

Bleadon village news

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Winter 2012 - Issue 94

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Diamond Jubilee, scarecrows and Olympic torches



Illustrated History of Bleadon

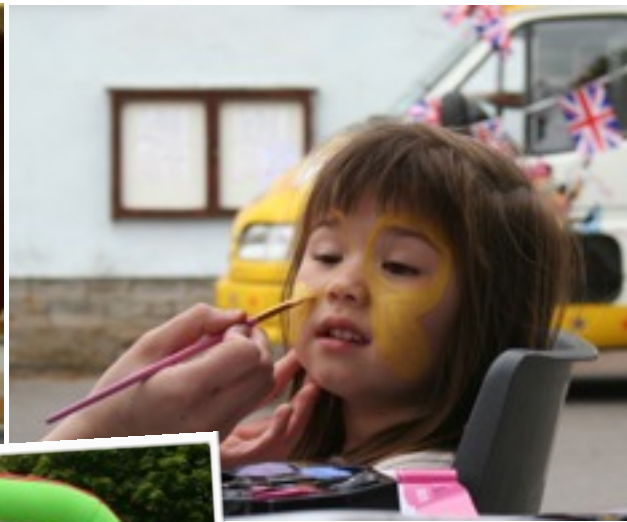


A splash of colour

**all this and more in this
BUMPER fireside edition**

A year to remember

Diamond Jubilee celebrations and Olympic Gold have helped make 2012 a sparkling year for Bleadon and Britain. Here's a few photo memories of a damp Jubilee weekend.



Cream teas, cart races and gladiator combat helped brighten up the smiles on Bank Holiday Monday



Some dressed to impress despite the cool June weather



WHOOOPS!

Many of you will have been wondering what happened to our Autumn edition of Bleadon Village News.

I'm afraid that this old editor had too many other things on and failed to get the September issue produced. For this I must apologise. To all of you who submitted copy and pictures for that issue I hope that this bumper Winter issue will make up a little for the loss.

I had hoped that my failure would pass un-noticed, but judging from some of the comments and sour looks I've received this little village magazine is essential reading for many Bleadon residents and its friends. Long may it remain so.

I shall endeavour not to fail our readers again.

As you will discover in the following pages it's been a busy six months in Bleadon. With Jubilee celebrations, Olympics, Scarecrows, colourful refurbishment of the Youth Centre, lots of improvements to the Coronation Hall, flooding, tree planting, publication of a Bleadon History and all the usual village activities that help us love this place.

Merry Chrimbo and a happy new year to you all.

Editor



Unless otherwise stated the opinions and comments expressed in this publication are those of the editor or contributor and may not be those of Bleadon Parish Council.

Season's greetings to all our readers

Please don't mention the weather!

In spite of the worst summer on record, dreadful flooding and now the cold snap, Bleadon keeps calm and carries on.

Here's my review of the last six months condensed down to a few lines.

A successful May Fayre was quickly followed by the celebrations for the Queen's Jubilee weekend, which included the Scarecrow Festival and the youth club's Family Day of Fun. The parish council's free gift of a Jubilee memento for all Bleadon children completed the celebrations. If Bleadon residents haven't collected their child's unique Jubilee celebration coin yet please let me know. Grandparents who have children living outside the village may wish to purchase a celebration coin as a gift. Please contact me on 01934 815331 if you wish to still obtain a Bleadon Jubilee coin.

The annual Contactus welcome party went ahead as planned in the Coronation Hall in mid summer in spite of there being only a few new neighbours in the village. The 2013 welcome party will be on Friday 21 June. If you have new neighbours between now and then please try and get them to come along.

Autumn began with a cornerstone Bleadon event, the Harvest Supper, always greatly enjoyed. By October the much acclaimed book *A History of Bleadon* written and illustrated by John Hickley was launched. A delightfully colourful and enlightening book which Bleadon can be really proud of.

The parish council thank the donors of the two commemorative trees recently planted in front of the Coronation Hall. The kind and generous gift from these two families is very much appreciated.

The village floral tubs, although lying low at the moment, are planted up ready for winter and spring colour. Meanwhile, the parish Christmas tree is twinkling in front of the Coronation Hall.

