

PRESS RELEASE

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Fieldwork – Farming memories from the 20th century

Freddy the pig killer was intent on mischief when he thrust a steel hook through the jaw of a pig and dragged the beast from its sty to be slain.

But the stricken animal's loyal keeper, 17-year-old Brian Wilder, would make sure Freddy paid for his cruelty.

The pair, rival hedge layers in bygone rural Herefordshire, nearly came to blows when young Wilder fetched a bucket of boiling water to scald off his dead pig and slopped it down Freddy's wellie.

"How the scene changed. Freddy went hopping about the yard to get his boot off while brandishing a large knife at me.

"I was off out of that yard, on my bike and off home in split seconds," Mr Wilder recollected as he shared his story with the makers of Fieldwork, a DVD revealing what life was really like on the farm in the forties, fifties and sixties.

Produced by The Rural Media Company, 30 digital stories from farmers and their wives, war time land workers and labourers tell of a lost way of life that was wholesome, romantic and rewarding but also labour intensive and often harsh.

Joan Watkins joined the Women's Land Army in December 1948 and on a farm in Bromyard kept an exhausting routine of milking morning and afternoon and working at seasonal jobs in between.

"Mains electricity had not arrived at the farm. A generator powered the milking machines. On winters evenings we relaxed in the sitting room

in the soft glow of an Aladdin lamp and warmed by the glow of a real fire.

"We went to bed by candle light and sleep came very easily after a hard day's work," she records for the film.

For some the change to modernisation and tractor power took a bit of getting used to.

John Morris from Willersley recalls when his father swapped his horse for his first tractor in 1940.

"It was put to work in a field ploughing. At the end of the day father said he would like to drive it back to the buildings.

"When he wanted to stop it he forgot to use the clutch and started to shout 'whoa, whoa' as he thought he still had a horse."

Poor Mr Morris finally came to a stop when his tractor embedded itself in the wall of his barn.

These and other intriguingly titled tales including; The Calf that Stole the Bull, The Mole Catcher's Secret, The Hop Kiln Accident and The One Armed Smithy, will be aired during the Borderlines Film Festival when Fieldwork is premiered at Borderlines Film Festival, at the Courtyard, Hereford on Saturday, April 4 at 4.30pm.

"Digital stories are the perfect medium to capture real voices and memories – lives that could disappear in the mists of time and be lost forever." Says Jane Jackson of The Rural Media Company, "Fieldwork is our third DVD in a series of high profile digital story collections." Travellers Remember in 2006 featured Gypsy and Traveller families' reminiscences of life on the road in the 1960's and 70's and Migrant Stories in 2007 gave voice to some of the seasonal and migrant workers in Herefordshire in 2007.

An informative booklet to accompany the Fieldwork DVD, well illustrated with archive photographs, has been produced to offer all ages an enjoyable and accessible approach to the county's agricultural history. The DVD is available to buy for £10 from The Rural Media Company. Contact Natalie Preece on 01432 344039 or at nataliep@ruralmedia.co.uk

Release ends

Note to Editors

- **Partners Bromyard and Eardisley History Societies** were instrumental in recruiting story tellers and sourcing archive photographs.
- The **Fieldwork** project was funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund and Herefordshire Council.
- **The Rural Media Company** is a Charity and company limited by guarantee and is supported by ScreenWM, Elmley Foundation and Herefordshire Council.
- www.ruralmedia.co.uk