

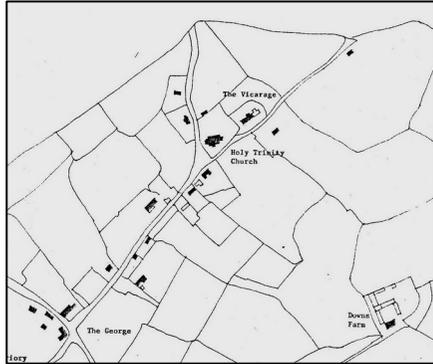
# CHURCH ROAD, ABBOTS LEIGH

## THE OLDEST STREET IN THE VILLAGE

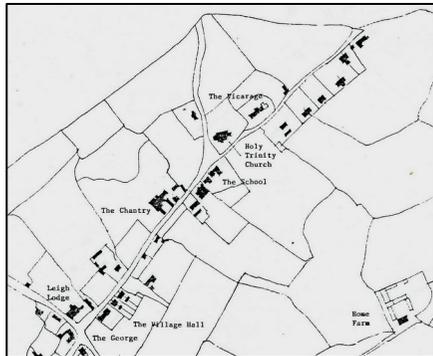
ABBOTS LEIGH HERITAGE GROUP  
June 2018



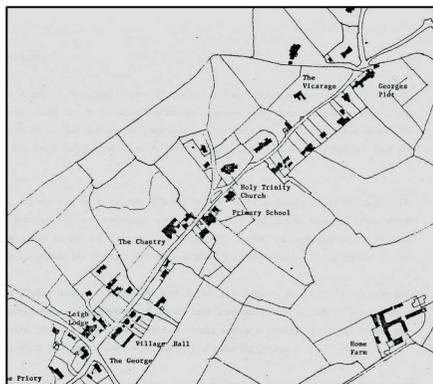
## CHURCH ROAD: A CHANGING MAP



**1838**  
(from a  
Tithe  
Map)



**c 1900**



**c 1945**

**mid 1700s** – Several larger properties – Leigh Lodge, the Mansion House (now the Chantry), Abbots Leigh House, The Villa (now the site of Avonhurst) plus the Church and Glebe, and Leigh Farm, together with half a dozen cottages.

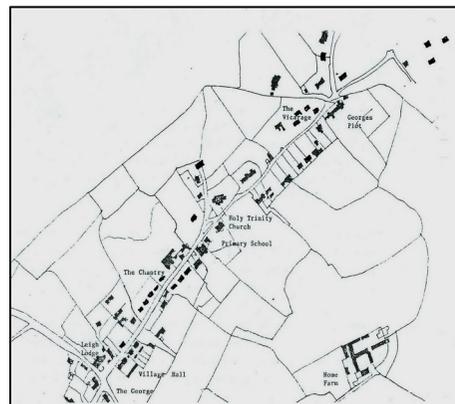
**1841** The first census lists nineteen properties on Church Road – the same larger properties as before but with a few more estate cottages.

**c 1900** – twenty six properties with additional estate cottages on the south side of the road and a Village Hall (with flat).

**1920s and 1930s** – thirty five properties - some larger houses at the east end of the road, a new Vicarage, together with a few family houses.

**1950s and 1960s** – forty nine properties with some new family houses on both sides of Church Road filling gaps on the land of The Chantry, Abbots Leigh House and Southdown Park.

**2017** – sixty six dwellings after some redevelopment and new build but also improvements/enlargements/extensions to several cottages.