Although the parish council recessed in August the wheels of democracy kept turning with short informal meetings for planning, open spaces and finance. The regular council business of looking after Bleadon continues 24/7. We meet on the second Monday each month at 7.30pm in the Coronation Hall. Residents are very welcome to come and see us working on your behalf.

A Civic Service will be held on Sunday 21 April at 10.15 at the church of St Peter & St Paul, Bleadon. We should love to see you there.

In the coming year we shall tackle the financial constraints and difficulties that all parishes and councils now face from government. It seems that now the buck really does stop here!

We plan to set up a Flood Action team of volunteers to put in place immediate plans to help alleviate the problems we face all too frequently these days. The first job being to give North Somerset a list of flooding hot spots.

I thank you for your continuing support and encouragement of the team of volunteer councillors and the officers that is your parish council. A thank you also to the unheralded helpers in our community that have once again made this a year of Bleadon at its best.

Happy Christmas and a very happy new year.

Penney Skelley, Chairman Bleadon Parish Council



NEWS

Andy Eddy retired from his voluntary role as our local West Mendip Ranger a couple of years ago. But you can't keep a good man down. Now he's looking for a band of volunteers to help him keep Bleadon's public footpaths in good order.

Over the summer months residents who use the footpaths have noticed a decline in the up-keep of some of our many local footpaths. A wet summer promoted excessive growth of weeds and brambles.

That growth, coupled with the reduction in budgets at North Somerset Council has meant that many of our footpaths have become difficult to negotiate. Andy hopes, with your help, to put that right.

Working with the support of North Somerset Council and Bleadon Parish Council he will train volunteers to safely use tools and strimmers to ensure that any work done by the team is safe and good practice.

Whilst North Somerset Council is responsible for the legal management of footpaths and the maintenance of Public Rights of Way, it has to do so within its

budgets. With severe budget cuts affecting all council services it is likely that footpath maintenance will be reduced to match the reduced budget.

On Permissive footpaths over private land it is up to landowners to ensure that paths are accessible. Unfortunately, for many landowners access for the public is too often a very low priority.

I'm also afraid that over the coming years we will see even less footpath maintenance being done by the district council as local budgets are cut further and further.

If you would like to volunteer to help Andy with our Bleadon footpaths please contact him now on 01934 814264

or email the Parish Clerk at:
parishclerk@bleadonparishcouncil.gov.uk



Ragwort - beauty or beast?

Few readers who enjoy our many footpaths can have failed to notice the proliferation of bright yellow flowers this past summer.

It may look pretty in our fields and verges but it contains a toxin that can be dangerous to cattle and horses if eaten in quantity.

Ragwort has received quite a bit of media coverage and is a perennial topic each summer at parish council meetings. Many facts are presented, but also many myths. It is a fact that some Ragwort are poisonous to mammals, but it is a myth that an animal dies if it ingests only a mouthful. It is also a fact that Ragwort is poisonous to humans, but a myth that it is a serious health hazard to people. Furthermore, it is a fact that Ragwort is currently more common in Britain than 30 years ago, but a myth that this species is an extremely efficient wind disperser.

Although Ragworts can be a significant nuisance to horse keepers, it is a very important source of nectar and pollen. About 150 species of insects, such as bees, flies and butterflies, visit the plant. Therefore, even if it were possible, eradicating the plant is not always a desirable option. We have to find a variety of practical ways to protect livestock.

Pulling up and removing the plant before it seeds is very labour intensive but appears to be the best practical solution without harming wildlife.

Conveniences



The parish council is still considering whether to take over the ownership and management of the public conveniences on the

Coronation car park site.

This follows the planned withdrawal of North Somerset Council

funding and operation of all its public toilets from the end of March 2013 as part of the district council's current 40% cut in budgets.

Bleadon Parish Council has been in negotiations with North Somerset since it first heard about the planned withdrawal of service. Our public toilets are seen as a major asset in the heart of the village and the parish council would not wish to see them closed and boarded up.

Transfer of the asset would see a return of both the building and surrounding green space to the parish council. The site had originally belonged to the parish council but was passed to Axbridge Rural District Council in 1959 when the RDC wanted to build the toilets. So things have come full circle.

