

June/July 2020



# Blagdon Life and Times

The Newsletter from Blagdon Local History Society



**The Blagdon Local History Society** is producing this newsletter as a way of 'airing the archive' - in other words, providing the members of the Society with some of the gems of local history that get filed into the Society archive, which they may never normally get to see. Also, it is by way of a small compensation to members for the present closure of the Society facilities at Blagdon Lodge during the present Covid-19 pandemic.

Hopefully this will become a regular publication, exclusive to the members, providing them with further interest in our local history and a stimulus to help with more research.

Here are articles from on-going research, numerous snippets and titbits that bubble up from the archive to show the inimitable character of the people of Blagdon. They have the ability to bring a smile to your face even when things are >>

## CONTENTS

BLAGDON LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY NEWSLETTER.....	1
AND NOW FOR SOMETHING COMPLETELY DIFFERENT....	2
WHY DOES BLAGDON HAVE A FIRE STATION?.....	3
100-YEAR-OLD ADVERT FOR A BLAGDON TEA ROOM APPEARS ON TV.....	4
BLAGDON RECREATION SOCIETY.....	5
WHAT WAS BLAGDON LIKE OVER 100 YEARS AGO From a presentation by Sheila Johnson, transcribed Mike Adams.....	6
THE SORRY TALE OF PHEOBE HEWLETT by Jacky Kerly.....	7
TALES FROM A TODDLER EVACUEE by John Derbyshire.....	10
THE FIRST COMPLAINT.....	11
THE ADDICOTT BROTHERS.....	11
HAYMAKING, BLAGDON STYLE.....	12

\*\*\*\*\*

*Compiled by Sheila Johnson, Jackie 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 and the BLHS Archive.*

\*\*\*\*\*

More articles and news about events, also more pictures can be found on the temporary society website: [bit.ly/BlagdonLHS](http://bit.ly/BlagdonLHS) or on the Facebook Group page: [Blagdon Local History Society](https://www.facebook.com/BlagdonLocalHistorySociety) - message [Peter May](#) to ask for an invitation to join.

>> really grim, often with a story that is so strange or outlandish, it is unbelievable, but sooner or later you find it really did happen.

And now for something completely different.....

Motor and Cycle Engineer  
**O. G. A. LYONS**  
 Proprietor of the  
**BLAGDON LIONESS COACHES**

**ALL WEATHER COACHES**

Any make of Car and Cycle Suppl  
 Taxi and Touring Cars for Hir  
 Day and Night Service.

We would like to announce that we hope in the  
 near future to undertake Complete Overhauls,  
 Reboring, Welding and General Repair Work.

**Mendip Garage**  
 BLAGDON, Nr. BRISTOL  
 Telephone BLAGDON 250

*Wells Journal  
 14/6/1940  
 The title for this article is probably more eye-catching today than it was when it was printed. This was a real headache for the police who had to keep track of people who may have had interests contrary to the Allied cause. Just by dint of their country of origin many innocent people would be incarcerated, regardless of their long established - perhaps family - connections to this country.*

*Advert for the local bus company in the programme for the third horse show in Blagdon Coombe*

**BLAGDON ALIEN FINED AT AXBRIDGE**

**FAILED TO NOTIFY CHANGE OF ADDRESS.**

Pleading guilty at Axbridge Sessions on Monday that as an alien she failed to notify her change of address, Valerie Simkovits, domestic help, The Close, Blagdon, was fined £1.

P.C. Bailey stated that in the course of his periodic enquiries he found that the defendant had left her former address. She was entitled to be away for 14 days, but on her return was supposed to report her movement in person. This was not done although he found that she had stayed at Bristol and the Hotel Cecil, London.

Frederick Augustus Culverwell, The Close, Blagdon, said the defendant came to this country in December, 1938, from the Nazi oppression in Austria, and had since looked after his daughter's child. His daughter was called up as an ambulance driver, and the defendant took the child to see her. Owing to the child's illness she was unable to return as arranged.