**2017**

Sixty six properties  
on Church Road

## CHURCH ROAD

**Leigh Lodge** was built around the mid eighteenth century and extended in the 1850s. It was occupied until 1924 by a series of lawyers – James Short, James Fussell, Col. Carey Batten. From 1924 to 1964 Leigh Lodge was occupied by Dennis Grierson Fry, and his family - his wife (later widow) Norah and their daughter the reclusive Elizabeth Ann Lee. Loyal to her servants (especially the chauffeur Faulkner), to her neighbours (and particularly her contemporary Pam McFeat), and a major benefactor to both the McFeats and others. Elizabeth Ann moved to London in 1964 but is buried, with her husband (alleged to be her gardener) Joseph Lee in the graveyard at Abbots Leigh. Leigh Lodge was occupied briefly by Lady Cadbury in the 1950s and thereafter by a succession of owners. **Elm Lodge** was built as an extension to Leigh Lodge to provide kitchens, dining room and living quarters for staff. On the other side of Leigh Lodge were stables and a loft later converted to a dwelling, again for staff. **No 5 Church Road**, the former stables/coach house was converted into a dwelling by Elizabeth Ann and occupied for many years by the Faulkners.

Opposite Leigh Lodge is the **Village Hall**, commissioned and paid for by Sir Cecil Miles, 3<sup>rd</sup> baronet, designed by Edward Down (surveyor and resident of Leigh Bank) and built in 1896. Beyond the Hall lie **Nos 8/10** and **12/14** two pairs of cottages built in 1879. Owned by the Fry family after 1916 the cottages were occupied by Fry workers who did not live in at the Priory. We know of their gardener George Chamberlain at No 14, Bertha Rowles kitchen maid then cook at No. 12, and later Amy Gillard who was able to buy No. 14 in 1952 after the death of the Frys.

**Leigh Farm** dates from at least the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and for much of the 1800s was farmed by the Hollyman family who held ownership for over a hundred years. Kelly's Directory 1939 shows then still on the farm. The Hollymans also held **Byfield** and **Oakleigh** to which Jack and Olive Nottingham had moved from Yew Tree Cottage at the end of Manor Road. Close to the road are two cottages known in 1972 as Rose Cottage 1 (owned by Dennis Osborn of Campfield and occupied by his gardener) and Rose Cottage 2 (today's Rose Cottage) where lived Arthur Fear and Ida – head teacher at Abbots Leigh school.

Across the road and stretching along a 19-acre site from Leigh Lodge to the Church was **The Chantry**, originally the small mansion house of Robert Bright (cotton merchant and owner of over 1000 slaves in Jamaica). On the estate in the nineteenth century was a small farmholding which for several years acted as the village meeting place and café. At the 1915 sale the Chantry Estate did not sell – Caroline Bright was still in residence aged 87. She died in 1917, however, and at a subsequent auction The Chantry was bought jointly by Colonel Carey Batten and Inghram Gunn of Abbots Leigh House (see blow). Batten enlarged and improved the farmholding which was bought in 1923 by William Lansdown and has recently been extended to form three dwellings – **Swallowfield Farm, Batten House and Potager House**. The Chantry itself was bought by Derek Avery but soon sold on to the Inskips. They built two cottages in the kitchen garden for their chauffeur (Mitchell and Ackerman), cottages since demolished with **Oakfields** being built on the site. Also built later within the grounds were **Westover**, later extended to include **Westover Lodge**, Linden Gate (now **Abbots House**, together with **Nos 9 and 11**). On the death of the Inskips The Chantry itself was divided into two – **Chantry House** and **The Chantry**. Outbuildings were converted into **Chantry Fields** whilst **Chantry Cottage** remains now as it was in the 1920s.

On the southern side of the road, No. 26 (**Closeburn**, formerly Byeways) and No 30 (**Archways**) formerly Primavera) were built in the kitchen gardens of Abbots Leigh House. Next door **Carey's Cottage** was the conversion of an Abbots Leigh House squash court. **Abbots Leigh House** itself dates from 1750-1775, then a modest mansion or dower house, but in the nineteenth century enlarged to become the home for some time of Henry Miles (acting as the Miles estate steward) and in 1911 of Alfred Tomes, a retired Lieut. Col surgeon. In 1915 it was bought by Inghram Gunn, chief engineer and later chairman of W.D. and H.O. Wills and executor of the will of Lord Winterstoke. Abbots Leigh House was owned from the 1950s by the Arrowsmith-Browns (printing business in

Bristol) and later by architect Roger Gallanaugh and family, designer of several Abbots Leigh houses.