North Somerset have promised to ensure that the building is in good repair before it is handed over. I also understand that there is some funding available towards the legal costs of the property transfer.

Currently the toilets cost around £3000 to operate each year. These costs include Water, Sewerage and Business Rates, electricity, maintenance, supplies and cleaning. The parish council will be seeking to reduce these running costs in order to afford this additional burden on the Parish Precept.

A recent user survey threw up some surprising statistics on the amount of usage of the two toilets. North Somerset figures suggest that the average summertime cost per user is just 19p. The pattern of use would suggest that many users (probably the majority) are visitors to the village. However, the facility is an essential convenience for play area families, church-goers and car park users.

Transfer of the surrounding land would also ensure that the village retains its useful little public green space in front of the toilets and the bike racks alongside the toilets for use by the community.

How much do the toilets cost?

Figures from North Somerset reveal that the current annual running cost is £2941.39.

Cleaning + supplies	£1693.05
Sewerage Rates	£260.88
Water Rates	£190.68
Council Rates	£400.27
Repair + maintenance	£221.55
Electricity	£174.96

How would the parish pay for the toilets?

The parish council is faced with a number of options when it comes to funding the operation of the public conveniences:

- Add the cost to the Precept. Thereby increasing the average cost per household by £6. This is unlikely to be palatable to the council tax payer or the members of the parish council.
- Take funds from parish council savings (Reserves) to operate the service until a better solution can be found.
- Make savings within the current parish council budget to pay for the toilets. This will mean a significant reduction in some services or activities currently provided by the parish council.
- Charge people to use the toilet. The obvious solution, but one that is likely to cost a lot of money to install, implement and maintain in the current building. It is unlikely that we would ever see a full return on our investment.

If parishioners have any constructive suggestions, I'm sure that the parish council would love to hear them before the next council meeting on Monday 14 January 2013.

Failing to find a way for the parish council to fund the continuation of our public toilets will see this village centre building closed and boarded up within the next four months.

NEWS...it's been very wet

Over recent weeks we've seen a lot of rain fall on our little parish. It is at times like these that we all realise what a mixed landscape we live in. With the Mendip Hills shedding their rainfall down onto the less fortunate souls that live on the floodplain at the south and west end of the parish. The heavy rain resulted in flooding in several areas, with Coronation Road, Bridge Garage and Purn Way being particularly badly hit.

The parish council was quick to react to public concern and passed those concerns on to the two agencies that are chiefly responsible - North Somerset Council and Wessex Water. Whilst it took some time to resolve the issues because of the extreme work load both authorities were under at the time it is a little reassuring that some remedial action was taken. This included the arrival next day of Cllr Terry Porter (Chairman of North Somerset Council) to see the problem for himself. Here are some of the responses we received to our pleas for help.

Be assured that the Executive is treating the flooding across North Somerset very seriously indeed and officers are meeting with the other agencies such as the EA and IDB to get to the root of the causes at the worst affected spots.

As you will appreciate with the ground already sodden and rhynes full, often the additional heavy deluges have nowhere to

go, hence drains overflowing which normally could cope. This isn't helped when leaves and debris also can't get away and block the pipes. To conclude we are looking at putting extra funding in to sort issues where clearly NSC drainage is not up to the job but this is not a short term issue and the onus is also on the other agencies and land owners to take their drainage clearance seriously. We will be working to this

end by advising where we can with the threat of prosecution if necessary.

Meanwhile property owners in affected or at risk areas are strongly advised to take their own precautions by purchasing sand bags etc to use as barriers when floods threaten.

In the end heavy rain is something none of us can stop!

Councillor, Elfan Ap-Rees

North Somerset Council

It has been a very busy time indeed. Be assured though, much of my time in the recent heavy weather has been spent in Bleadon looking at drainage problems on Coronation Road, Bleadon Road, Bridge Road, Shiplate Road and Purn Way. As always, I will be forwarding all relevant information I've obtained to our highway drainage team for them in turn to decide upon the appropriate course of action and, where budget allows, prioritise works amongst their jetting and maintenance scheme lists.

