

ABBOTS LEIGH CENTENNIAL RECORD

Volume 4

**Pill Road,
Leigh Court Drive,
Blackmoor Road,
Ham Green,
Chapel Pill**

The George Inn at the crossroads of the main Bristol/Pill road with Church Road and Manor Road is one of the oldest buildings in the parish. Church House was an ecclesiastical property, recorded in 1719 as providing stabling and a venue for church ales. During the mid 1750s, churchwardens let it as a public house with rent being used for the church. Until the early 1830s buildings flanking the Inn provided poorhouse accommodation (without water) until the Miles built new poor houses in Manor Lane. The property was sold in 1892 to the Miles Estate for £3,000. There was a slaughterhouse against the back wall and Reuben Hollyman and later William Arters, tenants of Leigh Bank and village butchers (see below) ran a butcher's shop next door. By 1911 the tenant of Leigh Bank was Arters' son-in law, Edward Down who eventually sold what is now the car park to George's Brewery in the 1930's.

At the sale of the whole Abbots Leigh Estate in 1915 Lot 30 - the George Inn was auctioned at a reserve price of £2,000 and sold to George's Breweries for £2,900. The George has had a succession of landlords. The Bindons - Thomas and later his son George - managed the inn through the 1850s and 60s, Thomas Thomas was landlord in the 1870s (when also John Hilford lived in an apartment above). The Hardwicks, John and later son George, were landlords at the 1881, 1891, and 1901 Censuses. William Gardner was landlord from 1911 until 1919, followed by Edward Pillinger who had sold his farms to Melville Wills. George Ferris was manager from 1928 to 1937.

Below the George is **Leigh Ban**, home to Reuben Hollyman inn the mid 1800s and home of the Arters and later Down families from the 1870s 1979 and thereafter in the hands of three successive owners. In 1891 John Arters lived at Leigh Bank with his niece Mary Babbage, the village postmistress as housekeeper. His granddaughter Clara married Edward Down and the family settled in Abbots Leigh. Edward and Clara's elder son, Norman Arters Down, served in the first world war, Geoffrey Down, a younger son was killed in October 1943 whilst serving as a signalman on HMS Charybdis. After the second world war Leigh Bank remained the home of Marjorie Down who also bought land at Knightcott Road (see Centennial Record 3). Below Leigh Bank is **Bankside Cottage**, part of the Leigh Bank property but becoming a residential dwelling from 1906.

Houses on the Pill Road below between Harris lane and Dennyview were built over a period from 1939 onwards. Eliza Chapman sold land here (as on Dennyview) and some houses – **Poundridge** and **Brookhaven**, for example – are known to date from the early 1940s. Others such as **Conifers** were added up to and in the 198s. Precise dates for **The Chestnuts**, **St David's**, **Conamore** and **Glenavon** are not known.

Opposite Conamore is The Lodge, historically known as Lower Lodge, being the less formal entryway to Leigh Court than the Coronation Avenue rote through The Gateway (see Centennnial Record 1). In 1915 Humphrey Repton designed a lodge for Philip Miles but the present (modernised) lodge bears only a slight resemblance. Later sold at auction the lodge is now tenanted. Further along what we are calling Leigh Court Drive, though it

is formally part of the Pill Road, is Freeways, a residential care centre supporting over 115 people, formerly owned by St. Christophers. Behind Freeways is **Leigh Court Farm**, with one residential dwelling and also working a magnificent historic walled market garden. Adjoining Freeways is The Orchard, a bungalow for Freeways staff set on what was the bowling green of Leigh Court. On the opposite side of the drive the new build **Karpasia Farm** is nearing completion, whilst further back up the drive is Brackenwood Garden Centre with the residential **Brackenwood Lodge** dating from the early 1980s.

Leigh Court Mansion itself, built 1815-1817 by Philip John Miles was the residence of the Miles family until the estate sale in 1915. Unsold at the auction it was bought later by the Reverend Harold Nelson Burden , having established the National Institutions for Persons Requiring Care and Control, jumped at the opportunity to buy the mansion and surrounding grounds and completed a purchase in March 1916. Burden provided residential care and support for over two hundred women and girls, and Leigh Court remained in the ownership of the Burdens until 1939 when Harold Burden's second wife Rosa died.

In 1948 the Ministry of Health took over the lease of Leigh Court, continued to run it as a hospital, and eventually bought it from the Burden Trust. In 1985 the property became redundant with respect to the needs of the NHS and Leigh Court came into the ownership of St Christopher's School which held it for a further three years. Sold in 1988, Leigh Court passed to a development company (which went into receivership) and from 1992 has been owned and developed as a business and conference centre by the JT group together with Leigh Court Associates.

