbished, offering excellent facilities including a health club and golf course, and with go-ahead chef **Ian Craig** aiming for his first Michelin star, Grey Gables managed to retain its loyal regulars while appealing to a younger, affluent clientele.



ALF GRUNDY



Gloucester • Born 13.11.44

While **Eddie** sails close to the legal wind, and **Ed** occasionally capsizes, Alf is a positive submariner. Eddie's elder brother started young by stealing chocolate from Woolworths, progressed to receiving stolen goods and eventually served time for breaking and entering. But what really estranged Alf from the rest of the family was walking off with Eddie's car stereo and the contents of **William**'s money box. When **Joe** was 80, Eddie and **Clarrie** arranged for him to visit Alf as a birthday treat, but neither are in any hurry to renew the contact.



CLARRIE GRUNDY



Keeper's Cottage • Born 12.5.54
(Rosalind Adams)

Clarrie must have done something very wicked in a previous life to be landed with such a trial in this one. While cooking and cleaning for husband **Eddie** and curmudgeonly father-in-law **Joe**, she tries to keep the peace between feuding sons **William** and **Ed**. If that sounds like a full-time job in itself, you might be surprised to hear that Clarrie also works in the dairy at **Bridge Farm** and behind the bar at **The Bull**. She's kind-hearted and a good friend, but displays a fierce tongue when one of the Grundy men gets out of line, which is quite often. To escape her daily drudgery, she likes a nice romantic novel (not that she gets much time to read) and very occasionally escapes to Great Yarmouth to see her sister Rosie Mabbott.



ED GRUNDY



Keeper's Cottage

Born 28.9.84

(Barry Farrimond)

Ed's lived a pretty troubled life so far and there's no sign of it easing any time soon. He's served community punishments for joyriding and burglary and in 2004 he tried to grow cannabis in a barn at **Bridge Farm** with his mate **Jazzer**. The woman Ed loved – **Emma** – married his brother **William**, and a relationship with Beth, whom he met in Europe, foundered when she returned to the USA. With little to keep him in Ambridge, Ed had decided to go travelling again when desperate Emma told Ed that his nephew **George** was in fact his son. The announcement changed the lives of everyone involved.



EDDIE GRUNDY



Keeper's Cottage • Born 15.3.51
(Trevor Harrison)

This former tenant of **Grange Farm** can often be seen doing casual work on the farms of **Ambridge**, sometimes using his ancient tractor or digger. But Eddie's got a finger in more pies than Mr Kipling, dealing also in garden ornaments, compost, landscaping and anything else he thinks will turn a penny. He admits that selling illegal meat was a bit of a mistake and was fortunate to escape prison – although to be fair he didn't know the meat was condemned. Perhaps Eddie's best bit of luck in recent years was a windfall from his old milk quota. This allowed him to buy **Grundys' Field**, which has become a base for all the Grundy enterprises – including, for a while, an illegal cider den. No wonder **Clarrie** despairs.



EMMA GRUNDY



(née Carter)

Casa Nueva • Born 7.8.84

(Felicity Jones)

It's not generally reckoned the best start to a marriage to sleep with the groom's brother, and even worse to marry pregnant and unsure which one is the father. **Neil** and **Susan Carter**'s daughter Emma naturally assured loyal **William** that he was the daddy-to-be, while **Ed** packed up his broken heart and travelled in Europe for a time. But after Ed's return and the birth of baby **George**, Emma was torn between stifling domesticity with steady Will and the exciting pull of dangerous Ed. Once she announced that Ed was in fact George's father, the family was torn asunder.



GEORGE GRUNDY



Casa Nueva

Born 7.4.05

Little George was named after **William Grundy**'s former gamekeeping mentor George Barford. So far, so straightforward. But there's a clue to this child's troubled background in his middle name. Was he named Edward after his grandfather **Eddie**? Or did **Emma**'s guilty conscience want the man she believed to be the real father – Will's brother **Ed** – to have some sort of stake in the child? By the time George was only a few months old, Emma had confessed, and thrown in her lot with Ed, sending Will into turmoil and the **Carter** and **Grundy** families into chaos.



JOE GRUNDY



Keeper's Cottage • Born 18.9.21
(Edward Kelsey)

Being the Grundy who lost **Grange Farm** for future generations sat heavy with Joe, but the purchase of **Grundys' Field**, making this former tenant into a landowner (albeit in a very small way), brightened his 80th year. Joe's often to be seen trotting around the village – in his trap, pulled by Bartleby the pony, that is. Bartleby knows the lanes well, which is a blessing given Joe's appetite for his own notorious farmhouse cider (Joe claims to be a Methodist, but he's seen rather more in **The Bull** than at chapel). Joe looks after the gardens at Keeper's Cottage and neighbouring April Cottage, and maintains a running feud with **Lynda Snell** across the road. Well, every man needs a hobby...



WILLIAM GRUNDY



Casa Nueva • Born 9.2.83
(Philip Molloy)

Although never the most exciting boy in the playground, on the face of it **Clarrie** and **Eddie**'s elder son hadn't done too badly. Will's godmother **Caroline Pemberton** had always looked out for him, and after the death of Greg Turner **Brian Aldridge** was persuaded to promote Will to head keeper at the combined **Grey Gables**, Berrow **Estate** and **Home Farm** shoot, with a tied cottage to boot. To top it all, August 2005 saw him married to the lovely **Emma**, who told him that she was carrying his child. But when she admitted that **George** was in fact the offspring of Will's hated brother **Ed**, the playhouse was torn well and truly down.