P.S. Stacey said the Chief Constable regarded such cases in a serious light. It was essential that the police should know where aliens were.

The Chairman (Mr. Warren Jane) said the Magistrates had to support the authorities in their task of tracing and keeping check on the movement of aliens. This was the first case to come before the Court and there would be a modified penalty of £1 which he hoped would be a warning to others.

*Western Daily Press:  
 15/12/1939  
 Williams farthings*

**864 FARTHINGS**

**E**IGHT HUNDRED and sixty-four farthings were received at the Council House, yesterday, for the Lord Mayor's Christmas Dinner Fund, from Joyce Williams, of Blagdon.

Joyce is now in her 'teens, and since she was a small girl, she has collected farthings herself, and from her friends, for the fund.

Well done Joyce, your novel effort shows the collective powers of the smallest contributions, for if our arithmetic is correct, 864 farthings make 13 shillings.

*Going back in time to 8<sup>th</sup> April 1920. This was the early days of what would eventually end up as the site of Yeo Valley HQ at the top of Rhodyate*

**HOTELS, HYDROS, HEALTH RESORTS AND BOARDING ESTABLISHMENTS.**

BLAGDON-ON-MENDIP.

**MENDIP BUNGALOW PRIVATE HOTEL,**  
 BLAGDON-ON-MENDIP, Somerset.

Enlarged, entirely redecorated and fitted throughout with Electric Light.

600 feet above sea level. Extensive views of Blagdon Lake, Wrington Vale and Bristol Channel. Ideal touring centre for Cheddar, Wells, Glastonbury, Weston, &c.

— OPEN TO NON-RESIDENTS. —

Luncheons, Teas and Dinners served at any time.  
 Home farm. — Garage. — Cars for hire.



## Why does Blagdon have a fire station?

This may be a question that has crossed your mind. But judging by the incidents on this page, you might then consider a nearby fire engine not only appropriate but essential...

*From the Wells Journal 1<sup>st</sup> May 1912. What you might call an 'incendiary piece'. Also, that level of Stoicism might be a rare find today.*

### BLAGDON.

**ALARMING INCIDENT.**—What might have been a serious calamity at Blagdon on Saturday evening was averted by presence of mind and prompt action. A series of tableaux vivants was being given in the Parish Room, and the limelight effects were operated by Mr. Gadd, who, with his gas cylinders, was perched alone on four planks near the wooden ceiling. In his cramped position, while moving about, he inadvertently loosened one of the valves, and caused an escape of gas, which took fire, and gave a flame over a foot long. To turn back the valve it was necessary for Mr. Gadd to put his hand in the midst of this sheet of fire. He most pluckily did so, and said nothing, but only asked for a bandage and some oil. He conducted the whole of the performance for over two hours in pain, and when he came down it was seen that the skin on the back of the fingers of one hand was burnt off and the other hand was scorched. If it had not been for his courage a panic might have taken place, with calamitous results.

Mr Charles Horler, of Ham Cottage, Blagdon, struck a match to light his pipe while the petrol tank of his motor-cycle was being filled at the garage of Messrs Harris Bros., Blagdon, on Saturday, and the machine was burnt to scrap-iron.

*A view along the High Street of Messrs Harris Bros. or Central Garage, as it was known, the scene of the (above noted) conflagration. Where is it now?*

*The forecourt is now a small layby and the garage was taken down to make a yard in front of Highfield House. (See below)*



Before the 'modern' style fire station that was built to house the present machines, the fire engine was housed in the small building next to the Village Club. After service as a fire station, it was used as a small bank (NatWest I believe) and then became the café and clothes shop Fanny's and is now Cocos. For any unbelievers out there, the pictorial evidence is below.



The Old Fire Station  
(photograph David Lock collection)

1912: the front of the Seymour Arms was blown out after an acetylene gas explosion during renovations by Oakhill brewery. At this time the 'engine', a hand trolley with pump, was kept down in Coombe Lodge.