As Councillor Ap Rees describes below, many of the issues experienced in Bleadon and beyond are not directly under our control from a maintenance point of view, but are a consequence of

insufficient rhyne capacity for current levels of rain, or of neglectful practices on the behalf of landowners or external agencies in clearing ditches etc, so I'm pleased to hear that this is being tackled in the long term.

With regard to Bridge Road garage, our drainage team have been made aware that despite previous works issues still exist here. Unfortunately with a small team, a limited budget and exceptional weather conditions which have persisted on and off since Spring, they have very large back logs of on site investigations that need to be held, jetting works that need to be carried out and maintenance works that are required. At the moment therefore I'm not able to offer any significant

feedback on their behalf. All I can suggest is that if there is a risk of flooding to property or a significant hazard in the highway which is reported to you here, you contact me and if there is anything I can do to assist I will. Owners/managers of Bridge Road garage should do the same by calling our contact centre on 01934 888802 who will then raise a call for my attention. Unfortunately of course I can't promise to clear any flooding at such times, but will do my best to help in any way possible.

I'm sorry I can't offer news of a more immediate solution to this problem.

Will Price, NSC Area Officer responsible for Bleadon.

Wessex Water

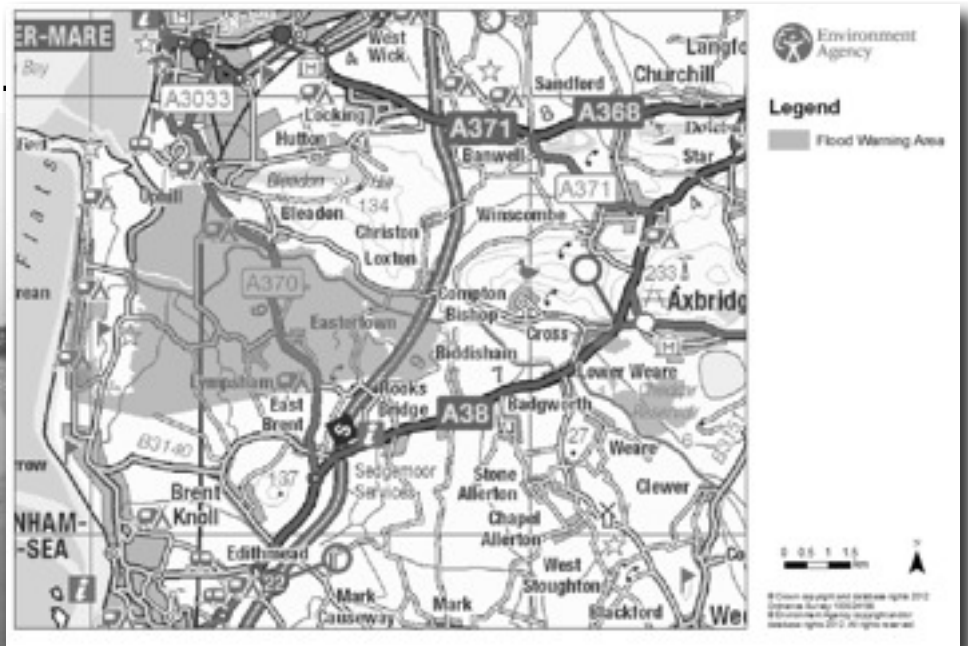
The flooding experienced here was due to the excessive rainfall and run off water from the highway entering the foul public sewer, overwhelming it and causing backing up and flooding. I confirm the Bleadon

pumping station was working to full capacity. Also, once the flooding levels had receded we re-opened an old overflow that had been capped off, which alleviated the surface water run off.

Jonathan Paget, Wessex Water Customer Relations

Cllr Ap-Rees is working to try and reallocate Highways funding to help solve some of the recent highway flooding problems. A lengthy Hit List of problem areas has already started.

He wants to hear from local people who can identify where the persistent problems occur.



The Environment Agency's floodplan (above) indicates the likely scenario that flooding from the sea would extend to the Bridge Road and Bleaden Road rhyme. Low areas along the river Axe towards Loxton could also be affected.

New Floodplan measures now offer a more accurate Flood Warning Service, ensuring those people at risk of flooding can receive tidal flood warnings when they need them.