GRUNDYS' FIELD



This 3.4 acres may not look like much, but when the **Grundys** bought it in 2003 it represented their first step into land ownership after generations of being tenants. They've kept a few cattle and over-wintering sheep there and now a Berkshire sow, Barbarella. But it's as much a storage area as a piece of productive grassland. Dominating the plot is a pole barn, which was erected without planning permission, demolished (to **Lynda Snell**'s delight) and re-erected (to her disgust) when **David Archer** rented the Grundys a few acres of **Brookfield** land. The barn and a rough shed house Eddie's medieval tractor, his pre-Saxon digger, and his stock in trade: garden ornaments, materials for his landscaping business, and mounds of 'organic' compost. Don't complain about the piles of manure – that's Eddie's bread and butter, that is.



USHA GUPTA



Blossom Hill Cottage • Born 17.6.62
(Souad Faress)

Solicitor Usha is an equity partner with the **Felpersham** firm of Jefferson Crabtree. Usha's parents were unhappy when she moved to the countryside from Wolverhampton in 1991. She's been welcomed by many villagers, but integrating into the rural community brought plenty of challenges, including a horrendous series of attacks by a gang of racist thugs. Although she gets on well with salsa dancing partner **Ruth Archer**, relations with Ruth's sister-in-law **Shula Hebdon Lloyd** never recovered from Shula's affair with Usha's then boyfriend Richard Locke. Since he left, despite the matchmaking efforts of Auntie **Satya Khanna** and brother Shiv, Usha has not had a satisfactory romantic relationship. But this practising Hindu does enjoy a platonic friendship with the local vicar **Alan Franks**.



SIOBHAN HATHAWAY



Germany • Born 13.6.65
(Caroline Lennon)

Siobhan and former husband Tim came to **Ambridge** in 1999; he to be the local GP and she to work as a freelance translator. But the marriage foundered. Tim became close to the then-vicar Janet Fisher (to whom he is now married) and Siobhan started an affair with **Brian Aldridge**. Once she gave birth to Brian's son Ruairi, matters accelerated rapidly and she was hurt and furious when Brian chose to stay with his wife **Jennifer**. Siobhan settled in Germany, allowing Brian practically no contact with his growing son, but became more content after finding a new partner, Dieter.



BUNTY AND REG HEBDEN



Bunty born 20.2.22
(Bunty – Sheila Allen)

Retired solicitor Reg and wife Bunty are the parents of **Shula Hebdon Lloyd**'s first husband Mark. Since her marriage to **Alistair**, Shula has been uncomfortably caught between husband and in-laws on a number of issues affecting **Daniel**, whom Mark had fathered by IVF, although dying before Daniel was born (keep up, keep up...). Alistair insisted that Daniel should go to the local state primary, against Reg and Bunty's wishes, which didn't exactly smooth the way when he wanted to adopt the boy, thus severing Reg and Bunty's legal rights. The maternal grandparents **Jill** and **Phil Archer** had to pour tea on troubled waters before they consented. And of course Shula has made sure that their relationship with Daniel is just as close, despite the adoption.



Grey Gables

We don't know if Higgs – as most people know him – talks to the flowers at **Grey Gables**, where is he general handyman and gardener. He certainly doesn't talk to many people, providing **silent** services as the chauffeur of Jack Woolley's vintage Bentley.



HOLLERTON JUNCTION



*Yes. I remember Hollerton –
The name, because one afternoon
(No seat!) the London train drew up there
Abruptly. It was late June.*

*The iPods bissed. Someone cleared his email.
No one left and no one came
On the bare platform. What I saw
Was Hollerton – only the name*

*And ‘Ambridge – 6 miles’, and grass,
And Hassett Hills, and silage clamp,
And ‘Services to Birmingham – Platform 2.
Wheelchair access via ramp.’*

*And for that minute a moped growled
Close by, and round him, noisier,
Farther and farther, all the cars
Of Borchester and Dorsetshire.*

With apologies to Edward Thomas.



HOME FARM



STOCK

600 ewes • 110 hinds, stags, calves
100 pigs (outdoor reared)

CROPS

954 acres cereals • 128 acres grassland
75 acres oil seed rape • 100 acres sugar beet
80 acres linseed • 75 acres peas
80 acres woodland • 58 acres set-aside, including:
40 acres industrial rape • 10 acres willow (game cover)
4 acres strawberries • 6 acres maize

OTHER

25-acre riding course • Fishing lake • Maize maze

LABOUR

Brian Aldridge (managing and relief)
Adam Macy (deputy) • Andy, Jeff (general workers)
Students and seasonal labour
William Grundy (gamekeeper) • Fly (sheepdog)

With 1585 mainly arable acres, Home Farm is the largest in **Ambridge** and carries out contract farming for **Brookfield** and other farms. As a partner in the Hassett Hills Meat Company, it raises and supplies high-quality lamb to butchers and caterers, selling its venison and strawberries at local farmers' markets. And in 2005 it trialled a new visitor attraction – a maize maze.



