

June/July 2021



Blagdon Life and Times

The Newsletter from Blagdon Local History Society



Hooray! Back and at last.....

Spring has sprung and we are looking forward to a return to 'freedom'. The confines of the pandemic have had some very strange effects on us and our society.

But let us not think on that for now. We can leave that for future historians to dwell on. This is the time of the year that Blagdon becomes famous. Why? In 2019 it was estimated that there were something like 2.9million anglers i.e. fishermen and women in this country, and I bet you a large percentage of the really serious fishermen amongst them had heard of Blagdon Lake. To many people who live in Blagdon the Lake is merely the rather pleasant backdrop to village life. But to others and to countless visitors over last 120 years, the Lake is why they are here. It has often been described as the best fishing lake in the country, and if the fishing is as good as the tales that came with the lake and are about the lake, like many fisherman's tales, they are very good indeed. Therefore, herein lies a taster to Jacky Kerly's talk later in July - details inside.

Also inside are the results of the Christmas competition (don't hold your collective breath!) and it is a lesson about some aspects of the village that we have lost.

And talking about being lost, what happened to the 'lost archeological society'? **The**

CHarterhouse **E**nviron's **R**esearch **T**eam, or **CHERT** as they were fondly known. This

intrepid brigade was last seen digging deep holes on Mendip. The mystery is solved.....

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Compiled by Sheila Johnson, Jacky Kerly and other members of the Blagdon Local History Society. Edited by Peter May. With source material from the Western Daily Press, the Wells Journal, Addicott's Archive, the John Gallup Collection, Joan Lyons and the BLHS Archive.

More articles and news about events, also more pictures can be found on the society website: <https://www.blagdonlhs.com/> or on the Facebook Group page:

Blagdon Local History Society - message Peter May to ask for an invitation to join.

Tales of Blagdon Lake

Blagdon's most famous feature is naturally its lake, but 'natural' it certainly is not. It is in fact a reservoir created in the 1890s by the construction of a dam across the little river, the Yeo.

Start of construction in 1891 saw the beginning of a considerable amount of disruption and change in the village, with a huge influx of workers and navvies boosting a tiny rural population. Along with the lake there was to be a railway, to bring in the coal for the pumping station that would pump the water in a huge oval shaped pipe to the edge of Bristol. Thus the isolated rural community of Blagdon was also opened up to the great developments of the Victorian age. A perfect recipe for drama.....



Yeo Reservoir (Blagdon Lake) Timeline

1888/89: Bristol Water bill for construction of Yeo Reservoir

1891: Work started on construction of the reservoir

1899: Grand ceremony, directors closed the outlet valves and the lake began to fill.

1903: Donald Carr, Blagdon Lake's first Ranger, builds hatcheries at Ubley Mill

1903: Lake reaches capacity

1904: Fishing started. A fishing hut was available with dining and dressing rooms.

1927: New commodious fishing hut in the Elizabethan style was opened.

1938: Donald Carr retires after 35 years.

1938: Mrs Annie Pearce retired as caterer after 28 years. service

(Above) A view of the dam shortly after 'New Road' was constructed. This picture by Charlie Jones from the Gallop collection was probably taken back in the mid 1920s. The Lake seems much less full than it has been of late, probably because nowadays it is not so essential to Bristol's water supply as it was. Then, apart from a few wells and springs, it was the only water that Bristol 'had on tap'.

BLAGDON LAKE

by Steve Jaggard

Few who have seen Blagdon Lake from the high ground at sunrise or sunset can fail to agree that it is indeed one of those rare instances where man has outstripped nature herself and given to the Mendips an added glory.

It comes as something of a surprise to most people when they learn that Blagdon village does not get its water from the Lake. (The village is supplied, at the time of writing, from a source near Charterhouse.) The 1,860 million gallons that the Lake holds when it is full are pumped to the reservoirs and treatment works at Barrow Gurney to supply large parts of Bristol.

Construction of the Lake, formerly known as Yeo Reservoir, began in 1891. A long trench was dug, largely by hand, on the line of the dam across the valley floor. This trench was to

be filled with concrete to provide a waterproof seal and prevent water leaking under the dam. The original design estimated that the trench would need to be 39ft. deep. However, it was found necessary to excavate to a depth of 175 ft. before an impervious foundation was secured. This made the foundation trench one of the deepest in England for many years.

The dam was constructed on this foundation and has earth embankments and a solid clay core which makes it watertight. The whole structure is 1,750 feet long, 280 feet wide and 45 feet high quite a project for construction by hand.

At a grand ceremony in 1899 the Directors of the Bristol Waterworks Company closed the outlet valves and the Lake began to fill. It first reached full mark (the deepest point is 42 feet) in January 1903 forming a lake over 1.5 miles long and a mile at its widest point and larger in extent than the combined acreage of Durdham and Clifton Downs . The aspect of the countryside was altered beyond recognition; barns and bridges were submerged and what had formerly been a Somerset patchwork quilt of hedgerows, was sunk under an inland sea. Does anyone know anything about the valley before the Lake was formed?



The Rickford Spring is the one that can be seen cascading over the waterfall at Rickford and it runs by gravity into the Lake. (see left). The main spring or 'rising' comes from the other side of the road. [This is another image from the Charlie Jones collection. This would probably have

been taken in the mid 1920s.- Ed.]

The main source for the Lake is the catchment area of the River Yeo. This river runs into the Lake at the Ubley end.

The Bristol Waterworks Company are under statutory obligation to provide ample compensation water in the Yeo Valley down- stream of the dam.

Pumping to Barrow started in December 1904 using four steam driven Beam Engines which were installed in the Pumping Station below the dam. These engines were arranged in pairs in the two wings of the Engine House and could each pump 2.6 million gallons of water a day using 44 tons of coal in the process.

Nine men were required with two engines running: one engine driver for each of three shifts, one dayman, one stoker for each of three shifts, and one coal trimmer for each of two shifts from 6.00 a.m. to 10.00 p.m.

In 1948 the engines in the North Wing were replaced with electric pumps of much greater capacity and the station last ran "in steam" in 1953.

The two Beam Engines in the South Wing, dated 1902, have been retained and restored for preservation where they stand. They are good examples of the latest type of large beam engine to be developed and apart from specimens in the Bristol City museum they are the only Beam Engines surviving in the region.

The large ornate chimney, which many villagers must remember, stood between the two wings of the Engine House and has now been truncated by 50 feet. The boiler room was at the rear and was served with coal for many years by the Wrington Vale Light Railway.

Blagdon Lake offers some of the finest trout fishing in the country. With a limestone water of only 14 ft. average depth the lake is rich in flora and fauna and produces big brown and rainbow trout; there are no coarse fish. Since the opening of the fishing in 1904 the heaviest fish recorded is a brown trout of 10 lb 4 oz in 1926 and a rainbow of 8 lb 8 oz in 1924. In 1976 a record 16,510 fish were caught. Last season (1978) 12,083 were caught at an average weight of 1 lb 15 oz., 173 were over 4 lb. The heaviest brown trout was 5 lb 2 oz and the heaviest rainbow trout was 7 lb 9 oz. I would be very pleased to hear from anyone who knows what it was like working in the Pumping Station, or who knows anything about the building of the dam or Pumping Station, or from anyone who has any photographs.

By Steve Jaggard printed in the Blagdon Parish Magazine April 1979

Steve Jaggard was Telecommunications Manager for BWW. He's in David Veater's film of the Pumping Station from 1985. He died before his time in 1996.