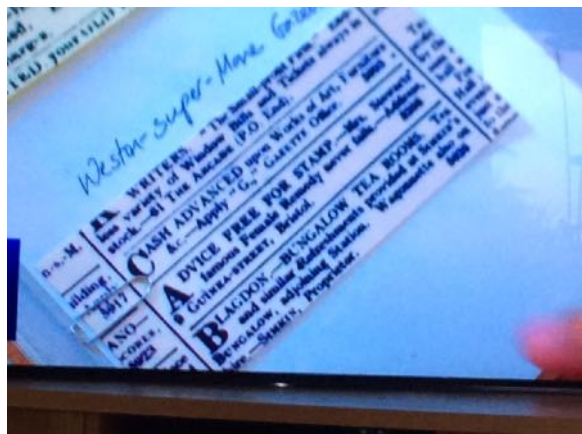
1923: Mary Ann Filer's house on the High Street caught fire and the conflagration could be seen from Church Street. More legends on this event at a later date!

## 100 year-old advert for Blagdon Tea Room appears on T.V.

During the recent broadcast of the highly esteemed BBC TV series about the history of one particular Georgian house in Bristol, A House Through Time, the presenter David Olusoga was scrolling through classified advertisements in local newspapers. He was looking for evidence of the business activity of one notorious resident from the early 1900s. One series of ads from a Weston newspaper made a sharp eyed Blagdon resident, Caroline Way, really sit up. Under one particular ad that David was pointing out was another advertisement for 'Bungalow Tea Rooms' in Blagdon.

Caroline took a 'still shot' from the TV and emailed the ad for the mystery tearoom to BLHS chairperson Sheila Johnson. Sheila's encyclopaedic knowledge of Blagdon history soon solved the mystery as to its whereabouts.

This was the long forgotten Simkin Tearooms and taxi service that was strategically established next to the railway station. David was looking at ads posted around 1909 and this would have been early days for this enterprise.



**Mr Simkin** was a blacksmith and came to Blagdon to work on the lake. Joan Lyons said:

*When the lake was being dug he used to dress the tools belonging to the men working on the lake.*

He lived in one of the temporary navy's huts. Joan Lyons said it was a 1914-18 Army hut but he was living in it before WW1. She said:

*He was always dressed smartly and wore a 'Stove' hat (Between a top hat and bowler).*

Sheila Johnson wrote:

*When the work on the lake ended he opened the tea room and offered accommodation to fishermen.*

*He also ran his carrier service taking railway passengers and luggage up/down the hill.*

*It is said he made a mechanism to hoist the beds up into the roof out of the way during the day time. He was a wagonette proprietor by 1911, his wife ran the tea rooms. Taking into consideration the war, I suspect it was at its peak in the 1920s.*

*He married his second wife in Blagdon in 1909 (he was 61 and she was 31!) and he died in 1932. Another house has been built on the site of his bungalow, called Railway's End.*

There's a story there!



## *The Blagdon Recreation Society*

sounds like a pretty fusty club, but we have a lot to thank it for, even today. If you read nothing else in this newsletter, read this (below). It shows an incredible communal spirit that existed in the village way back in the month of December 1920 and, as we learned from last month's newsletter, that spirit lasted well into and after the WWII.

**BLAGDON RECREATION SOCIETY VENTURE**  
 A well attended meeting of the Blagdon Recreation Society, Ltd., was held at the Village Club, Blagdon, when the chair was taken by Mr W. H. Seccombe Wills, and supported by Messrs J. Upton, F. Wood, S. E. Ball, R. C. Cock, and C. J. Redwood, and the hon. secretaries, Messrs E. T. H. Godwin and F. C. Taylor. The Chairman, in introducing Mr J. Randall, organising agent to the Agricultural Organisation Society (Western branch), said that the eyes of the whole county, if not the whole of England would be watching the experiences of the Blagdon Recreation Society, Ltd., which had been formulated for the purpose of carrying on the business of recreation and amusement caterers, and to promote the holding of sports of all kinds for the recreation and benefit of the inhabitants. Through the kind interest and support of Mr G. A. Wills they had been able to purchase the Meade Grounds, situated in the centre of the village. Their aim was to issue 2,000 shares to the parishioners, at 10s per share, and each share was guaranteed to carry a 5 per cent. interest. Their society, he added, had been affiliated to the Agricultural Organisation Society. Mr J. Randall delivered his address, in which he commended the society to the meeting. Mr F. Wood moved and Mr J. Upton seconded a vote of thanks to the A.O.S. Applications and promises to take up shares totalled nearly 1,000.