Felpersham
(Peter Howell)

Bishop Cyril has never been asked to do a *Thought For The Day*, **Felpersham** being a fairly obscure diocese. But the chances are that it would be thoughtful and compassionate, like the man himself. Successive vicars of **Ambridge** have benefited from their boss's wisdom, and perhaps none more than **Alan Franks'** predecessor Janet Fisher, who became attracted to the former Ambridge GP Tim Hathaway. After Tim's marriage collapsed following **Siobhan's** adultery, and thanks in great part to Cyril's counselling, Janet was able to remain a priest and in 2003 she married the man she loved. Let's hope Alan isn't about to present the bishop with a similar challenge.



CLIVE HORROBIN



Inside again, naturally

Born 9.11.72

(Alex Jones)

Honour among thieves? (Pause for hollow laughter.) Clive demonstrated quite the opposite when he was on the run following an armed raid on the **Village Shop**. He forced his big sister **Susan Carter** to harbour him, and then when eventually caught he shopped her to the police. Nice... When he returned to **Ambridge** after his prison sentence, it wasn't long before ex-copper George Barford correctly suspected that Clive was linked to a series of burglaries in the area. When Clive was released following that sentence, he conducted a twisted vendetta against George, which culminated in 2004 in a firebomb attack on George's house. Badly burned, Clive sought refuge with Susan once more, but this time she did the right thing. Clive got 12 years.



THE HORROBINS



6, The Green, and elsewhere

Most people think the Horrobins are a waste of space, but they do serve one useful purpose, as a family the **Grundys** can look down upon. At least only one of the Grundys has been to jail, whereas **Clive**, Keith and **Susan** (now **Carter**) have all been residents of Her Majesty's guesthouse. It can be argued that Gary and Stewart haven't joined their siblings inside only through a combination of good luck and low cunning. And although Tracy hasn't been in trouble with the law, her attitude to work is pretty criminal, as several ex-employers can testify. Bert has already disowned Clive and as far as Ivy is concerned (she is **Usha Gupta**'s cleaner at Blossom Hill Cottage), mother's pride is what you make toast with.



IZZY



Meadow Rise, Borchester (Lizzie Wofford)

Ruth Archer had to put a few prejudices to one side when her daughter, the previously no-mates Pip, palled up with Izzy. While Pip's farm upbringing had kept her a child, Izzy seemed well into her teenage years by the time she was 12. But Ruth eventually saw beyond the crop-tops and hooped earrings – and Izzy's home in the pretty rough Meadow Rise flats – to see a sparky, confident girl with a welcoming nature and talent for music. Stepfather Dom is not only very taciturn but not a great earner, so Izzy's mum Karen works on a supermarket check-out and has two cleaning jobs to provide for the family, which includes Izzy's 'mental' (her description) elder brother Keifer, younger half-sister Minnie and Ghengis the Alsatian.



Borchester

One-time greasy spoon with a flat upstairs, bought in 2003 by **Jack Woolley** and reopened with a retro 1950s feel. **Kenton Archer** practically begged Jack to give him the job of managing it, mainly because he'd become homeless after exhausting the patience of numerous family members. Frank the chef turned his hand to a slightly more ambitious menu (gasp: panini!) and capable assistant manager **Emma Grundy** made sure that Kenton could concentrate on what he did best – chatting up the more attractive customers. Emma planned to return to work after her maternity leave, but her naïve intentions foundered on the rock of childcare realities. When failing Jack started to divest his portfolio in 2004, the café was one of the first businesses to be sold, but to Kenton's relief the new owner kept him on.



JAZZER



Borchester • Born 1984
(Ryan Kelly)

Clarrie Grundy wouldn't mind if **Ed** never saw his old school friend again. Joyriding, housebreaking, cannabis growing... all activities that Jack 'Jazzer' McCreary has led Ed into (although to be honest Ed didn't need very much leading). Over-enthusiastic use of the drug ketamine left Jazzer a little clumsy and with memory problems, and put paid to his hopes of storming the rock world via his now-defunct band *Dross* which included Ed, **Fallon Rogers** and Jazzer's elder brother Stuart. For a while, Jazzer assisted **Neil Carter** with the piggy end of **Tom Archer**'s sausage business, and Ed's dad **Eddie** finds work for the lad occasionally, but it's probably best not to ask where most of his money comes from.



JESSICA



Lower Loxley

Jessica proved impervious to **Kenton Archer's** charms, which led him to the natural conclusion that she was a lesbian. She can certainly handle the birds, as she is the resident falconer at **Lower Loxley**. Jessica is self-employed, with a *quid pro quo* arrangement whereby she uses premises at Lower Loxley and they are able to offer falconry displays and 'experience days'. Although **Nigel Pargetter** often spends time with Jessica, he assures **Elizabeth** that his interest – unlike Kenton's – is purely in the hawks and falcons.



Wolverhampton
(Jamilla Massey)

Usha Gupta's Auntie Satya is a persistent woman, but after numerous failed match-making attempts even she must despair of ever seeing her niece married. For many years, Satya provided the link between Usha and her parents, who disapproved of Usha's move to the countryside, and she's been a great support when Usha's needed it (and sometimes when she didn't...) Usha's not much of a cook, either, which is why when Satya comes to visit she brings food parcels.



The Stables • Born 1962
(Michael Lumsden)

Ambridge cricket captain Alistair runs his veterinary practice from converted buildings at his home, where wife **Shula** also runs a riding school and stables. Alistair's first marriage ended when his wife had an affair, and Shula's fling with Richard Locke meant that she and Alistair might not have made it to the altar themselves. But his love for her and her son **Daniel** won out, and he's been a wonderful father to the boy, whom he adopted in 2000. As a sole practitioner, Alistair has lost business to the specialists in a multi-vet practice in Hollerton – most wounding, **Brookfield**'s dairy herd work. Alistair responded to this slight from his brother-in-law **David Archer** by taking comfort in gambling; probably unwise that, as he once lost £8000 playing poker with **Matt Crawford** and his cronies.