On **July 14th Jacky Kerly** will be talking to the Blagdon Local History Society on:
The creation of Blagdon Lake: Unimagined changes for the village when the Bristol Water Company embarked on the building of a dam, flooding a valley to create a reservoir and subsequently a world famous fishery.

Keep a lookout for notices on Nextdoor, Facebook or the BLHS website for further information.



(Left)
Another picture from the Charlie Jones collection. The Lake, Inspection House and the huts that the navvies and workers lived in during the lake construction. This image was probably taken during the mid-1920s.

"100 years or so ago..."

Blagdon Lake and who and what it brought to the village by Sheila Johnson

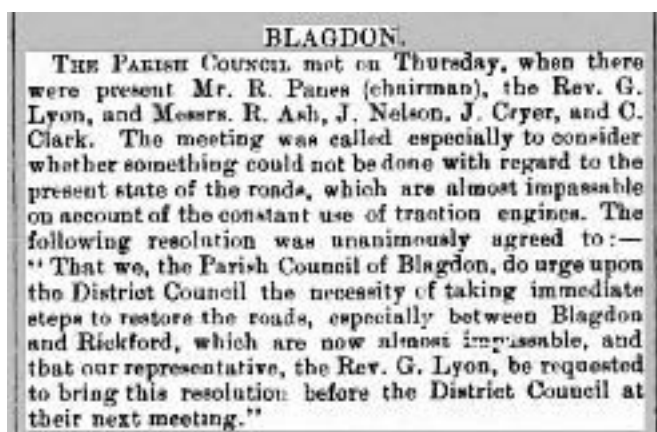
100 or so years ago ...

It's hard to imagine the state of the village between 1890 and 1910.

The village was full of strangers, men who had come to work on the construction of the reservoir and the Wrington Vale Light railway and on building works for the Coombe Lodge estate.

Some of these men were accompanied by their families and the number of children attending the village school had risen to 184 pupils by 1898.

Traction engines hauling materials from Sandford Station churned up the roads resulting in the publishing of several letters of complaint in the local press.



(Above) Wells Journal : 2nd December 1897

Drunken navvies disturbed the peace and appeared before magistrates in the local petty sessions.

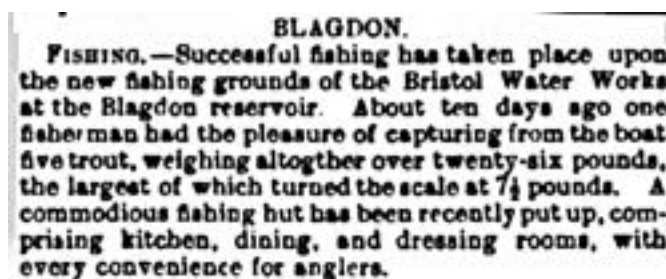
William Henry Wills, the first and last Lord Winterstoke, bought Coombe Lodge with about 300 acres in 1880 and over the next 30 years he proceeded to buy more land and property increasing the size of his estate. He had a vision to create a 'model' village and was aided in this venture by his cousin architect Frank Wills. Clennon Cottages, High Street Cottages, Orchard Cottages, The Rent House and the Village Club were all built by William Henry Wills, changing the face of the High Street.

All this construction resulted in an increase in heavy transport - hauling stone, gravel

and cement, and repairing roads.

The building of the pumping station, 1899-1905, brought skilled bricklayers (9d per hour), brick carriers, soft stone sawyers (6d per hour) and scaffolders to the village. In 1908/9 the nave of St Andrew's Church was demolished and rebuilt, again funded by Lord Winterstoke.

In the midst of this mayhem, the valley was transformed by the new reservoir - not only was it beautiful to behold but it was also open for fishing. The lake brought employment and prosperity to the village - fishermen rented rooms, visitors came to see the lake and the impressive engineering of the Pumping Station, and local shops and inns flourished.



(Above) Weston Mercury: 27th August 1904

When Bristol Waterworks Co constructed the reservoir there was no thought of stocking it with trout. The idea came from Robert Neville Grenville (1848 - 1936), of Butleigh Court, Glastonbury. A man of extraordinary energy and talent, he built a steam car which is now in National Motor Museum at Beaulieu. He owned a fleet of steam rollers which were used all over Somerset laying the county's roads. He was keenly interested in agriculture and from 1893 to 1904 he carried out cider experiments which led to the formation of the Cider Institute at Long Ashton. His proposals that Blagdon reservoir should be stocked with trout from his hatchery and made to yield revenue, was at first scorned, but later accepted. Record catches were reported and today trout fishing at Blagdon and Chew Valley is world famous

The accommodation question is a difficult one for those who visit Blagdon for the first time, as there is no hotel available. Thanks to Mr Alexander [Secretary and General Manager, BWW], I found exceedingly comfortable quarters in the house of Mr Jones [Hillside in Station Road], the guard who watches over the destinies of the light railway which conveys passengers from Yatton, on the Great Western Railway main line (near Weston super Mare) to the Blagdon Station, which is almost within a salmon cast of the reservoir. Mr Alexander also told me of a Mr Simpkin who has rooms to let, and a brother angler was loud in his praise of Butcombe Farm. There is also a small inn. On the whole there should be no difficulty about getting rooms, but it is advisable to write to Mr Donald Carr, the head keeper, both on the subject and as to the time the boat and its attendant are to be ready. Carr is a host in himself, and emphatically the right man in the right place. His experience extends to the Tay, Caithness, Donegal, and elsewhere, and covers hatchery management. The company are certainly fortunate in having obtained his services. (The Field, 2nd September 1905)

Donald Carr was the first Chief Ranger of Blagdon Lake, a position he held for 35 years. He was the founder of the famous trout hatcheries at Ubley. Robert Neville Grenville supplied him with yearling trout at the outset and then Donald introduced rainbow and brown trout to Blagdon lake. Over the years he stocked many lakes and rivers all over the world with ova and fry from the Ubley hatcheries. Prior to his long service in Blagdon he was engaged on the famous Glenveigh Castle estates in Ireland and it was there he built the first concrete hatchery for breeding fish in the United Kingdom – previously they had been made out of wood.

When he first came to Blagdon the grounds of Ubley Mill were almost a wilderness – hard to believe some 35 years later when walking round the breeding ponds and gardens that adjoined his home. These beautiful grounds with their ornamental trees, lawns and ponds, were all laid out by Donald Carr who also built the hatcheries himself. Many are the famous people, from members of the nobility to stage stars, who had enjoyed their sport because of the knowledge and courtesy of Donald Carr. He was supported by popular gillies his son Samuel Carr, Jim and Laurie Williamson, Jim Murdoch and Angus McClaughlan. Jim Murdoch who retired c1968 was the last of the gillies to be employed by Bristol Waterworks.

What Happened at Blagdon.

It was in 1905 that the movement for reservoir fishing received a powerful influence by the story of what was happening at Blagdon. This natural reservoir, in the heart of Somerset, owned by the Bristol water authorities, suddenly leaped into fame not only as providing a new avenue for sport, but as a potential source of revenue to its owners. Although the charges were high, the demand for tickets was so great that anglers had often to wait a month before their turn came round for a single day. And the fishing was phenomenal. Trout up to 8lb. and even 9lb. each were being caught. Now, thanks to the publicity given to the Blagdon experiment and also to the demands of anglers themselves, there are over sixty municipal or urban authorities who provide angling for their ratepayers.