The **Old School House** (before 1915 called Severn View Cottage) was occupied from 1915 for a further thirty years by James Hare, village schoolmaster. Next to it on a site which is now **Avonhurst**, was in 1800 The Villa, the site of which became the first village school in 1839. The school was sold to Somerset County Council in 1914 and a new school built in 1923. The foundation stone laid by Janet Fry is still visible on the Village Field wall. The school was closed in 1986 and Avonhurst built on the site. The **Village Field** was once rented by Caroline Bright of the Chantry from the Miles family before being bought by Melville Wills and later owned by Luther Brimble of Leigh Farm and afterwards given to the village.

The vacant land opposite Abbots Leigh House and the Old School House was in 1918 the subject of a haggle between Carey Batten and Gunn over the view from Abbots Leigh House across the Severn. Gunn bought the view and this is preserved to this day by a later covenant which precludes building on that site. **Muiravon**, however, was built on this site in the late 1930s.

Close by are the older **1 and 2 Muiravon Cottages** dating from the eighteenth century. Occupied by a succession of Miles estate workers through the nineteenth century both cottages were bought at the 1915 sale by Gilbert Morgan who lived there for a few years before selling – but again as separate cottages. After the sale Samuel Parsons, village carpenter was displaced but was able to move to 12 Church Road. Also on this lane is **Church Gate** built and occupied by builder Dave Roberts in 1980.

Throughout the history of Abbots Leigh, however **Holy Trinity Church** has been a pivotal focus (see separate pamphlet). The Holy Trinity of today was built at varying intervals over a period of about 800 years. It is thought that the church was built on the site of a Saxon hermitage or small chapel with 1115 the first date put on construction. The original crypt has been filled in, and the nave is probably 13<sup>th</sup> century, the south aisle is probably 14<sup>th</sup> century with the tower mid 15<sup>th</sup> century. The small door in the south wall was the entrance to the pew for the Lord of the Manor. On 21<sup>st</sup> February 1848, the church was gutted by fire. The tower and the chancel were saved and William Miles, 1<sup>st</sup> Baron Miles, paid for the rebuilding of the church.

Immediately to the east of the church is **Glebe House** dating from the eighteenth century, enlarged in 1834 but in 1924 superseded by a new vicarage. When the new vicarage was built Glebe House became the residence of C J King, owner of CJK Tugboats at Avonmouth. Next door the **White House** was built in 1955 in the garden of the vicarage. The current **Vicarage** itself was built for the Rev. Robert Raymer who studied at Dublin University, former school teacher, officer of The Leicestershire Regiment in the Boer War and of the Leicestershire Regiment in the Great War in which he was wounded before resuming his career and becoming vicar of Abbots Leigh in 1923. Beyond the Vicarage was Petra, built in 1966 by Leslie Hawkins, but now **Abbots Gate** a group of four detached houses developed by Crest Homes.

Back on the southern side of the road, land next to the Village Field had been bought by Luther Brimble of Leigh Farm from Melville Wills and in 1963 this was sold to Nell McNaughton Wainwright (Clifton bank manager and Reserve Captain HMS Flying Fox) who built **Galleon's Reach**. On this plot, had stood one of Abbots Leigh's oldest buildings – Old Stone Cottage. Over thirty years before that Old Stone Cottage (No 50 Church Road), was the home of 'Granny White' known to several of today's village residents but best remembered because three of her sons – Thomas, Gilbert and Ernest - were killed in the first world war. Old Stone Cottage itself was demolished in 1999 and **Langford House** was built on the site.

In 1938 Melville Wills had commissioned builder Dowling to build two estate worker cottages next to Old Stone Cottage. **The Maples** (No. 46 rented to Arthur Hickery, estates officer at Leigh Woods until 1998 when it was sold and **Gablecott** (No 48 rented to Harry Baker, forester until 1982).