Abbots Leigh Kennels and Cattery were the site of Moundleigh where earlier Richard Beard Withers and Eliza Chapman lived their later years. Up the lane alongside the kennels lies **Haberfield Park Farm** recently developing as a production site for halloumi.

In 1915 E.C. Fairweather, a Hertfordshire speculator bought extensive parkland north of Leigh Court but soon sold that part which would form Blackmoor Road to Richard Withers. Using materials from dismantled former army camp bungalows and on sites where at the time no road existed, Withers built six houses along the road – **Sunnyside, Fair Provence** and **Ferncliffe** retain some original features from the 1920s but other plots were sold on. William V Thomas (see below) built **Woodleaze and Dayme Stream**. Other houses – **Little Croft, Pear Tree Lodge, Woodlands, Greenpeace, Oaklea Lodge, Oaklands, Wandilup and Hillview** have been enlarged, modernised or replaced.

Land adjoining Pill Road below and beyond the Haberfield roundabout was bought in 1915 by Mildred Trim and later acquired by George V Thomas and over a period of years he built a number of houses along the road.- not building consecutively (i.e. from **Greentrees** down to **Tanglewood** or vice versa) but selectively developing sites and later filling in gaps or selling on to other builders. From information provided it is likely that **Hartree Bungalow** 1936, **Oaktrees** in 1932,, **Hazlehurst** in 1935, **Capella, Leaside, Tanglewood** 1939 were probably Thomas built with **Greenacres** 1962, **Acorn Meadows** 1974, **Green Drift and Vinstra**, 1975, **Merrivale** 1984

Down a lane lies **Blackmoor Lodge**. Dating from the eighteenth century (or earlier) this was the first known home of the Livings family – the only family to be named in the 1841 Census and to live in the village in 2015. James Livings, a carpenter, lived at Blackmoor Lodge until 1871 but later occupants were Uriah Carter (1891) and Thomas Morse (1901) both gamekeepers, and Thomas Rich (1911) blacksmith. At the 1915 sale Blackmoor

Lodge fell within a larger area of land bought by E.C. Fairweather (see above) but he sold on to Richard Withers who in turn sold this part of the site to William Edward Thomas grandfather of the present owner. With improvements made to the dwelling and the acquisition of additional land supported farming activity involving cattle, horses, barley crops and poultry into the twenty first century. **Woodside** lies on land bought in 1915 by Mildred Trim and passed through several hands until in 1924 it entered the ownership of George V Thomas.(William Edward's brother – see above).. He built a bungalow but this was expanded in 1986 with an adjacent paddock to include a new house, stables and garage.

At Ham Green **The Croft** is thought to be the oldest building in Abbots Leigh dating back to the fourteenth century when it lay within the manor of Portbury and in 1542 marking the boundary for the diocese and parish of Abbots Leigh. Prior to the 1915 Abbots Leigh Estate sale it was tenanted by Annie Gage of Chapel Pill Farm and at the sale it was bought by Flanagan from Pill. Soon afterwards the property was increased by the acquisition of surrounding land and over the years that land has been released to allow the development of a number of Ham Green dwellings. **Shepherd's Hey**, originally a small bungalow on agricultural land behind the Croft was built in 1939, and extended in 1956 and again in 1963 by owners who have been there for sixty five years. **Little Orchard**, built in 1996 on land which was previously an orchard, and **West Hay** were put up in 1966 by builders Unique Developments on land which was previously an orchard belonging to The Croft. Behind The Croft lies Lime Tree Grove with Nos. **9, 10, and 11** lying within Abbots Leigh parish.

On the other side of the road, on land acquired by Alvis Brothers at the 1956 auction of Ham Green Hospital permission was granted in 1964 to build **St. Catherine's Mead** - six detached dwellings to house agricultural workers. The further development of housing came with the construction from 1979 to 1988 by builder L D Fowler of Nos **76, 78, and 80** Pill Road.

In the early 1920s, after the Estate sale, the Ministry of Health and Bristol Corporation had bought Chapel Pill Farm together with some parcels of land at Ham Green. In the late 1920s a number of cottages at **Chapel Pill Lane** were built for farm and hospital workers but in 1956 all these land and property holdings (including farm land west of the main road) were put up for auction. Alvis Brothers purchased all of the sites and remain major landholders in the area. **Chapel Pill Farm** had been an expanding farm through the nineteenth century, managed by established village worthies –Joseph Fyson, Robert Bryant and from 1861 to 1921 successive members of the Gage family. On the sale of the farm to the Hospital Frank Marshall became farm manager and was succeeded by Bloodworth, Ludwick and from 1981 the present manager. In the early 2000s farm outbuildings were converted into **The Granary**, four rented cottage dwellings.