(Above) Westminster Gazette 17 July 1914

Donald Carr retired May 1938



Some 70-80 anglers from all over the country attended his retirement ceremony which was held on May 1st, the opening day of the season, on the grassy banks of the lake. He was presented with a gold hunter watch and a cheque for over £80. Col Frank Howard expressed appreciation of Mr Carr's services and the esteem in which he was held by all. Col Howard then read a number of complimentary messages and telegrams one of which was from Will Fyffe the well-known Scottish comedian who was a regular visitor to Blagdon. Mr Carr was succeeded by his son

Samuel Sanderson Carr who was given a hearty welcome. Sadly, Samuel died some two years later after a short illness- he had served overseas with the Somersets during WW1 and had been badly gassed. He was succeeded by Angus McLaughlin who first came to work for Donald Carr as a gillie* in 1908.

Gillie*: "A Gaelic word (properly gille) for a boy or lad, manservant or attendant, especially one who attends a sportsman fishing or hunting." - Brewers Dictionary of Phrase and Fable.

When it was decided that fishing on Blagdon Lake may make financial good sense, in order to attract the right class of sports person, it was deemed essential that these sports persons should be guided as to the correct decorum and procedures in the niceties of trout fishing - a sport not without its nuances. It was therefore considered that no expense be spared in getting the right calibre of guide or 'gillie'. These were naturally sought after in the Highlands of Scotland where the salmon and trout fishing expertise was of world renown. The eventual team that was to loyally support Donald Carr for many years were a bunch of highly skilled and knowledgeable young men with a mischevious sense of humour and a huge capacity for alcohol. Many of their adventures and capers became legendary. John Lyons recounts one such story:-

(Below) Left is Bil Lyons, Jim and Laurie in Garston Lane **A fishy story from John Lyons**



A couple of members of the Crazy Gang were staying at the Seymour Arms and asked Hettie or Frank Pope to arrange gillies for them. The story is that Laurie and Jim came up to meet them and they started on the whisky and were still drinking and chatting when the sun started to appear so Jim and Laurie said we need to go to the lake and be ready to start fishing as the sun rises. They drove them with their gear around



The Crazy Gang was a group of British entertainers, formed in the early 1930s. The members were: Bud Flanagan, Chesney Allen, Jimmy Nervo, Teddy Knox, Charlie Naughton and Jimmy Gold and sometimes 'Monsewer' Eddie Gray.

Essentially the gang comprised three double acts; Flanagan and Allen, Naughton and Gold, and Nervo and Knox (with some input from Gray). They had all had entertainment success before the Crazy Gang, but not of the same magnitude. It was natural for them to get together as they shared a similar style of comedy and worked on the same bills at theatres. The group achieved considerable domestic popularity and were a favourite of the Royal Family, especially King George VI.



Will Fyffe, CBE (above right) (16 February 1885 – 14 December 1947) was a music hall and performing artist from Scotland, a star

of the 1930s and 1940s, on stage and screen. He travelled extensively throughout Scotland and the rest of the UK, playing the numerous music halls of the time, where he performed his sketches and sang his songs in his own inimitable style. During the 1930s, he was one of the highest paid musical hall artistes in Britain.

In addition, Fyffe appeared in 23 major films of the era (American and British), sometimes starring, and recorded over 30 songs, delivered with his own unique style. His singer-songwriter skills are still well-known today, particularly his own composition, "I Belong To Glasgow".

the village and back to The Mead. It was still quite dark so they set them up on The Mead bank ready to cast out into the "lake". As the sun rose they were casting out over the Mead but as they must still have been fairly inebriated it was a little while before they realised!!

(Left) Members of The Crazy Gang with Mr and Mrs Stokes at the Live and Let Live

(Below) Jim Murdoch outside Walnut Tree House. There was a shed near the Fishing Lodge where fish could be wrapped in rush material so they could be posted. Jim is carrying two fish ready wrapped for posting. Jim and Laurie Williamson lodged with Will and Florence Lyons in Walnut Tree House when they first came to Blagdon.



And there's more.....

Gratuities big and small ... by Christopher Ogborne

Christopher lived in Blagdon some years ago and wrote a book about fishing simply called 'Blagdon', published in 1987.

For much of the time Blagdon belonged to the gillies. It was their domain and stories abound concerning these colourful characters. They took real pride in their work, being deferential but without any degree of subservience. They were held in high esteem by their customers – gratuities were an accepted part of the day, with typical gratitude being shown in the form of a ten shilling note. One pound was generous – referred to by Laurie Williamson as a 'thick un' – and the more senior gillies knew who to look out for. But surely nothing will ever come close again to the gift of a motor car, bestowed on Donald Carr by a grateful Sir William Morris, in thanks for his service over many years.

The Obituary as it appeared in the Wells Journal of Friday 18th September 1936 of..... **DEATH OF MR. ROBERT NEVILLE GRENVILLE. SURVIVES WIFE BY ONLY A MONTH.**



"Mr. Robert Neville Grenville, Burleigh, near Glastonbury, died at his residence Butleigh Court, on Sunday 12th September 1936. Born in 1856, Mr. Neville Grenville was educated at Eton and Magdalene College, Cambridge, and headed the list of first applied science degrees Cambridge in 1803. A clever engineer, he was apprenticed to Eastor, Amos and Anderson, London, and did much

work ashore and afloat.

Mr. Neville Grenville was High Sheriff of Somerset 1906, and had been a county alderman since the inception of the Somerset County Council. He was chairman of the Somerset Catchment Board, and had the unique distinction of having held the office of chairman to the Upper Brue Drainage Board since that body was constituted by special Act of Parliament 59 years ago last November. He was an original commissioner of the Somerset Drainage Act, and chairman for many years.

For 14 years Mr. Neville Grenville served in the West Somerset Yeomanry and retired in 1894 with the rank of captain."

CIDER ENTHUSIAST.

"He was keenly interested in agriculture, and from 1803 to 1904 he carried out cider experiments, which led to the formation of the Cider Institute at Long Ashton. It was his cider maker Mr. Frank Talbot, who carried out his instructions in those experiments who dropped dead at the graveside of Mrs Neville Grenville (wife of 'the Squire', as he was widely known) in August. At that time the Squire was indisposed, and it is possible that such tragic incident has been on his mind.

The Squire possessed a wonderful memory and could recall the minutest details of concerns in which he was interested. He was formerly on the council of the Royal Agricultural Society and the Bath and West Society."

BLAGDON LAKE.

For many years he was breeder of trout and stocked Blagdon reservoir with common and rainbow trout.

A staunch Conservative, he was president of the Wells Divisional Association at the time of his death.

In spite of his age, the Squire retained full possession of his faculties until the end.

Some years ago Mr. Neville Grenville presented the Tribunal House, Glastonbury, one of the oldest buildings in the town, to the nation, and shortly before his death offered the famous Glastonbury Tor and slopes to the National Trust. An appeal has recently been launched by the Lord-Lieutenant of the County (Lord Bath) and the Mayor of Glastonbury for funds for the purchase of this historic spot.

Butleigh Court, his pleasantly situated estate, includes most of the village, and the mansion is somewhat unusual, as no two chimneys are of the same design."

The above obituary only skims the surface of the achievements of this very privileged but astounding individual. One thing he was also partly responsible for was a 'Steam carriage', to which he gave his name. For more information start at <https://beastrabban.wordpress.com/2017/05/26/bristols-real-steampunk-car-the-1875-grenville-steam-carriage/>.

