

The Heart of the Project

Our main concern, when applying for the lottery grant, was how we could best preserve and store not only the photographs we had been given or loaned, but also, and much more important, the information we have concerning them. This leads us to the heart of the project, which is the searchable database. It allows us to link the photos with the history of the people, places and events shown in them.

Searching the on-line database can be done in several ways, including inputting a simple photo ID (if known); word search; use of pre-selected keywords; key-words combined with picture titles; and an advanced word search of all text associated with the image as well as date-limiting the search period. The system also allows map-based searching, so clicking on the displayed map of Eydon lists the photos taken at that location.

Searches result in a list of images in batches of four. These show the thumbnail image, its title, and the first few lines of text. Clicking on the thumbnail brings up the full sized image and all associated text. By clicking on the full sized image it is possible to access a magnified part, enabling details to be viewed more easily. Selection of a person's head produces not just the magnified image of it, but also a potted biography of the person, if known. Furthermore, images which are associated are linked, which enables all relevant information to be accessed easily.

Our aim is not just to record what is shown but, by linking them to other photos, to trace as much as possible of their stories, thus providing as comprehensive a database as possible.

For example, we have a photo taken in Eydon in 1905, showing villagers cleaning up after the Great Fire [Fig 1].

We now know who all the people in the photo were, what happened to them and their families and, in many cases, have links to their work and interests. So, in the background is Bill Bull, a waggoner with his cart, who was also a hand-bell ringer, and we now have a picture of Herbert, his son, who died in the Great War. On the right is the little girl who preserved the photo, and we have her picture, 70 years later, at the Eydon WI Golden Centenary Celebrations [Fig 4]. Her grandmother is in the centre of the 1905 picture and we have photographs taken after the fire of the remains of the laundry she ran [Fig 5]. We also have pictures of her grandmother's mother and siblings [Figs 2 & 3].