Standing back from the road are three pairs of cottages – Nos 52, 54, 56, 58, 60, 62 - improved and extended - but still retaining the shape and character of the estate worker cottages built probably in the 1830s. It is said that they were set a little down hill from the road in order not to be seen from Leigh Court. In 1915 **No 52** was bought by William Frampton, returned from the war and later to become a village stalwart as clerk to the Parish Council. **No 54** had been bought by Walter Gabbitass (because the cottage he tenanted in 1915 had been bought by someone else) but he was killed in 1916 and it was his wife Florence and their children that occupied No 54 for several years. **52a** and **54a** were built as new dwellings added on to existing cottages.

Nos 56-58 were bought at the sale by John Chamberlain, long time tenant of **No. 58**, and his daughter Mary lived there until her death. **No 56** had been bought in 1916 by Edwin and Ellen Frampton and their son Eric was still resident at No 56 in 1972. Nos 60-62 were bought in 1915 by Colonel Carey Batten. One tenant, Walter Gabbitass (No. 60) was killed early in the war (see above) but was able to buy No 54. The tenants of **No 64** were the Wiltshires. Since 1871 James and Emma Pennell had lived at this cottage but reflecting perhaps the close relationship between Pennell and Wiltshire families, William Wiltshire is buried in the Pennell grave in the Lower Churchyard (which also commemorates Arthur and Rowland Wiltshire both killed in the final weeks of the war. By 1921 William Hunt had moved from No 56 to No 62 (then **2 Anchor Cottages**), where the Hunt family remained for many years whilst Samuel Amos moved into No 60 Anchor Cottage, now **April Cottage** until 1976 when the cottage was bought by Catherine Brown.

**Nos 66-68** are a younger pair of cottages built in 1903. They were purchased by the Frys soon after the 1915 sale. No 68 probably housed Fry tenants but after the death of the Frys was sold to William Hunt (snr) in 1953.

In 1915 No. 70 Church Road remained as it had for many years two cottages, one thought to be where the village laundress) lived). In 1915 both cottages were bought by a Mrs. Tupman of Clifton for her daughters Alice and Catharine who are listed as living there in 1921. But they soon sold and in the early 1920s the cottages were combined by Howell Davis into what is now **George's Plot** (named after a small plot 'George's Ground' to be seen on Richardson's 1800 map). Davis died young and his widow married Sir Paul Gueterbock (equerry to King George V and keen horseman). He donated the church gates on which his initials PG can be seen.

Opposite George's Plot is **Campfield** built in 1923 for Ernest Taylor who owned 'Taylors of the Green' Bristol's first department store. Used as land for training reservists in the first world war the house was originally Camp House but has since changed its name. Beside Campfield is **Windyridge**, built in 1924 for Ernest Savory who lived there for twenty-seven years. He was followed by the Claremonts (1951 – 1958), the Hacks (1958 -1975) and since then by the present owner. This was a distinguished part of the village. Ernest Taylor was High Sheriff of Bristol in 1927 followed in 1928 by James Arrowsmith Brown (Park Hill) brother of Henry Arrowsmith Brown of Abbots Leigh House. Down the short lane from Windyridge are **Pendle House** and **Park Hill** whose past owners include Banks (antique shop on Park Street and later George McWatters (managing director Harveys wine merchant). Above Park Hill is **Deerhurst**, an older part built in the mid 1950s with a second part in the 1970s. In the garden can be seen traces of what Humphrey Repton called 'that obtrusive mass of yellow ugliness' – the house of John Protheroe. Philip Miles went to the Somerset Quarter Sessions and not only diverted a public right of way but in the end forced the demolition of 'the yellow house'.

Deerhurst was one part of Southdown Park, bought at the 1915 auction by Col. Carey Batten but sold in 1924 to the Willes brothers who built a small cottage on the site that is now **The Lodge**. Dr. Charles Willes used local quarry material to make garden ornaments which he sold at a Whiteladies Road shop, but turned to dairy farming (shorthorns) the milk from which he sold to William Lansdown (see Swallowfields above).and later to pig breeding. On the site now stand **The Oaks, Long Barns** and **The Barns** – new houses set on what are self evidently old farm buildings.