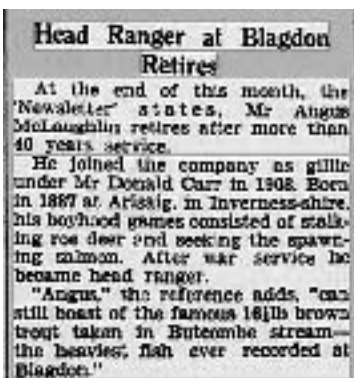
The image right is of R.N. Grenville in the steam carriage with his family and servants outside Butleigh Court c. 1895.



The car consumed five gallons of water and 6 pounds of coal per mile, and on the flat could reach the astonishing speed of just under 20 miles an hour. It required three people to drive it: a fireman, driver and brakeman. the latter being a legal requirement. It was eventually acquired by Bristol City Museum after spending four years as a stationary engine driving a cider press at Butleigh Court. It is now in the National Motor Museum

Flying from Croydon Aerodrome in a De Haviland Moth machine, Captain H H Balfour and Mr De Pass, of the Batchelors' Club, London, flew to Blagdon Lake and made a successful landing at Holt Farm, Blagdon, on the shores of the lake. This is the first time in its history that Blagdon has been visited by fishermen arriving by aeroplane. (Central Somerset Gazette 22nd June 1928)

By the way - HH Balfour was Under-Secretary for Air during WW2



(Left) The notice in The Western Daily Press on 18th October 1950 for the retirement of Angus McLaughlin as Chief Ranger at Blagdon Lake. He had succeeded Mr Donald Carr's son Samuel after he had died two years after his father retired. The legendary 16lb 4oz brown trout he caught in as Butcombe stream was used for spawning and thus boosting stocks for the lake and then released back into the lake, but she was never caught again. **For more fishy tales:** <https://blagdonlake.files.wordpress.com/2010/04/lookingback.pdf>

Memories of the Inspection House

by
Kathy Day

My two brothers and I were certainly privileged as children to be brought up in the Inspection House but I'm sure we didn't appreciate it at the time.



My father had come down from Scotland where he had worked on the Salmon fishing in Newburgh, Fife. Bristol Waterworks wanted all Scottish Gillies for Blagdon lake. After a few years he married my mother and they made their home at Aldwick Cottages.

Theodore Matthews and family were caretakers at the Inspection House and they were due to retire. Mr W D Alexander, the then Chairman and Director of BWW, asked my mother and father if they would consider taking over. They were allowed to live there rent free which was a big consideration in those days, round about 1936/37. My elder brother (James W or Bill) was five and I was three years old when we moved – my younger brother George was born at the Inspection House in 1937.

The AGM of BWW was held there once a year and my mother had to cook lunch for them. The directors and their families were allowed to spend long weekends there and again my mother was in charge of feeding them etc. Mr Alexander often came to stay together with his housekeeper and their maid Maud.

During the war office workers were allowed short breaks to get away from the bombing in Bristol and mum and dad struck up some long friendships with quite a few of them.

We also had soldiers billeted there during the war, quite a big encampment was built around the big fir tree which stood in the middle of the driveway, opposite what was then the front door. I always remember their cook was nicknamed Dixie Dean (very apt).

We had free run of the gardens and grounds when we were young, apart from times when there were guests staying, when we were forbidden to go anywhere near the boardroom windows!!! There was a small pond at the bottom of the garden where we used to fish for tadpoles etc.

Dad cultivated a large kitchen garden with apple, plum trees etc and mum kept the flower garden tidy. Our living accommodation was two sitting rooms, three bedrooms and a kitchen with larder and a downstairs toilet. The other side of the house consisted of the boardroom, a cloakroom with downstairs toilet, three bedrooms and a bathroom and upstairs toilet

In later years when Mr Melvin was General Manager, his wife thought it was terrible there

was no bathroom on our side of the house, so what was the coal cellar was all cleaned up and we were given the luxury of our own bathroom.

Many readers will remember the late Monica Murdoch with great affection - Bill Murdoch married Monica Monk in 1955.



(Left) A 1920s view of the Inspection House from the Charlie Jones collection. The climbing plants have quickly taken hold, giving it an impression of Gothic antiquity.

Mrs Annie Pearce (1872 - 1954)

Mrs Annie Pearce and family lived in what is now Wren Cottage in Street End Lane. The house has had several names including Glen Cottage, The Gardens, and in general terms The Rocks. She was married to Bill Pearce, nicknamed Jumbo because of his size, who had come to the village to work on the construction of the reservoir as a steam crane driver. In 1901 they lived in one of the temporary navvies huts down by the lake with their two young children. Unfortunately he was invalided at around 42 years of age, so his wife Annie had to go out to work. The opportunity came along to take charge of catering at the Fishing Hut/Lodge and Annie, helped by her daughter Elsie, was to work there for 28 years.

(Right) The new Fishing Lodge, April 30th 1927

"The old fishing hut had a corrugated metal roof and it made a terrible din when it rained ... The new hut was first thatched with heather but it let the water in and had to be replaced."
(Joan Lyons)





(Above) Mrs Annie Pearce

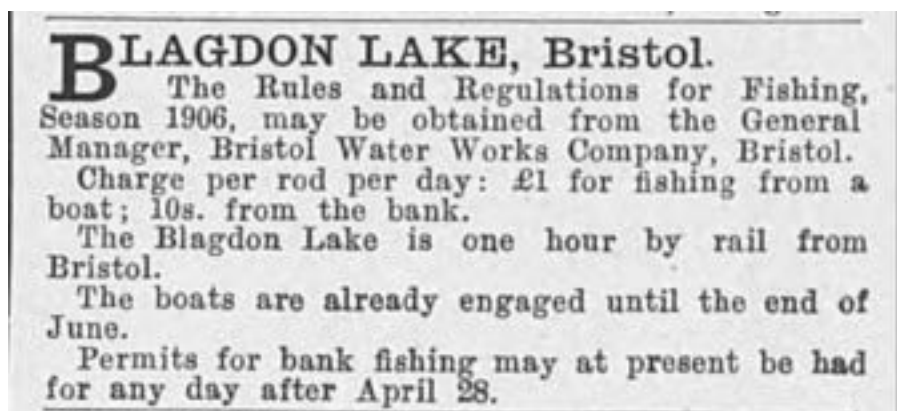
The Crazy Gang and Will Fyffe were regular visitors, if they performed in local theatres they would come out to Blagdon during the day to relax. They used to perform on the grass in the front of the fishing hut. After a good day's fishing the mantelpiece in the lodge was covered with bottles of gin and whisky.

Mrs Pearce did not leave the lodge until the last boat had returned, in case they wanted tea. Annie retired in 1938, aged 66 and her daughter Elsie took over until she was 58, after which catering ceased.

They walked from Street End Lane, carrying everything they needed for the day, cakes were baked and lunches were cooked at home as there were no proper cooking facilities in the Fishing Lodge. Milk was collected from Gallop's Yew Tree Farm (behind the Fire Station), and water from the Inspection House. Cake and bread and butter cost 6d and cake, bread and butter and two eggs cost 9d. Annie's weekly wage was 9s - 7d.



(Above) Mrs Pearce, Fanny Harris, Sam Carr (son of Donald Carr), Elsie Pearce (Annie's daughter) and Laurie Williamson (gillie)



(Left) Illustrated Sporting News 3 March 1906. The popularity is evident from the fully booked boats until the end of June and the season has not even started.

In Brief: A few memories of George Tricks

Shades of "Dad's Army"

American troops were in Blagdon during the war. The Green Howards were first at Norbury College and then at Mendip Bungalow.

Two land mines fell at Holt Farm.

The Home Guard met in Court Lodge.

Mr. Light the postmaster commanded the Home Guard because he had a telephone.