The Stables • Born 14.11.94
(Dominic Davies)

Given that his father **Alistair** is a vet, you might not be surprised at Daniel's fascination with animals. But it's not in the genes, as Alistair adopted Daniel in 2000. Daniel's blood father was a solicitor, Mark Hebden, who tragically died in a car crash without knowing that his wife **Shula** was pregnant. In 1998, a mysterious illness was eventually diagnosed as juvenile arthritis, and Daniel is subject to occasional 'flares' of this debilitating condition. But most of the time Daniel is a normal little boy, who enjoys horse riding. Now that's *certainly* something he's inherited.



SHULA HEBDEN LLOYD



(formally Hebden, née Archer)

The Stables • Born 8.8.58

(Judy Bennett)

Outwardly, Shula – **Phil** and **Jill Archer**'s elder daughter and **Kenton**'s twin – is the pinnacle of respectability: a qualified chartered surveyor now running her own stables and riding school, a regular churchgoer, bellringer and church-warden. But a moment of madness with former **Ambridge** GP Richard Locke estranged her from Richard's partner **Usha Gupta** and very nearly lost Shula her now-husband **Alistair**. (Shula's first husband Mark was killed in a car crash in 1994, never knowing that after years of disappointment and treatment for infertility Shula was finally pregnant with **Daniel**.) But since the affair Shula has devoted herself to being a good wife, mother and member of the community – to the point where arguably she could do with a bit of excitement again. Given Alistair's problems, she might not have to wait very long...



A rather sad little bed-sit in Felpersham
(Stephen Hancock)

Larry Lovell would no doubt describe himself as the doyen of the **Felpersham** Light Opera Society, although that's not the word most people would use. A former professional actor/singer/model (knitting patterns, actually) he occasionally muscles in to direct village shows on what **Lynda Snell** fiercely regards as her turf. Decades ago, Larry's path crossed with ex-hoofer **Julia Pargetter-Carmichael**, as they swirled around, if not the bowels of Variety, then certainly its lower intestine.



LOWER LOXLEY HALL



Lucky **Elizabeth Pargetter**, living in a stately home... Just don't let her hear you say that, because she's far more concerned with keeping the 300-year-old pile tolerably vertical. To fund the never-ending maintenance bills, she and **Nigel** try to wring every drop of income out of the place. The Hall hosts conferences and takes sightseers; Nigel runs falconry courses and displays with **Jessica**; the grounds boast rare breeds, cycle trails, an art gallery, a cruck barn and (not for the acrophobic) a tree-top walk. All this takes staff, of course. Ancient retainers **Titcombe** and **Mrs Pugsley** have been joined over the years by numerous additional employees, including retail manager **Kathy Perks** and Hugh the Orangery Café's chef. **Hayley Tucker** nannies for **Jamie Perks** and the Pargetter twins **Lily and Freddie**, and runs activity visits for local schoolchildren.



ADAM MACY



Honeysuckle Cottage • Born 22.6.67

After graduating in agricultural economics, Adam worked for many years on farming development projects in Africa. Jennifer was delighted when he returned to **Ambridge** in 2003, but things haven't exactly gone smoothly. Despite **Brian Aldridge**'s protestations, Adam's step-father found it hard to adjust to the news that Adam was gay – and to his relationship with **Ian Craig**. And Adam always felt that Brian favoured his half-sister **Debbie** when sharing the management of the farm. Step-father? Half-sister? Get this: when **Jennifer** became pregnant with Adam, she was unmarried and refused to name the father, although Adam's shock of red hair implicated local cowman Paddy Redmond. Jennifer's first husband Roger Travers-Macy later adopted Adam. Despite the difficulties at **Home Farm**, Adam developed a thriving strawberry business and, in 2005, a maize maze.



KATE MADIKANE



(née Aldridge)

Johannesburg • Born 30.9.77

(Kellie Bright)

It's ironic for **Brian** and **Jennifer Aldridge** that now their daughter Kate has grown up and settled down a bit, she's 5000 miles away on another continent. When she was at home, Kate was a heap of trouble: expelled from school, taking up with travellers, having baby **Phoebe** at 19 and denying the father **Roy Tucker** his parental rights – until she needed to dump the child so she could 'find herself' in Africa, that is. She met **Lucas** on her travels and had his baby Noluthando ('Nolly') on 19 January 2001. Lucas has been a calming influence on her ever since.



LUCAS MADIKANE



Johannesburg • Born 1972
(Connie M'Gadzah)

Lucas caused quite a stir when he arrived in **Ambridge**. The father of **Kate's** baby was *black*. But he managed to win many villagers round with his charm and directness. Kate wasn't happy when Lucas wanted to move from Cape Town to a journalist's job with the South African Broadcasting Corporation in Johannesburg, but her love for him won through and they married in June 2001.