Above ^ This immediately-post-war *Evening Standard* cartoon strangely parallels our communal situation as we go into a (hopefully) a post-Covid world. If nothing else it reminds me of the plague of fly-tipping that has been occurring locally since the recycling depots have been closed! Below - A genuine post war ad.



<<< This picture came to the archive as "Chum Ash Bert Stone WW2". It shows how hard it had been for those left at home during the war and how seriously the 'Dig for Victory Campaign' had been taken by those in the country.

It also shows how you can grow whopping cabbages on second rate land if you know what you're doing! If you know where this is, please let me know. We would like to do a 'then and now' photo -email me at: [pjmay.gardenwriter@btinternet.com](mailto:pjmay.gardenwriter@btinternet.com)

## ... *What was Blagdon like over 100 years ago?*

Back in November 2011 **Sheila Johnson** gave a presentation at the Society meeting at Court Lodge, which gave an effective impression of how things have changed. Many things for the better, but a few things?.....perhaps not. We thought you may be interested in a short transcription of part of it taken by **Mike Adams**.

The publication of the 1911 census was the core source information on which this presentation was based. Sheila selected materials from our archive to illustrate what was happening in Blagdon against the background of significant events nationally which included:

31 <sup>st</sup> March	Shops Bill proposed the 60-hour week for shop workers and half-day holidays
4 <sup>th</sup> May	Lloyd George, Chancellor of Exchequer, unveiled National Insurance Scheme
31 <sup>st</sup> May	Titanic was launched
17 <sup>th</sup> June	60,000 women marched through London demanding the vote
23 <sup>rd</sup> June	George V coronation

The coronation was celebrated with teas and sports in Blagdon. William Henry Wills, Lord Winterstoke, died on 29<sup>th</sup> January 1911. He was without heirs so the baronetcy and barony became extinct. His plain elm coffin was borne from Coombe Lodge on the bier which he had himself provided for the parish.

At this time there was virtually no electricity, no free medical service, no resident doctor, no telephones, no fire station and no garages in Blagdon. An electricity generator had been installed in Coombe Lodge and Murdoch Fraser was recruited from Scotland as the chief engineer.

In 1911 the population was 915 and there were 233 households. The corresponding figures for 2001 were 1172 and 499, although the latter do not include Rickford.

Recorded for Court Lodge were Sarah Stevens aged 71 and granddaughter Hilda Watts aged 12. It is known that Hilda did not live there so she probably happened to be staying overnight when the census was recorded.

Reverend G. Menzies Lambrick occupied the Rectory.

Coombe Lodge was occupied by Henry Seaman and his wife, acting as caretakers.

There were two bakeries (East End now Gilcombe House and High Grove now The Old Bakery) and six grocer's shops - the present Stores and Post Office was then Redwoods Supply Stores who had taken over from Taylors, who emigrated to Canada in 1907.

John Nelson ran the Post Office alongside his grocery and draper's business on the site of Body and Soul.

There were five inns, two saddlers, three bootmakers, two blacksmiths and a district nurse. With the advent of the railway and the opening of the lake barely ten years previously, it is not surprising to find 11 waterworks employees and eight railway employees living in the village.

The rural nature of the village can be judged from the 21 farms recorded.