George's father was of higher service rank but had to be sergeant.

Mr. Lye, whose head was totally bald would not wear a forage cap, and at inspection wore his old flat cap.

The lake was covered with boats and rafts all tethered together with wire to prevent landings by the enemy.

Mr Tripp, who lived in 'The Shrubbery' The Old Parsonage, once nicked his hand when a Sten gun went off by accident. He later applied for a wound stripe.
George's mother ran a Camouflage factory in the basement of the Court, knotting strips of cloth into coarse netting.

George and his father took the pony and trap over Mendip and found the roads closed off from Paywell Farm to the Miners' Arms. They had a pass and could go through. There were lorries etc. all waiting to go to D-Day.

Answers and Results of the Christmas Competition

Hhhmmm! The results of the Christmas Competition were.....(pause for effect).....

Drum rolls and tense plink plonky soundtrack.....

Nobody won! Because nobody entered. In fact, if someone had just entered just one right answer they might have won the glittering star prize. But that's all gone now - hard luck. But I'll tell you the answers because I bet you are absolutely 'chafing at the bit' to find out. They are interesting, because even though many new residents may imagine Blagdon to be preserved in aspic since time immemorial, they do go to show how much Blagdon has changed a lot even within living memory. Take for instance garages. We had almost as many garages in Blagdon as Pubs at any one time. At least four of each and that does not include the Club as a pub (because it wasn't meant to be). More will be divulged as time goes on...

Let us first remind ourselves of what the task of the Competition was. It was simply to point out the present day whereabouts of various Blagdon shops, stores and retail outlets mentioned in an article that appeared in The Wells Journal on 2nd December 1925:



CHRISTMAS FARE.
That our local tradesmen are alert and up-to-date is easily proven by the well-stocked shops and windows of Christmas goods that are now so alluringly and gaily dressed with everything that is desirable for the festive season. Mr. J. Nelson has a fine display of Christmas fruits, etc., and presents of all sorts for all ages. Mr. R. Wigley has his commodious shop crammed with prime joints, and he is again well to the front in his display of prize beasts. The windows of Messrs. C. Redwood and Son are a centre of attraction for young and old alike. Mrs. F. Cryer has a very charming and extensive display of seasonable delights and goodies for all comers. Mrs. J. Lyons (Rhodgate Stores) is again up to her high standard with a huge stock of Christmas cards, sweets, boots, wearing apparel, etc. Miss Durbins (East Town) has a large array of good and seasonable things and Mr. James Best (East Town) is well-stocked with a choice selection of fruits, fish, poultry, etc. For Motorists, cyclists, etc., there are huge stocks of seasonable gifts displayed in the garage windows of Messrs. Harris Bros, Mr. J. Roberts, Bath Road, and Mr. Oliver Lyons, Street End. All the local hoteleries have ample stocks of good cheer that add to the creature comforts of mankind, and the Blagdon Band under Mr. W. Harvey is now adding to the charms of the season with a choice selection of carols and festive music.

(Left) **The challenge in question.**

The answers in summary:

1. Mr J. Nelson was where "Body and Soul" is now, but has been the Post Office.
2. Mr R. Wigley is Blagdon Butchers now.
3. Messrs. C. Redwood and Son were the owners of what is now the lower part of the Village Stores.
4. Mrs F. Cryer was Sovereign Cottage on the High Street.
5. Mrs Lyons, Rhodg[y]ate Stores. This is Lantern Cottage on Rhodyate.
6. 'Miss Durbins' (Durbans) is now Cherry Tree in Church Street.
7. Mr James Best had two premises on Church Street. This one was where The Upper Barton is now.
8. Messrs Harris Bros Garage was in front where Highfield House is now.
9. Mr J. Roberts Garage was where the Terrace is now along from the Seymours.
10. Mr Oliver Lyons, Street End. They are still there at the old coach station/garage.

Tall Tales of some of the Lost shops of Blagdon



Nelsons in Blagdon High Street was the Post Office (left). That was in the back. But also part of it was a drapery, on the right as you went in, with clothes on rails and boots hanging from the ceiling. The left wall was lined with deep drawers, which contained dry grocery goods including varieties of teas. The Nelsons also sold hams, bacon and pork from their own homegrown pigs. Wigley's the butchers that is in the background.

You may recognise this image of the shop in the twenties from the Christmas issue. Somehow it seems to express a lively and decadent lifestyle that was probably a long way from reality for most residents of Blagdon at the time, with most people's vocations being well and truly harnessed to land and the subsistence it provided.

In these times there were no pensions and little welfare apart from the work house. 'To make ends meet' at the time of life we would consider as retirement, many people, especially widows, invested their paltry savings in setting up a shop. They might open their house to the public, selling anything that they or their friends and family might make or grow. Or even sell beer or more especially, local cider. For some time at least, the latter option did seem to be a default form of endeavour, since cider was cheap and plentiful in Somerset and... it was nice to have a bit of company in the evenings.

This is not to say that Nelsons was founded on such principles of desperation. But it goes to explain why Blagdon, even though it had quite substantial and successful shops in the High Street, like most other villages most villages were littered with other little shops.

Soon the financial world was to be rocked to its economic core by the Great Recession and we really do not know what effect that was to have on the people of Blagdon.

Nelson's shop was started by George Panes as a grocers and drapers. His son Benjamin took it over in 1855 and took on the post office in 1878. Benjamin Panes retired in 1896 to West End House it was let to the Nelsons. John Nelson retired in 1932 'after 40 years service' and Mr and Mrs Francis Light took over.

The shop stayed in the ownership of the Panes family until 1922 when Benjamin Pane's daughter sold it.

Pete Ryley came to Blagdon at the end of WW2 to tell Frances Light that his good friend who was her fiancé had been killed in the war – he stayed and married Frances ...



Mr R. Wigley, now known as Blagdon Butchers. (Right) With its slaughter house round the back, this is how the shop appeared in 1977. Very little changed from how it would have been when it was first built in 1901 when the Ball family ran it. In 1923 the Balls emigrated to Australia. ... Bill Lyons worked with Reg Wigley for a number of years and then he had his own business in Ubley. Bill's son Roy worked for Reg Wigley. He said:

"After Reg Wigley's near fatal motor bike accident my father

worked alongside Ellen Wigley, his wife. Eventually dad bought Mrs Wigley out in 1954, when we moved from Laburnham House to the house adjoining the shop which Sir David Wills has now put back into a dwelling for rental." This property has been in its time an Estate Agents, an Auditors, Gun Shop, Paper Shop and finally Cobblers Collectables. John retired in September 2013.



Redwood Supply Stores.

(Left) Messrs C. Redwood and sons. A general store on the left with drapers and fabric supplies on the right. This had just recently before been owned by Wilfred Taylor. In 1945 after the Redwoods the local bakers the Coles bought it and managed it right up to 1972.

The business was originally started by Albert S Taylor c. 1870 and later run by his sons Allan and then Wilfred Taylor - Wilfred emigrated to Canada in 1910.

Mrs F. Cryer - Sovereign Cottage.

At the top of the High Street on the right and set back from the road, this was the little shop that had been run for years by **Mary Ann Filer**. Early one morning in 1923 the house caught fire. Buckets of water were thrown on the flames to no avail....