KIRSTY MILLER



Borchester
(Anabelle Dowler)

As she works at **Ambridge Organics**, you'd expect Kirsty to have environmental principles, but you might be surprised to learn that she was once charged (although not convicted) with destroying GM crops. It was to be the start of a six-year on-off relationship with fellow eco-warrior **Tom Archer**. But in 2005, foolish Tom fell for a business contact and ditched Kirsty, only to be ditched himself shortly afterwards. **Pat and Tony Archer** feared that the break-up would mean the end of Kirsty's involvement in their family business, because she had been a staunch support to Tom's sister **Helen** – personally and professionally – following the suicide of Helen's partner Greg Turner in 2004. But Kirsty was blowed if Tom was going to ruin that too. And as for romance, **Sam Batton** soon picked up the, er... baton, much to Tom's chagrin.



NIGHTINGALE FARM



No longer a farm, now just the farmhouse with outbuildings and half an acre, this property was one of the many in **Ambridge** acquired by **Matt Crawford**. He promptly did it up, let it to **Lilian Bellamy** and then moved in with her after his divorce in 2005. Nightingale Farm was owned by **Marjorie Antrobus** until 2003, when she reluctantly had to sell it to finance her move to The Laurels nursing home. Matt re-amalgamated the self-contained flat with the rest of the house. A shame, because it had provided a happy first home for a variety of Ambridge's young people, notably **Neil** and **Susan Carter** and **Ruth Archer**. The final tenants were **Roy** and **Hayley Tucker** and Roy's daughter **Phoebe Aldridge**, who were much less content when forced by the sale to move in with Roy's parents.



ELIZABETH PARGETTER



(née Archer)

Lower Loxley Hall • Born 21.4.67

(Alison Dowling)

Elizabeth has never quite stopped being the baby of the **Archer** family. Despite marrying **Nigel**, having twins **Lily and Freddie**, living in an historic mansion and capably running the bulk of its commercial ventures, she's still inclined to throw her toys out of the pram – particularly at any hint that her parents **Phil** and **Jill** are favouring **David**, **Kenton** or **Shula** over her. Apart from sibling rivalry, Elizabeth has faced some genuine challenges in her life. Before her marriage to Nigel, she had an abortion after being dumped by swindler Cameron Fraser, and her congenital heart problem required a valve-replacement operation after the birth of the twins. Although Nigel despairs sometimes of his 'Lizzie's' competitiveness, her fighting spirit has played a big part in **Lower Loxley**'s continued survival.

 LILY AND FREDDIE PARGETTER 

Lower Loxley Hall • Born 12.12.99
(Theodore and Madelaine Wakelin)

It doesn't seem so long ago that the family feared for **Elizabeth**'s life, pregnant as she was with twins and suffering the effects of a congenital heart condition. But Lily and Freddie were born – in that order – safely if a little early by caesarean section. As toddlers they were treated to the nannying skills of **Hayley Tucker**, supplemented by the idiosyncratic care of grandmother **Julia Pargetter-Carmichael**. They started at Loxley Barratt primary school in 2004, and their resultant mixing with hoi polloi gives Julia almost daily outrage.



NIGEL PARGETTER



Lower Loxley Hall • Born 8.6.59
(Graham Seed)

Lower Loxley's continued survival has helped Nigel shrug off his former reputation as **Julia**'s idiot son, one largely earned through appearing at hunt balls in a gorilla suit and his party trick of undoing bras one-handed. But even those fond of him would admit that he still displays a loveable eccentricity. Like many visitor attractions, Lower Loxley reveals the enthusiasms of its owner, with a cruck barn, falconer **Jessica**, cycle trails and bike hire, a wild flower meadow and an area of vines that will eventually produce Lower Loxley's own wine; all of which are the result of Nigel's crazes. It has to be said, though, that recruiting **Elizabeth** as his wife and co-manager was probably the smartest move that Nigel ever made, or ever will.



CAROLINE PEMBERTON



(née Bone)

Grange Farm • Born 3.4.55

(Sara Coward)

A relation of Lord Netherborne, **Ambridge's** posh totty has brought pleasure to innumerable men since her arrival in 1977 (Archers listeners, that is; what do you think we meant?) After twenty single years – including an affair with **Brian Aldridge** – she found Mr Right in the person of landowner Guy Pemberton, who unfortunately died after only six months of marriage. She later found love with another rich man: **Oliver Sterling**. And why not? Two Rights don't make a wrong. In 2004, with more love to offer than they could expend on each other, the couple became foster carers. Caroline owns the Dower House and a majority share in **The Bull**, and has managed **Grey Gables** since 1988.



JAMIE PERKS



April Cottage • Born 20.7.95
(Ben Ratley)

Despite his youth, Jamie's often to be found in the local pub: he has regular stayovers with his dad **Sid** at **The Bull**, although his mother **Kathy** is the main carer. Living next door to the **Grundys** might not be considered ideal – especially when you've had **Ed** as a babysitter. But with **Kenton Archer** as your favourite 'uncle' – well, we might as well write poor Jamie off now.



JOLENE PERKS



(néé Rogers)

The Bull

(Buffy Davis)

With a name that calls out to be sung, it's no surprise that Jolene's background is in country music. The singer and pianist (real name Doreen) still plays occasional gigs with her band, The Midnight Walkers, but her main efforts are devoted, with **Sid**, to **The Bull**. Jolene's warm personality and generous assets make her a natural behind the bar. Much of The Bull's success in recent years has been down to her, with line-dancing sessions and music nights in the upstairs function room, and innovations including a cyber-area with internet access. Jolene's daughter **Fallon Rogers** has inherited her mother's musical ability, although she'd rather eat nails than play country and western.