Blagdon School had 130 children on roll, staffed by the Head, John Westbrook and four others. There were regular medical inspections and in 1911 the playground was tarmacked over.

Horse drawn transport to and from Bristol was by one of the village's carriers - George Fear or Jacob Lyons; Charlie Simkin transported passengers and luggage to/from the station.

The oldest person in the Blagdon census was Louisa Wilkins aged 93, passing away in February 1913. Rev. Lambrick recorded in the Parish Magazine, 'At 95 her memory was wonderful, not only for things of long ago but also for quite recent events.....She used to work her own potato plot until the end, but she often regretted that no teasels were grown now as they employed such a sight of people.'

# The Sorry Tale of Phoebe Hewlett

*from researches by* **Jacky Kerly**

In these strange times when many of us seem to have our livelihoods threatened, it can be tempting to wonder whether things can possibly get any worse. But we only have to think back to any time in history before the last World War to think how lucky we really are. It was when there was no National Health and no social safety net of benefits (unemployment benefits started in 1911) and we are reminded that if there was no gainful employment to be had, you had virtually no help. You could resort to the workhouse (Axbridge Union House opened in 1837) where you were obliged to labour for a pittance for little more than meagre rations and a roof over your head and to sleep in a crowded dormitory. But what might you resort to if even this is not available to you?

In order to be privileged to any of this 'charity' you had to apply to the Parish you were born in. If you were female and had been legally married, you could apply to your spouse's Parish for support for yourself and family, if he had died or gone missing. For this you required a Settlement Order from the Parish Overseers and this is the tale of one such applicant, Phoebe Hewlett, which is a story that could easily have come from the pen of Thomas Hardy. But it is a true tale that Jacky Kerly has gleaned from her researches into Blagdon's archives of Settlement Orders and it shows what many people had to resort to.

**It is a tale typical of the situation in which many paupers, particularly women with few rights of their own, found themselves.**

**It is based on examination and settlement documents with additional research in italics, Blagdon Vestry records, census documents and online.**

In **June 1828** a John Stephen Jones, born in Blagdon, and his wife Phoebe had become chargeable to the Parish of Newnham, Gloucestershire and were ordered to be returned to Blagdon. (*There is no record of Jones' baptism in the Blagdon registers*). They had a child Thomas around 16 months old and she was pregnant with another. *Thomas had been baptised in Newnham 11<sup>th</sup> April 1827.*

The Blagdon Vestry minutes of **August 1828** state that it was agreed that 'the woman known by the name of Phoebe Jones be taken before the Magistrates, her examination taken, and removed to Nuneham (Newnham) from where she says she came with a regular order'.

Later that year, in **October**, Phoebe Hewlett was examined by the Justices for the Overseers of Blagdon. She said that she had been born in Newnham, Gloucestershire and that she had a right to settle there. Her father lived there until his death and her mother was still there. She said that she had served an apprenticeship from the age of 9 to 16 in Newnham. Phoebe was described as the reputed wife of John Stephen Jones who was born in Blagdon. She said that she had married 'by banns' in church in Awre, Gloucestershire, in 1926. (*Record found 4<sup>th</sup> March 1926, Jones as a bachelor.*) It had transpired that John had a living first wife and Phoebe had not seen him for some time.

*An apprenticeship if completed was grounds for a settlement. The fact that she was placed in it by the Newnham Parish officers would suggest that her family received poor relief.*

It has emerged that Jones was in a House of Correction in Littledean, charged with attempting to sell a horse he had stolen. This was reported in the Police Gazette in **June 1828**, the same date as their examination in Newnham which had resulted in an order for removal to Blagdon.

Further reports in **1829** indicated that Jones had been involved in other crimes, and when the horse's owner came forward to claim it back, Jones and an accomplice were committed to Gloucester Gaol to await trial for felony. The result of this came through in **September**, both men receiving a capital conviction, later commuted to transportation.