Memories of Rosemary Hodges – History forum c1979 –

RH = Rosemary Hodges, **JG** = John Gallop, **JC** = John Chamberlain

R.H. : [Sovereign cottage] Shop owned by Mrs Frank Cryer. My great aunt Mary Ann Filer She never married, she lived until she was 92, not always in Blagdon. She took on the shop from her parents William and Mary Filer. She kept the shop and everyone thought she was poor. Young lads used to gather there in the evenings. It was quite an old house with a big wooden beam in the chimney. She wasn't poor, she was a very mean old lady. The money she inherited from her father was supposed to be distributed to her nephews and nieces but she never gave it to them. Nobody could make her do it. She hid the money and the money she took in the shop. The money was distributed all over the house, some up the chimney, on a shelf up there.

The beam over the fireplace caught fire. Money was hidden all over the house. A lot of the money was paper and it was burnt, some coins were salvaged. One of the first on the scene was John Roberts (from the garage), he came with his young apprentice Sidney Kingcott. Mary Ann was very severely burned and for about 6 months stayed at Dipland with Rosemary's mother. She never went back to the village again. She recovered with good nursing and a good doctor and went to live over Radstock way with some relatives. They found money everywhere, nobody ever knew how much there was – I would have been rich!!

J.C.: Black money was circulating for months afterwards. I have some blackened half crowns pieces given to him by my mother. Black coins which came out of Filer's shop.

R.H.: They found money everywhere. My mother said they thought she would die, a very large percentage of her body was burnt.

J.G. : Claude Skillman's father Clifford was awarded a Royal Humane Society medal [The Society for the Protection of Life from Fire]. He was a very quiet man, he worked for John Roberts.

O.S.: Didn't they go to Coombe Lodge to fetch the fire appliance and there was some problem, they couldn't get the water?

J.G. There was a hand driven water pump.

J.C.: There were only standpipes in the village.

Unknown: Frank Wyatt who worked for Coombe Lodge was one who helped. He was filling his pockets with money, then his manager Mr Godwin said "I think you ought to go home now". He went to the lime kiln past the Council Houses, emptied his pockets and hid the money under some stones and went back so he could have some more.

From A History of Blagdon by Rob Marley

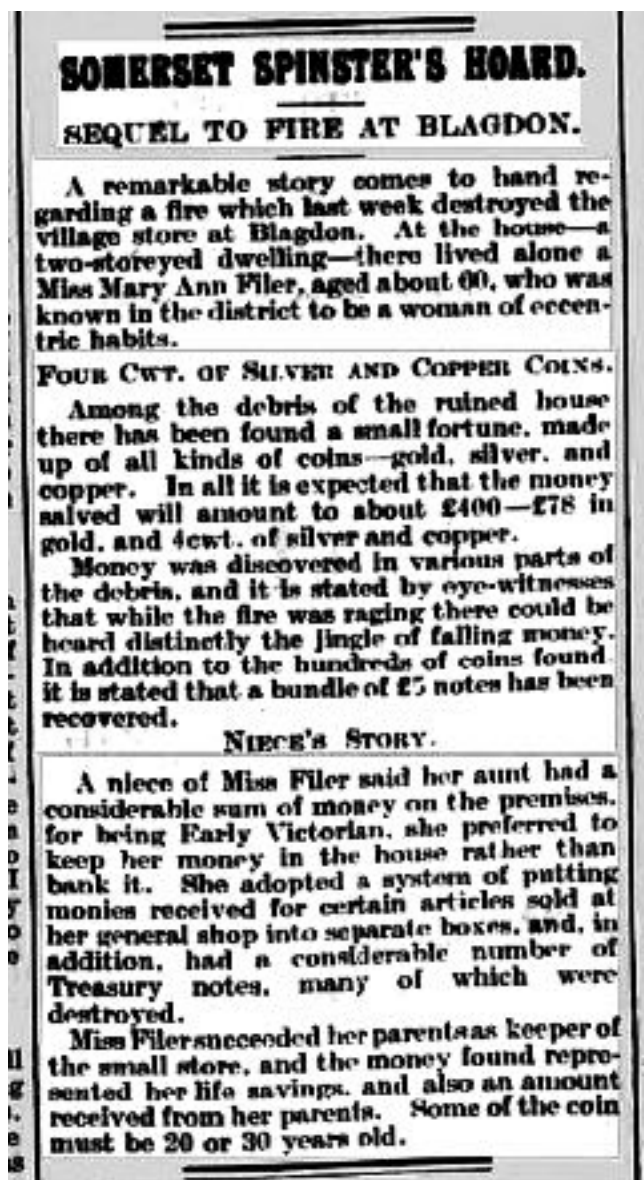
15 Sovereign Cottage, High Street

Mary Ann Filer ran a shop and general stores from here selling sweets and other things from the room on the right of the front door. The young men of the village used to gather there in the evenings to play cards.

Unfortunately, at about 7 o'clock one morning in 1923, the building caught fire and the late **Bett Shaw** had vivid memories of the day: "Mary had been playing cards around the big fireplace on a Sunday afternoon - the fire may have been started by a cigarette'. The fire pump was hitched to the back of Wills' lorry and towed up from its store in Coombe Lodge to fight it, but because the council had tipped a load of gravel over the hydrant they had to shovel it away before they could get any water. A neighbour, Clifford Skillman [and Reg Lyons], was the first in the house and rescued Mary Ann and was awarded a certificate by the Society for the Protection of Life from Fire. Bett remembers that, 'Money had been stored in various places, including biscuit tins and sweet jars. There is a story of her shouting "What about my drawers?" She was referring to the money put away in them. After Sunday school I would search the ruins and pick up pennies, this went on for years. Whenever a black coin turned up they would say, "she's been round Aunt Mary's".

Joan Lyons also tells of the event.

'Then came the surprise - money started rolling from all over the place, a bag of golden



SOMERSET SPINSTER'S HOARD.
SEQUEL TO FIRE AT BLAGDON.

A remarkable story comes to hand regarding a fire which last week destroyed the village store at Blagdon. At the house—a two-storeyed dwelling—there lived alone a Miss Mary Ann Filer, aged about 60, who was known in the district to be a woman of eccentric habits.

FOUR CWT. OF SILVER AND COPPER COINS.

Among the debris of the ruined house there has been found a small fortune, made up of all kinds of coins—gold, silver, and copper. In all it is expected that the money salvaged will amount to about £400—£78 in gold, and 4cwt. of silver and copper.

Money was discovered in various parts of the debris, and it is stated by eye-witnesses that while the fire was raging there could be heard distinctly the jingle of falling money. In addition to the hundreds of coins found, it is stated that a bundle of £5 notes has been recovered.

NIECE'S STORY.

A niece of Miss Filer said her aunt had a considerable sum of money on the premises, for being Early Victorian, she preferred to keep her money in the house rather than bank it. She adopted a system of putting monies received for certain articles sold at her general shop into separate boxes, and, in addition, had a considerable number of Treasury notes, many of which were destroyed.