KATHY PERKS



(formerly Holland)

April Cottage • Born 30.1.53

(Hedli Niklaus)

You wouldn't know it to look at her now, but at Christmas 2004 Kathy suffered one of the worst traumas a woman can face, when she was raped by former **Lower Loxley** chef Owen King. After chasing Owen from the area, Kathy's ex-husband **Sid** nearly jeopardized his current marriage by caring for Kathy, and it was many more tentative months before she was able to resume a normal relationship with boyfriend **Kenton Archer**. With experience as a home economics teacher and at **The Bull**, Kathy manages Lower Loxley's café and shop, and organises occasional film nights at the village hall. And with Kenton's erratic help, she does her best to provide a stable and loving home for her son **Jamie**.



SID PERKS



The Bull • Born 9.6.44

(Alan Devereux)

Sid runs **The Bull**, in which he has a half share, and is married to voluptuous **Jolene**. This is Sid's third marriage; his first wife Polly died in 1982. Their daughter Lucy lives in New Zealand and in 2003 made Sid a grandfather, while the much younger **Jamie** – his son from his second marriage – lives with **Kathy**. Sid's always been a sporty type and still keeps fit. Over the years he progressed from player to captain and finally manager of the **Ambridge** cricket team, eventually resigning after desperate discomfort about the talented – but gay – **Adam Macy**.



HEATHER PRITCHARD



Prudhoe, Northumberland
(Joyce Gibbs)

Ruth Archer's father Solly died in 2002. Her mum lives a long way from **Ambridge**, has a busy life and likes to take cruises, so she's only a rare guest at **Brookfield**. But when she does visit, her capable and motherly nature means that everyone gets looked after – and a lot of home cooking.



MRS PUGSLEY



Lower Loxley Hall

The housekeeper at **Lower Loxley** has seen her workplace transformed over the decades, but has borne the changes with not a word of complaint; in fact, not a word, full stop. But we feel sure that when sharing a pot of tea with her colleague **Titcombe**, she has plenty to say.



MR PULLEN



Manorfield Close • Born 13.7.15

Robert Pullen, a resident of Ambridge's little plot of 'old people's homes', has probably led a rich and varied life, but sadly nowadays he's only known for one thing: the relative weakness of his bladder.



ELLEN ROGERS



Denia, Costa Blanca • Born 1926
(Rosemary Leach)

Not to be confused with the unrelated **Fallon Rogers**, although in 60 years time we wouldn't be surprised if Fallon is just as merry a widow. Ellen lives in Spain among the ex-pat community in Denia, where she owns a bar and lives a jolly life. In May 2005, she braved her fear of flying to see her elder sister **Julia Pargetter-Carmichael** married. Her surprise arrival at **Nigel** and **Elizabeth's** wedding 11 years earlier blew Julia's cover as a scion of the aristocracy, as Ellen regaled everyone with tales of their childhood as daughters of a Lewisham green-grocer. Even Julia's name was as assumed as her accent: she was christened 'Joan'.



FALLON ROGERS



The Bull • Born 19.6.85

(Joanna van Kampen)

In 2005, this singer and guitarist finished an HND in popular music performance; unsurprisingly, perhaps, given her parentage. Mother **Jolene Perks** and father Wayne Tucson (which might conceivably be a stage name...) were both active on the British country music circuit. Fallon takes what music-related work she can get and works behind the bar of **The Bull** when she can't. She's shown some talent as a promoter, running successful music nights in the function room Upstairs@The Bull, but ideally she'd like big success in an indie band. She once had hopes for her group *Dross*, with friends **Ed Grundy** and **Jazzer**, until it collapsed when Fallon won a song-writing competition without involving them. Well, as an excuse for a band splitting up, it makes a change from 'musical differences'.



RONNIE



This busy farrier, a regular visitor to **Shula Hebden Lloyd**'s stables, was in 2004 persuaded to take **Christopher Carter** on the four-year-long farrier's apprenticeship scheme.



Borchester (Malcolm McKee)

As Cardinal Ratzinger was to the former Pope John Paul II, so Graham Ryder is to **Matt Crawford**. **Borchester Land**'s enforcer – a land agent working for the **Borchester** firm of Rodway and Watson – is often called upon to do Matt's dirty work, although the conscientious and courteous Graham would not see it that way (and certainly harbours no expectations of succeeding Matt). Graham is not popular in **Ambridge**, standing unsuccessfully for its parish council in 2003. And he was cast as the Devil in the 2004 Ambridge mystery plays, which tends to blow the papal analogy out of the water.



Established 1281

In 2003, when **Alan Franks** arrived as the vicar of **Ambridge** (plus Darrington, Penny Hassett, and Edgeley) and proudly surveyed the fine village church – dating back to Saxon times – can he have known what he was letting himself in for? **Shula Hebden Lloyd** and **Bert Fry** (church-wardens), **Neil Carter** (captain of the bellringers) and **Phil Archer** (organist) have tales to tell of grand controversy over the years: the installation of a lavatory, clandestine attempts to kill off the bats in the roof, and of course the installation of his predecessor Janet Fisher, who you (being very sharp) will guess was a *woman*. If the departed Janet had one word of advice for Alan, it would be to keep away from the politics of the flower rota, which make the Florentine court look like, well, a church flower rota.