Your quickdial code

The quickdial code gives you direct access to up-to-date recorded information about any flood warnings for your area. You can access this information by calling **Floodline on 0845 988 1188** and entering the quickdial code **164271** for the **Somerset coast around Brean and Lympsham** when requested.

You can also find flooding information on the Environment Agency website. Navigate to the flood warning page to search for flood warning info for this area, using either your postcode or river Axe.

Act now by planning what you would do in a flood

Householder flood plan: completing a flood plan will help you decide what practical actions to take for a flood. Find a template for a flood plan at: www.environment-agency.gov.uk/floodsouthwest

Community flood plan: As a community group you can prepare for a flood. Completing a community flood plan will help local members and groups plan how they can work together to respond quickly when flooding happens.

To contact someone in your local area office who can provide support and advice on your community flood plan call 01278 484812 or email custswnw@environment-agency.gov.uk



Marshalls quarry undertake environmental improvements

Earlier this year residents in Bridge Road had expressed concerns about the build up of dust sediments on the rhyne bed opposite Marshalls entrance. These concerns had been passed to the Environment Agency and the parish council.

In January the Environment Agency visited the site and carried out an inspection. This confirmed that rain water run-off from the quarry and spills from the lorry wheel wash at the site entrance were carrying limestone sediments into the rhyne.

Consistant low water levels in the rhyne and minimum maintenance of the rhyne by the Drainage Board meant that the sediments were collecting and not being washed away as effectively as in the past.

In July parish councillors met with Sean Clarke, Business Unit Manager at Marshalls Quarry. Sean had requested the meeting with parish councillors to provide an up-date on progress regarding our concerns.

Busting a couple of myths

The sediments are natural limestone dust and not a cement product.

Waste water from the manufacturing process is cleaned and goes into the foul water drainage system - not the rhyne.

Several **causes of the sediment wash off** were identified by Marshalls and the Environment Agency:

Heavy rain washes sediment from the four large aggregate storage bays. Whilst these bays are roofed rain can still penetrate at the open front of the bays and wash through the piles of aggregate. The wash off runs down the sloping concrete floor of the quarry towards the entrance.

Over-filled buckets on the loading shovel carrying aggregate across the site can create spillages.

Heavy rainwater washes limestone sediment off the quarry walls.

Vehicles passing through an **over-filled wheel wash** can cause a wave

of water to overflow the sloping wash pit. This run-off can then drain to the rhyne.

Dirty vehicles can carry soil/ aggregate from other sites into and out of the quarry in their wheel arches.

The solution

Reduce the amount of aggregate carried around the site in loading shovel buckets to reduce spillage.

More regular cleaning of the quarry floor. A dedicated cleaning tractor with purpose-built scrubbers has been purchased at a cost of £10,000. This cleans the quarry floor daily and deals immediately with any spills.

Reduction of the amount of aggregate kept in the four storage bays. This ensures that the aggregate is kept further back from the front of the bays where rain penetrates.

Installation of a deep sump within the existing wheel wash. This helps limestone sediment and dust to settle out of direct reach of vehicle wheels.

Creation of a new covered surface gully running diagonally across the quarry floor to capture rainwater and

sediment before it reaches the entrance.

This new gully runs into a new 10 cu mtr settlement pit near the entrance. Collected water is cleaned and put into the (Wessex Water) foul water system. Limestone sediments are allowed to settle before being scooped out to be re-used in product manufacture. Cost of this drainage improvement work is over £40,000.

Marshalls will pay for the Axe Brue Drainage Board to clean out the rhyne along Bridge Road and part of Bleadon Road for a length of 500mtrs at a cost estimated at over £3000.

During the parish councillors visit to the quarry site we experienced a heavy downfall of rain. We saw at first hand the problem of water run-off pouring down the slope of the site towards the Bridge Road entrance.

There was evidence that the new cleaning regime and other simple measures to control aggregate are helping to keep the site clean.

Excavation of the new settlement tank near the quarry entrance in August 2012



NEWS

Street light to starlight * *

In the summer issue of BVN we reported the forthcoming switching off after midnight of the village street lights controlled by North Somerset Council. It happened sooner than expected.