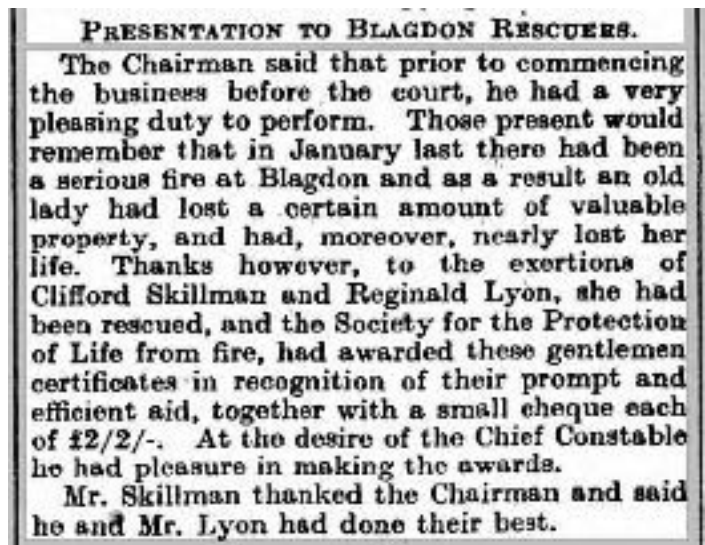
Miss Filer succeeded her parents as keeper of the small store, and the money found represented her life savings, and also an amount received from her parents. Some of the coin must be 20 or 30 years old.

sovereigns fell down the chimney, rolls of pound notes were found behind the pictures on the wall, a cocoa tin was found full of melted gold coins. Old blue sugar bags were stuffed up the chimney full of money. They say a box of silver coins took four men to carry to the cellar of the house next door. As the house burned the fire hose was washing money out the front door and down the path. A plank was put across the gate to stop the money rolling into the road. The local police found it impossible to collect all the money -- the spectators were pushing it into their boots as fast as they could. Afterwards villagers were seen digging the front garden and leaving with their pockets bulging. Several new motorbikes were seen around the village afterwards and the locals would say "There goes Mary Ann's money." Apparently she used to lend money, mostly for the calf trade - her interest rates must have been rather high.'

The shop was later taken by Mrs Frank Cryer. The Cryer family were farmers, brother George being a tenant of Ridge Farm and brother Norman living in Sovereign Cottage. The shop was running as a general stores in the 1930s.

Mrs J. Lyons - Lantern Cottage. Street End

Sarah Lyons, the great grandmother of Michael Lyons of the old coach station on Street End, ran the shop that was at what is now Lantern cottage on Rhodyate Hill. Like many of the small shopkeepers in the village she sold sweets, cigarettes and a few groceries. Although according to 'Bygone Blagdon' it was a popular place to buy your shoes. You could get paraffin in the door on the right. But on the very right there was a door that led upstairs to a hairdresser.



Her husband Jake kept a charabanc that was kept in the next cottage up, which was effectively his garage. He also had a thriving carrier's business, with a horse and cart, that provided a useful link to the markets in Bristol. Many locals have childhood memories of picking whortleberries in the summer on Blackdown, which they would sell to Sarah on

the way back home at about two or three pence a pound. Jake would then take them onto market the next day. 'Bygone Blagdon' claims that the weighing procedure was watched very closely, for Mrs Lyons was known in the village as "Old Mother Weigh-finger". Nevertheless she was remembered with kind regard.

'Miss Durbin' (Durban) - The Cherry Trees, East Town



Miss Durbin was still running her 'general store' at the Cherry Tree in 1931. In 1953 it was still a small grocers and sweet shop, popular with the school children, run by a Mr and Mrs Derham. Later it was owned by a Mr David Davidson who named the house or business Cherry Trees. Then it became an art shop run by Mr and Mrs Brett. Following that it was a bookshop owned by Mrs Skone.

In July/August 1977 Cherry Trees closed for alterations and reopened as GALT toy shop under Mrs Myra

Gay (see attached advert). There was a closing down sale advertised in May 1979 and the shop reverted to residential use (see below right).



(Above and left) Cherry Tree in about 1957. As well as sweets and groceries, fireworks were would have been for sale pre-November 5th.



(Right) Cherry Trees today with the altered frontage.

Frank Cryer, of the family that eventually bought Sovereign Cottage mentioned above, married Elizabeth Durban in 1922. Elizabeth had experience of shopkeeping from running the shop in Cherry Tree in Church street. Her sister Florence



Durban continued to run the shop in Church Street until 1945 when she went to live with her sister Mrs Cryer.

Mr James Best - Church St, East Town

Mr Best's shop is described as being well stocked with fruits, fish and vegetables. Some folk rembered Mr Best as having a fish and chip shop down Church Street, but this has been established as being much further down. Where precisely has not been pinpointed as yet. The fruit, fish and vegetables were sold at what is now called The Upper Barton - the building is now virtually unrecognisable from even the image (right) taken from the Blagdon on Film made Peter Bacon in the 1970s. There is also another documentary, which is an atmospheric



reminder of the Chew Valley at the time. Find it on https://youtu.be/UmnOz_6GBeY.

(Above) The two images above show it as it is today. John Chamberlain who had lived there believed the barton outbuildings were converted to dwellings in the 1930s.

(Left) The only photo that we have of the shop contemporary to the 1925 article is this picture of Bert Young who has parked the 'Estate' lorry across the road in front of the shop.

Harris Bros. - One of the lost garages of Blagdon



This garage was known as Central Garage and was probably the largest enterprise of the Harris brothers, Vivian, Vincent and Archie. Archie kept the Queen Adelaide for a time and also made bird tables. The size of the garage with its pumps and well stocked motorists shop can hardly be

imagined in the small area in front of Highfield House on the High Street. Actually Highfield House was part of the garage and only the front of it was removed in the 1970s to make a garden area and small layby.

An article about Blagdon's lost garages is due before they are completely forgotten. There was obviously a demand for them and so what changed for them to make them longer viable businesses?



STOP PRESS - IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT - An opportunity to LEARN MORE ABOUT THE LAKE!

In July there will be another opportunity to find out more about the origins of Blagdon Lake as we know it today.

Jacky Kerly will be tracing the history through from the Bristol Water Company's need to find more water resources to service the growing demands of the city, to the decision to build a dam and Yeo reservoir at Blagdon, the construction of the dam from 1889 and filling of the reservoir from 1901, the building and commissioning of the pumping station to the establishment of a world renowned fishing lake and bird conservation area.

All illustrated with many photographs and researched archive material.

A story of hard manual labour, tragedy and achievement resulting in today's beautiful vista.

Mr J. Roberts - the Seymour Garage, Bath Road



How is that a building as huge as a motor vehicle garage can disappear from the face of the earth with no trace? I must confess to all born-and-bred old Blagdonians that I was surprised (and still am) at the vanishing trick by Central Garage (above), but then there was a jaw dropping incident when I first saw the images of the Seymour Garage. I could not believe that it was where the Mead Terrace is now. It wasn't

until I saw the picture with it in relation to the Seymour arms (see left) that I could properly envisage it - a real eyesore.

But despite that, it must have been a very successful enterprise for many a year. As you can see from the image below when Mike Tinne owned the garage from 1965 to about 1972. He described these cars as 'My Aston Martins' and said the photo was taken by a customer who was a professional photographer.



These vehicles were very, very expensive in their day, but today they command even more ridiculous valuations. The Aston Martin DB4 GT on the left, for example, has a meticulously documented provenance. Built sometime between 1959 and 1961 it was once owned by Donald Campbell and is now somewhere in Switzerland, still in concours condition, and would be expected to fetch something in the region of £3,000,000 at auction.

Mr Oliver Lyons - Mendip Garage, Street End Lane



This was house and garage, home to the business many of us knew as the Blagdon Lioness. For children going to Churchill School it was the 'School Bus' that left here at 7.20 every school morning and brought them back at 4 or 5pm in the afternoon. The 'Lioness' brand was established in 1967 by Terry, son of legendary Oliver ('Twister') Lyons. For them transport was in the blood. Members of

the family had been in the haulage and transport business for generations.

In the 1901 census Jacob Lyons was described as a carrier, running a horse and cart to Bristol from Lantern Cottage, the shop run by his wife Sarah Lyons.