SILENT CHARACTERS



One of the delights of **Ambridge** is that coterie of characters whom the listener knows well and can picture clearly, but who are never actually heard to speak. A large but obviously rather quiet band, they include the ageing Mrs Potter and **Mr Pullen** at Manorfield Close; **Lower Loxley**'s gardener **Titcombe**, housekeeper **Mrs Pugsley**, resident falconer **Jessica**, chef Hugh and greenwoodworker Alec; **Eddie Grundy**'s friends Baggy and Fat Paul; **Home Farm** workers Andy and Jeff; **Bridge Farm** dairy worker Colin Kennedy; exotic Anja at **Ambridge Organics**; Frank, who flips the burgers at **Jaxx Caff**; **Freda Fry** who performs a similar function at **The Bull**; bellringer Neville Booth; **Grey Gables** assistant manager Trudy Porter; many of the **Horrobin**s; and the fragrant **John Higgs**.



LYNDA SNELL



Ambridge Hall • Born 29.5.47
(Carole Boyd)

They might not like it but every village needs their Lynda. Since she and long-suffering husband **Robert** arrived from Sunningdale in 1986, there are few Ambridge activities that have not 'benefited' from Lynda's special touch. In particular, she is the prime mover in local amateur dramatics and in 2004 she launched an ambitious appeal to renovate the old **Cat and Fiddle** pub as a visitor centre – on top of her receptionist's job at **Grey Gables**. Despite her annual hay fever, she's a keen gardener, and her support for environmental causes often brings her into conflict with local farmers. She clashed with **Adam Macy** over his strawberry polytunnels and is constantly in despair at the activities in **Grundys' Field**. **Joe** and **Eddie Grundy** would expect nothing less from someone with two pet llamas; Wolfgang and Constanza wisely keep their Peruvian counsel.



ROBERT SNELL



Ambridge Hall • Born 5.4.43
(Graham Blockey)

While most people remember an urgent appointment upon sight of **Lynda**, her husband is more the sort of chap you'd pull up a chair for. A computer expert (albeit with a failed software business behind him), genial Robert manages to put up with Lynda's crazes and campaigns – mainly because he genuinely loves her. Although displaying an almost parental affection for the llamas that Lynda bought for his 60th birthday, Robert also has two daughters from his first marriage. Lynda gets on well with the younger, Coriander ('Cas'), while Leonie is the more demanding one – as in 'demanding money with menaces'.



OLIVER STERLING



Grange Farm
(Michael Cochrane)

Oliver's marriage to his ex-wife was a traditional one. He ran a large farm (in the north of the county) and Jane was the home-maker, nurturing their son, two daughters and a growing frustration. Following their divorce, Oliver bought **Grange Farm** with 50 acres, intending to do a bit of hobby farming. As joint master of the South **Borsetshire** Hunt, Oliver met **Caroline Pemberton** – and they fell in love. She moved in with him in 2003 and before long they realized they both had more love to give; busy Oliver having missed out on much of the pleasures of fatherhood, and Caroline reflecting on the satisfaction that her godson **William Grundy** had brought her. They took the brave decision to become foster carers, a move that has brought them satisfaction and frustration in approximately equal measure.



TITCOMBE



Lower Loxley Hall

The **Pargetters'** head gardener doesn't say much. He probably thinks that **Lower Loxley**'s three acres of formal gardens speak for themselves.



BETTY TUCKER



Willow Farm • Born 4.8.50
(Pamela Craig)

Betty manages to stay cheerful, despite husband **Mike**'s precipitate mood swings and daughter **Brenda**'s disastrous love life. Son **Roy** has had his troubles too, but the end result of one of them was his daughter **Phoebe Aldridge**, whom Betty loves dearly. Phoebe's also given Betty an unexpected relationship with fellow grandparents and former employers **Brian** and **Jennifer Aldridge**. Managing the **Village Shop** means that Betty is a vital node in the **Ambridge** bush telegraph. She helps out occasionally at **The Bull** too and is a keen WI member, so the chickens at **Willow Farm** – where she runs an organic egg enterprise with **Neil Carter** – have probably been privy to more gossip than William Hickey.



BRENDA TUCKER



Willow Farm • Born 21.1.81
(Amy Schindler)

Daughter of **Mike** and **Betty Tucker** and younger sister of **Roy**. In May 2005, frustrated Brenda chucked in her job at Radio **Borsetshire** to look for more demanding journalistic work. When it didn't materialize, she decided to improve her employability by taking a degree in multimedia journalism, which meant leaving home for university. Maybe she'll find a more satisfactory relationship there than previously, because so far she's demonstrated an unerring eye for sleazeballs, con men and wasters.



HAYLEY TUCKER



(née Jordan)

Willow Farm • Born 1977

(Lorraine Coady)

Hayley loves children. She's a qualified nursery nurse, working as a nanny at **Lower Loxley** and is a devoted mother to husband **Roy**'s daughter **Phoebe Aldridge**. After a happy time in a cheaply rented flat, Roy and Hayley spent two years lodging with Roy's parents while looking for affordable local accommodation. If Roy was prepared to widen his horizons, they could do well for themselves in Hayley's native Birmingham. But Hayley would really prefer to stay in her adopted **Ambridge**, even if she still thinks that 'hayrick' is a greeting and 'spray boom' the noise that an aerosol makes.