On **5<sup>th</sup> October 1828** Blagdon Vestry minutes indicate that it was 'agreed to allow Phoebe Hewlett [*NB no longer Jones*] a sum of money for her maintenance (at the discretion of the Overseer) until such time as it may be ascertained what Parish she belongs to'.

On **2<sup>nd</sup> November 1828** Phoebe Hewlett applied for relief and it was refused. However, on **25<sup>th</sup> January** it was agreed to give her child a pair of shoes. The last vestry record is **9<sup>th</sup> February 1829** when it was agreed to allow Phoebe Hewlett 1-6d per week for the maintenance of her child and 2-6d as a present to carry her home.

There is no mention of a second child.

It looks as though Phoebe took herself away from Blagdon back to Gloucestershire for support, but that the Overseers of Dymock, Forest of Dean were not keen to take on the responsibility. The Gloucester Overseer wrote for Phoebe to his counterpart in Blagdon the following **October 1829** requesting the allowance they had agreed should be paid to a Mary Ann Wallis, 19 Somerset St, Redcliff. Blagdon Parish rejected the claim in **November** on the grounds that Phoebe was not the legal wife of Stephen Jones and wrote a letter to that effect

In **December 1829** another letter from John Hill, Gloucester Overseer to Blagdon stating that Phoebe had a child 'at nurse with an aunt', which should have an allowance from Blagdon. (*Presumably because children acquired the settlement of their father. This aunt could have been Mary Ann Wallis*).

Phoebe herself was living with a Mr Page.

If the support was not given, Phoebe said she would have to leave her place and return to Newnham or Blagdon but she considered that Newnham would consider her a vagrant and return her to Blagdon anyway.

Looking a little more closely we find that Phoebe had not had a good start in life. She was baptised in **1803** in Newnham, daughter of William and Hester. She had stated at her Examination that she was apprenticed aged nine for seven years until she was sixteen.

Aged seventeen, in **May 1820**, she was committed to Gloucester Gaol on the charge of stealing a dress and coloured leather shoes from a couple in Newent, but she was acquitted. Interestingly on the summary of trials' document she was the only woman among 13 men, all of whom, bar one who was described



as an ignoramus, were found guilty. Her residence was given as Newent and occupation labourer.

In **July 1833**, after leaving Blagdon, she was again convicted and sentenced to imprisonment with three months hard labour, for entering the Gloucester workhouse to give birth to a 'bastard child' now chargeable to the City, having previously done the same for another child. We don't know what happened to Thomas - there are several deaths of children of his name and age in **1832** in Bristol.

She married a John Wilton, born 1795, in **1838** in St Nicholas', Gloucester although she gave her birth date as 1805. He was a 40 year-old widower, a rope maker, of Quay Street Gloucester. She was a widow (but using the name Hewlett) and signed the register with her mark.

By **1851** John and Phoebe, with daughter Sophia, born **1839**, a servant, and Frederick born **1842**, scholar, were living in the St Mary Redcliffe area of Bristol. John was a sack weaver.

By **1861** Phoebe, widow aged 59, was a seamstress living in Bristol with her, by now, married daughter Sophia. John probably died in **1856**. It is likely that Phoebe died in Bristol in **1863**.

So, what do we know about **John Stephen Jones** after his conviction on **29<sup>th</sup> August 1829**? He was transferred from Gloucester Gaol on **21<sup>st</sup> September** to a prison hulk, *the Dolphin*, moored at Chatham. He was 33, born in **1796**. There were ten others from Gloucester, most, like him, given a life sentence. The gaoler's records show him as a labourer who could read and write, and notes that he was 'Very bad, a notorious horse stealer and has at this time 3 wives. Suspected to have been in prison before. Orderly in gaol'.



From "Mutiny in Chatham Prison Hulks"

[http://www.medwaymemories.co.uk/?page\\_id=808](http://www.medwaymemories.co.uk/?page_id=808)

He was discharged on **19<sup>th</sup> December 1829** to *the Nithsdale* to be transported to Australia. Sailing on **26<sup>th</sup> December**, one of 184 convicts on board, they arrived on **12<sup>th</sup> May 1830** in New South Wales.