Jacob acquired his first charabanc in 1913 running trips from the shop. Soon he had three charabancs named 'Mendip', 'Valley' and 'Scout'. In 1925 Jacob and his son Oliver built Mendip Garage on Street End. Oliver then moved in and took over the business. Oliver and his wife Sophia in turn gave half the business to their son Terry in 1968 when the Blagdon Lioness brand had been conceived. When Oliver died Terry inherited the whole business and in 1998 gave half of the business to Michael.

The business thrived throughout the decades taking tours all over the country, delivering kids to school and even trips to Europe. But in the early 2000s Michael took a turn back to horse drawn carriages, providing the services of some beautiful black

Freisian horses and carriages for marriages, funerals and shows. What looked like a good idea has been more or less put on hold for the last 18 months due to the the Covid pandemic. We wait with bated breath as to how things turn out. (Below) The family and driver Derek Skillman in the year 2000.



(Above) One of the early 1960s coaches that was one of first Blagdon Lioness vehicles. We believe it is still in existence and has been beautifully restored although in a very different 'livery'.

The upshot of shops and shopping around Blagdon!

As you can see Blagdon had enough shops for virtually everything for your daily needs, and these few shops mentioned in that 1925 article were just a smattering of the total.

For a more comprehensive study it is worthwhile looking back to the research of Rob Marley in Volume 2 of 'A History of Blagdon'. Listing 33 retailers and showing a timeline of their existence, most of them were trading at the time of the article in 1925. And even this does not cover them all. Up until the establishment of the toll road that is now the A368, which was not tarmaced until the beginning of the 1920s, Blagdon was fairly cut off from the outside world. A three hour journey by horse and cart to Bristol was not an appealing prospect. So it was said that money spent in Blagdon stayed in Blagdon, as was illustrated by the fact that Mary Anne Filer's burnt cash continued in circulation for many years after her devastating fire at Sovereign Cottage. But once that link was made with the big city, people became familiar with bigger businesses who could lower profit margins to a minimum to attract bigger volumes of trade. The age of the supermarket dawned in the late fifties offering variety, novelties and cut price.

The garages were probably persuaded to relinquish the land they stood on for tantalizing offers from property developers. Plus everyone was happy to see a few houses replace a mucky old garage, even if it meant travelling an extra few miles down the road for their fuel or vehicle repairs.

In 'A History of Blagdon: Volume 2' there is an incredibly detailed history of the land adjoining the High Street and that the village stores is built upon: "The Dibbins to the Post Office Stores" by the late Olga Shotton. "The Dibbins's" is the name the family that had worked and ploughed it way back in time possibly before the Civil War, but a long time before it was built on. It therefore took their name even though they only ever rented it. It does, however, show that there is nothing permanent in what seems like permanent. The lesson to be learnt here is: whatever the reason we might tell ourselves about why all these shops closed, the ultimate reason was that we simply stopped using them. So for the sake of what little remains, the shops, the pubs and restaurants, the Club, we must bear in mind the new adage: "Use or lose it!"

CHERT decided at their recent on-line AGM to disband. We asked their expert archaeologist to tell us about their achievements over the past 20 years.

CHarterhouse **E**nvirons **R**esearch **T**eam, 2000-2020: a Retrospect

By Vince Russett, former North Somerset County Archaeologist

"Everything ends, and that's sad. But everything begins again, and that's happy. Be happy". - The Doctor

CHERT was a community archaeology project at Charterhouse on Mendip. These projects rely on a group of volunteers, guided by a professional archaeologist, first Penny Stokes, then me, to record the history and archaeology of their local landscapes. Having previously run successful community studies at Downhead and Ashwick, Penny (then of Mendip DC) began a similar study at Charterhouse. After the emergency of foot and mouth in 2001, Penny asked me to take over, and we returned to fieldwork. I was astounded when I discovered that despite how well-known it was, no-one had even surveyed the earthworks of the Roman town before.

Our first work, then, was to collect together all the air photographs that we could, all the previously published (and unpublished) work at Charterhouse, historic photographs, including roads washed away by the 1968 floods, Bronze Age barrow excavations near Tynings Farm in the 1930s, and photographs of the Charterhouse Centre when it was a school in the 1920s.

Even in 2002-3, we took an interest in the military history of the area, helping Somerset County Council to survey a uniquely



surviving rocket battery site from WW2 near Tynings Farm.



(Above) Summer BBQ 2009

even trips to Europe happened.

In 2005, CHERT were part of the BBC Time Team's Big Roman Dig, allowing us to excavate in the Roman town, although frustratingly, worries about heavy metal contamination in the soil led to our section being curtailed on health and safety grounds.

Geophysical survey equipment was made available to us through the Council for British Archaeology, which expanded our areas of work: we surveyed the humps and bumps of abandoned buildings, the old Roman town at Charterhouse (showing it was at least twice as big as previously thought), recorded the old boundaries of the land written down in 1181 (which turned out to be much the same as the 19th century boundaries of Charterhouse), recorded spreads of prehistoric flints, post-medieval rabbit warrens, 19th century lead mines.



CHERT at the Time Team Roman Dig 2005

A special project was to survey the MoD land at the Yoxter ranges, at the top of Cheddar Gorge. Because these had been in military hands since the 1930s, and thus protected from



(Above) Steve Tofts and an excavated corn drier in 2009.

20th century destructive agriculture, this promised a treat of prehistoric and later landscapes. It was a little galling to find that the area had been heavily mined for lead, and most of the landscape was the result of its being recovered from that in the 18th century.

So what did CHERT achieve in its 20 years? It generated hundreds of surveys of sites, which will become more important as 'points in time' as the years go by; these are now in public ownership in Wells Museum. It raised awareness, both locally and regionally of the importance of Mendip: it directly inspired the then English Heritage to run a major survey of

the Mendip AONB, but probably most important of all, it inspired a group of friends to spend many happy days roaming and recording our ancient precious Mendip landscape.

So what happened next.....by PJ May

With dwindling membership through age and health the members of CHERT have asked if they can hand over the remains of their financial resources and wish to combine their historical skills with those of Blagdon Local History Society. Also on offer is the use of their surveying equipment.

Under the gloom of the Covid crisis, this has enabled BLHS to set new horizons in the archeological research of Blagdon. The BLHS committee has not (as yet) taken an opinion in regards to this from its members, but the committee has effectively welcomed CHERT with open arms. It is too good an opportunity to miss, to have these skills and experience available and to use them to help answer some burning questions about the development of Blagdon from Roman times to the late Medieval period.

BLHS has already had close links with ex-County archeologist Vince Russett and in the middle of May the committee met with Cat Lodge, Senior Archaeologist in the department for Development & Environment on the North Somerset Council. With the BLHS committee eager to investigate two particular sites on the edge of Blagdon, she seemed more than willing to guide proceedings and offer her advice and expertise whenever it was due.

Therefore watch this space or any outlet for Blagdon Local History Society news. Things are getting serious and it could be soon that members would be asked if they want to get involved. What better time than 'post-covid' to get a suntan digging holes in a Somerset field, rather than lying on some sand in the Costa del Whatever.

BLAGDON LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY WEB PRESENCE

Website: <https://www.blagdonlhs.com/>

Facebook Group: Blagdon LocalHistory Society

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/2267162113597430/>

You Tube Channel: Blagdon Local History Society

[https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCpCaBEw-lMgeXFAd6PphXlQ?](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCpCaBEw-lMgeXFAd6PphXlQ?view_as=subscriber)
view_as=subscriber

Email: blagdonlocalhistorysociety@gmail.com