MIKE TUCKER



Willow Farm • Born 1.12.49

(Terry Molloy)

Mike was once a dairy farmer – until his bankruptcy in 1985. He took on a milk round – when doorstep deliveries were under severe pressure from the supermarkets. He trained in forestry work – and then lost an eye in an accident. So he can be excused for not being the most cheerful of men. In more recent years, he's supplemented the milk round and forestry with turfing and casual labour. He helped his friend **Neil Carter** with his self-build house and in 2005 got regular work assisting gamekeeper **William Grundy**. Mike's often dour demeanour hides an intriguing talent. Always a keen line-dancer, in 2002 he studied ballroom dancing. He and wife **Betty** make a stylish couple at village hops.



ROY TUCKER



Willow Farm • Born 2.2.78
(Ian Pepperell)

Roy was once part of the group of racist thugs who terrorised **Usha Gupta** but that youthful foolishness is long behind him now. He pulled up his socks, read business studies at **Felpersham University** and eventually became assistant manager at **Grey Gables**. After Roy, wife **Hayley** and daughter **Phoebe Aldridge** (from ex-girlfriend **Kate Madikane**) had to leave their flat at **Nightingale Farm**, they struggled to find somewhere affordable and a 'temporary' move back in with parents **Mike** and **Betty** in 2003 became a drawn-out occupation.



UNDERWOODS



Well Street, Borchester

RADIO COMMERCIAL – UNDERWOODS – 0'30"

Female 1 Look at all these things! Gorgeous dress!

Female 2 Thanks. And what do you think of this vase, and this garden hose?

Female 1 You must have been to dozens of shops.

Female 2 No, Jean, I got it all at Underwoods.

Female 1 I'm amazed! All this in one store?

Female 2 Yes. Underwoods is big, friendly and it's got all you need.

Female 1 I wish I could say the same for my husband!

Both (GIGGLE)

Male Underwoods – **Borchester's** most varied store.



THE VILLAGE SHOP



Welcome to Information Central, also known as the **Ambridge** Village Shop and post office. Thanks to the philanthropy of owner **Jack Woolley**, manager **Betty Tucker** is on hand from early 'til late to serve you with the latest gossip, rumour and occasional half-fact.

Oh, and you can buy things there, too...



WILLOW FARM



Now, do you mean Willow Farmhouse, which accommodates **Mike** and **Betty Tucker**, their daughter **Brenda**, son **Roy**, Roy's wife **Hayley** and his daughter **Phoebe Aldridge**? Or do you mean the eight acres of land owned by **Neil Carter** – the rest of Willow Farm's holding having been sold long ago? The land houses Neil's outdoor breeding herd of pigs; an organic free-range egg enterprise, run jointly with Betty; and Ambridge View – Susan's dream house which Neil self-built with Mike's help. Confused? We're sure the postman has trouble too.



HAZEL WOOLLEY



Los Angeles? • Born 15.2.56
(Annette Badland)

Hazel, the adopted daughter of **Jack Woolley** and his first wife Valerie, claims to work in the film business, but no-one seems to know exactly what sort of films. She made one of her mercifully rare visits to **Ambridge** in summer 2005 and only left having failed to persuade Jack to sign **Grey Gables** over to her. **Peggy** loves her dearly, of course...



JACK WOOLLEY



The Lodge, Grey Gables • Born 19.7.19
(Arnold Peters)

Jack has clear memories of his humble beginnings in the Birmingham suburb of Stirchley, although sadly due to Alzheimer's disease he is increasingly unable to remember what he had for breakfast. In the 1960s and 70s, Jack built a business empire in and around **Ambridge**, including **Grey Gables** hotel, the **Village Shop** and the *Borchester Echo* newspaper. Even at 83, he was still ready to expand, buying **Jaxx Caff**, to wife **Peggy**'s exasperation. But it was his last acquisition and, with the *Echo*, was one of the first to be put on the market when his condition deteriorated. Jack has an adopted daughter **Hazel** from his first marriage who seldom visits except with an ill-concealed ulterior motive.



PEGGY WOOLLEY



(formerly Archer, née Perkins)

The Lodge, Grey Gables • Born 13.11.24

(June Spencer)

The doughty mother of **Jennifer Aldridge**, **Lilian Bellamy** and **Tony Archer** is originally from London's East End. She came to the village having married **Phil Archer**'s alcoholic elder brother Jack, and for many years she owned and ran **The Bull**. Peggy's pretty conservative in her views. She struggled to accept the presence of **Usha Gupta** in the village, let alone **Lucas Madikane** marrying her granddaughter **Kate**. When **Ambridge** had a woman vicar, Peggy felt forced to worship elsewhere. And her grandson **Adam Macy** being gay wasn't easy to take, either. In 1991 Peggy married her current **Jack**, becoming one of the wealthiest women in the village. Her children and grandchildren have benefited from her generosity, and she has been a staunch support to Jack in his declining years.

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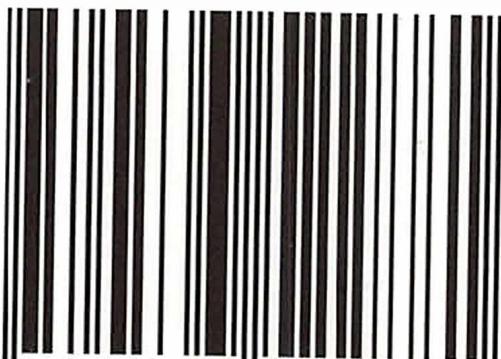
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