The **Australian Convicts records site** allows for Community contributions and a D Wong has added details to this and many other records:

**20/6/1829** *Police Gazette London, England:*

*STEALING. A Gelding, of the following Description, was taken in the Forest of Dean, from two Men, who call themselves JOHN STEPHEN JONES, and JOSEPH MILLER. The former says he lives at Blagdon, near Bristol: and the latter at Grafton, near Worcester. They are both in Custody, at the House of Correction, at Littledean, in the County of Gloucester, on suspicion of having Stolen the Gelding. They were about to sell it for Seven Pounds, when the Foresters said to them "The Owners are coming for the Horse." to intimidate them, when they both scampered off, but were soon taken.*

*John was 5'5½" tall, ruddy freckled complexion, dark brown hair, dark hazel eyes, no marks, married with 1 child, literate, protestant. Assigned to Richard Jones Esq., Sydney.*

**28/8/1838:** TOL, Cassilis - cancelled **25/6/1840** for being absent from muster. (Ticket of Leave) \*(see below) Cassilis is a small, historic village lying between Merriwa and Dunedoo. It spreads out on land beside the Munmurra River.

**18/3/1843** The Sun and NSW Independent Press: New Insolvents. John Stephen Jones of Berrima. Debts, £93 13s 6d; assets, £51 15s; balance deficiency, £41 18s 6d.

**14/11/1845:** TOL Passport - Allowed to remain at Maneroo in the service of Mr. Henry Badgery for 12 months - on the recommendation of the Berrima Bench, dated 1/11/1845.

**19/1/1850:** CP - Aged 53. Conditional Pardon. \*If well behaved, the convict could be given a Ticket of Leave granting some freedom. A Ticket of Leave was an indulgence given at the Lieutenant-Governor's discretion. It entitled convicts to work for wages. They still had to report for regular musters. Convicts could only get a ticket of leave when they had served a certain proportion of their sentence. At the end of the convict's sentence, seven years in most cases, the convict was issued with a Certificate of Freedom. He was then free to become a settler or to return to England. The Lieutenant-Governor could recommend the Crown grant a Conditional Pardon to a convict. The pardon stated what the convict could and could not do. It often limited the convict's movement to the UK or other colonies.

## **Tales from a toddler evacuee**

**John Derbyshire was a young 5 year old evacuated from London to Blagdon at the beginning of World War II**

### **A letter to John Gallop, Cleve, Church Street, Blagdon 25 11 2009**

As far as I can remember I was only five years of age when I arrived in Blagdon, six at the most. I was born in April 1935 which would put my arrival as some time in 1940 - 41. There were approximately 8 to 10 of us in my age group, some boys some girls. There were also other boys and girls older than us, one of which was very kind to me whom I met after the war was over in Norbury around 1946-47. I lost contact with her a few years later.

A lady travelled with us from London and stayed with us while we were in Blagdon. We called her Dobby. I never knew her surname or if she was a teacher or a nurse. I remember leaving my grandparents at a London railway station with my gas mask in a small square brown box hung round my neck and a very small brown case. The young ones like myself were kept in a separate dormitory or room and at night we all sat around a lady who read us a story before we went to bed. We had cod liver oil with malt every day which I liked, we also had hot milk which made me sick and still today I cannot even bear the smell of it.

Once a week we had a bath overseen by a very strict woman who had a long handled scrubbing brush which she used on our behinds if we were not behaving ourselves. She also made sure that every week we drank a glass of senna pods. Horrible black stuff stewed up in two tall blue and white enamel jugs.

We each had a vegetable patch and our parents sent us parcels of seeds to plant. I remember winning some sort of prize because my radishes came up first. We went for long, long walks across the hills where there were dew ponds with tadpoles and newts. We were allowed to bring these back with us and they were kept in a large glass tank so that we could see them develop into frogs.