Has anyone noticed?

Frankly, I was expecting a bit of grumbling from some residents. But it's possible that no one has found the reduction in street lighting anything but a bonus. Those of us who live in lit streets can now enjoy an unpolluted view of the starry skies after midnight (cloud permitting).

Just goes to show that some economic cut-backs can have a bit of a benefit.



Christmas recycling / waste collection

Recycling and waste collection dates will change over the Christmas and New Year in Bleadon.

They will still be collecting between Christmas and New Year – so continue to put out your recycling and non-recycling waste.

Mon 24 Dec No change
Mon 31 Dec Change to Wed 2 Jan
Mon 7 Jan Change to Tues 8 Jan

Recycling centres – closed 25 and 26 Dec and 1 Jan.

Details at www.n-somerset.gov.uk/recyclingcentres

Put your **real Christmas trees** out with your green garden waste collection in January or take it to the recycling centre.

Cardboard can be placed next to your green box, but please flatten, fold or cut it into manageable pieces – and keep it free from polystyrene packaging. Polystyrene should go in your wheelie non-recycling waste.

Severe weather advice

If snow and ice disrupts recycling and waste services and the vehicles can't get out to collect here's what you should do:

Non-recycling waste: Put it out on your collection day. If it's not collected leave it out. They will collect it as soon as possible.

Recycling/food waste: Put it out on your collection day. If it's not collected by 7pm, take them back in and put it out again the following week on collection day.

Green garden waste: Put it out on your collection day. If it's not collected bring it back in and put it out again the following month on your next collection day.



A busy publisher

Local artist John Hickley has been very busy over the past couple of months signing copies of his Illustrated History of Bleadon. The limited edition hardback has been selling like hot cakes. We are privileged to be able to reproduce some sample thumbnail pages in the centre of this Bleadon Village News.

Dog bins are for walkers' dog poo only.

Whilst it's great to see our dog bins being so well used, once again we are experiencing problems with overflowing dog waste bins .





This is caused primarily by people leaving other domestic rubbish in them and bringing large bags of dog poo from home. Yes, unbelievable!

Whilst the bins are emptied by Fountains every Monday they soon overflow if people are selfish enough to use them for other purposes.

The bins are intended for use by village dog walkers only and are not suitable for domestic rubbish. Please use your home wheelie bin for that. If dog walkers find the bins full we ask you to please take your little parcels home.

Village people

An open invitation from Cynth Sparks, Reserves Warden, Avon Wildlife Trust



Avon Wildlife would be pleased to welcome anyone to their team of voluntary helpers looking after our reserves at Purn Hill and Hellenge. If you enjoy the great outdoors, would like some gentle exercise and are interested in the natural world why not join them when you have the time? They're a small and friendly team who normally meet at Hellenge on a Tuesday and Purn on a Thursday. There is no need to commit yourself to attending regularly. They would be pleased to receive any help you can offer. So if you would like to see buzzards and barn owls; foxes, deer and adders; or the fantastic wild flowers that grow on the limestone grassland please get in touch.

Cynth can be contacted on 204028 or at:
cynthia.sparks@sky.com.


Alan Kerr can be contacted on 812084 or at:
alan.kerr@tinyworld.co.uk.

Bleadon bag travels

Bleadon's unique bags continue to show up in some unlikely places far and wide



Jill and Dave Hobbs took their bag mid-Atlantic to the Azores, whilst Chris Cudlipp went for gold at the London Olympics. For some it's just bare-faced cheek in France!



I'm not so sure that's REALLY Santa. In sunglasses?

Do you ride tandem?

Malcolm and Grace's tandem ride to London.

During one gloomy January day we were sat thinking of warm summer days ahead when we decided a great adventure would be to cycle to London. Whilst we are regular tandem "day" cyclists we had never toured on bikes before so this would be a new and different challenge. We had to carry enough clothes and kit for several days. The date was set for the second week of July when we would be in the depth of a fine British summer! Our friends Janet and Dave Jones asked if they could join us on their tandem.