I remember us all going out on the moors with wicker baskets lined with newspaper and picking berries [probably whortleberries on Blackdown] - there were hundreds of them and we used to come back with the baskets full.

Everywhere you walked there were grasshoppers who flew in front of you with red wings. There were butterflies everywhere which we were allowed to catch with small nets.

The picture of the back of the Mendip bungalow with the house is exactly as I remember with the grass falling away at the back where you could see the lake. I remember the town hall where we had silent picture shows. We also had a trip to Weston super Mare and all I remember was that the tide was out and you had to walk miles to reach the sea.

I returned to Norbury during the war where I remember the sirens going off and my Grandfather carrying me down to the air raid shelter every night. Our house had gone when we returned, it had been hit by a German bomb. I can only assume I was not very long in Blagdon as all my other memories are of the Blitz and picking up shrapnel from the lawn before my grandfather mowed it.

Hope that I have not bored you too much, your information has been very helpful to me and has put my mind at rest about the early part of the war.

All the best,  
Yours sincerely  
John Derbyshire  
Barnstaple

*Mendip Bungalow Hotel >>>  
This was probably taken during the carefree days sometime between the wars. But it may have looked something like this when John Derbyshire was staying there.*



**THE FIRST COMPLAINT.**

A letter was read from Mr. Ambrose W. Carpenter, of Blagdon, calling attention to the dangerously slippery state of the roads in the Blagdon Combe, and arguing that it was scandalous that a road which had been in excellent repair should have been tared. The condition was just as dangerous through Langford and Churchill. Everyone claimed that tarred roads were a death trap for drivers of horses, and he protested against any further tarring being done, as well as contended that something should be done to remedy the state of the roads at the present time.

Mr. Lovell said the particular pieces of road in question was a bit steep, and therefore he had arranged with the contractor to apply a little gravel if it became slippery. He might say this was the only complaint of slipperiness on tarred roads that he had received in his district this year.

Mr. G. Edwards said he had not found the length of road in question to be slippery—he frequently used it—and therefore did not regard it as very dangerous.

Rev. Edwards: The worst piece is at Rickford Pond.

Mr. Lovell added that he had been very anxious to know what effect sand had had on the road, and as no complaints had come to hand he had made enquiries as to whether people experienced any difficulty when driving.

Mr. G. Edwards: Through Churchill Gate to Blagdon is about the safest road we have to drive over.

*<<< From the Wells Journal 12<sup>th</sup> October 1921, an article that just goes to show that 'progress' is never to everybody's convenience.*



**<<< Date unknown.**  
Andrew and George Addicott with their toy tank. Two characters, now sadly passed away, that would give many local people a tale to tell. Andrew was the creator and one of the editors of the Yeo Valley Gazette and left us the legacy of his huge collection of images to be relished on [Addicott's Archive](#). Also, his book, "Bygone Blagdon", probably stimulated more interest in Blagdon history than anything that was written before.

## Haymaking Blagdon Style

Late summer was for making hay, rather than the frantic, noisy scramble for silage that occurs today whenever the weather allows in May. These pictures from the John Gallop collection give a sense what it was like in Blagdon between the wars.



Haymaking was a communal affair with anyone that was fit and able drafted in with the understanding that good 'vittles' would be provided and, at the end of it all, as much cider as you could possibly want to drink.

This scene, in Big Garston, would be some time in the 1920s. Tractors were not a common sight until well after 1925. This hay would have been reaped and possibly the windrows turned mechanically but it would likely to have been horse drawn.

This is really what it is all about. It's teatime and time to take a breather in making up the haystack. The sense of communal endeavour is something the people in this photo would take for granted, but would sorely miss if it was not there. It is something that we struggle to find nowadays. Vestiges of it still exist in activities around the village like the fête and the harvest supper.



The same scene today. Scenes like this of then and now are eerily moving.

If any members have any other pics of 'then and now' please send them in by email to the address on page 5. Also please send in any other general comments.