Day 1 Bleadon to Devizes 68 miles Sunday 8th July

Saturday had been a day of torrential rain, Dorset and Devon towns had been severely hit by flooding so we were a little concerned to say the least. Fortunately the day turned out to be dry, sunny and mild with a small rain shower in Bath where we stopped for lunch.

Setting off at 8am our route was through back lanes and a small section of the A370 into Bristol. There we stopped for coffee at the dockside museum after which we joined the Bristol to Bath cycle path into Bath. Out of Bath the Sustrans National Cycle Route 4 joins the Kennet and Avon canal tow path and following the day of rain this turned out to be a very wet route covering the tandem and our legs in mud! Through Bradford on Avon and climbing up past the amazing Caen Hill flight of locks we arrived in Devizes at 5pm.

Day 2 Devizes to Newbury 40 miles

From Devizes Route 4 continues to follow the K & A canal but along small country lanes which was much more pleasant than the muddy tow path we had used the previous day. Stopping in Pewsey for coffee and the renovated Cofton pumping station along the way. We had lunch in Hungerford and arrived dry in Newbury in time for a lovely stroll around the town.

Day 3 Newbury to Windsor 48 miles

Continuing to follow the K & A canal we eventually arrive in Reading town centre where we stopped for lunch.

After Reading we join the Thames cycle route which took us into Maidenhead where we stopped for afternoon tea. This was the day when we got wet....very wet! After leaving Maidenhead the storm clouds gathered and a heavy down pour started. We sheltered under a tree but after just a few minutes of very heavy rain the tree ceased to be any kind of shelter. The rain stopped after around 30 mins so we continued with our journey. Passing Eaton Dorney lakes where the route was diverted around the perimeter of the Olympic rowing venue, arriving at our hotel at 4.30pm.

Day 4 Windsor

We had always planned to take a day off in Windsor as we had not visited before. So we enjoyed a dry day walking around lovely Eaton and Windsor.

Day 5 Windsor to Teddington Lock 32 miles

Through Windsor into Great Windsor Park and then past the RAF memorial where we stopped. Amazing views across the Thames from the tower there and a very humbling. Under the M25 and into Staines where we joined the path alongside the Thames itself. Catching a small ferry boat across to Weybridge saved a few miles along a busy road. Safely across we continued alongside the Thames. In the afternoon we passed Hampton Court Palace before arriving in Kingston then onto Teddington for our last hotel stop.

Day 6 Teddington to Paddington 19 miles + 3 mile ride home from W-s-M Station

From Teddington we crossed the footbridge over the Thames and headed into Richmond Park. Out of the park along small roads and following the route of the Olympic Cycle Road Races we arrived at Putney bridge. Then into Westminster via small roads and along the Chelsea Embankment. Stopping in Pimlico for coffee. On into central London with a stop off at Westminster, Buckingham Palace and Hyde park before going to Paddington for our booked afternoon train home. 210 miles cycled with just 1 puncture.



*Photos: Along the Kennet & Avon;
Bath lunchstop;
Heading into Maidenhead with storm
clouds gathering;
Outside Buckingham Palace*

Dot's Olympian day to remember

Denise Marsh, Yoga Teacher at Bleadon, put Dot Reaney's name forward to run with the Olympic Torch. At the age of 86, Dot is her original and eldest student. Bleadon Yoga Group organised a coach to go to Washford on the 21 May 2012 to cheer Dot on.

Extracts from
Dot's Olympic
diary - Monday
21 May 2012

8 am Hadn't slept much, but up for a shower and breakfast.

10 am Rechecked uniform, trainers, socks and white jumper for underneath my top). Now the all important miniscule pocket in my trousers – my passport (just fitted), added tissues, sweet, lipstick and a couple of Gaviscon. Put a £10 note in my shoe. I wasn't permitted to take, camera, phone, coat or any luggage. Copied my identity number and location on a small card in my pocket. I had to be at Dunster Castle at 3.15 pm for my "Run" at 5.25 pm.

1 pm Ken on time. Threw coat, bottle of water, small purse and comb into his car and we were off. It really was going to happen. We passed flags and bunting en route.

2.30 pm Arrived at Dunster Car Park where lots of Police were in evidence. We were directed up through the High Street and after showing identification we were waved into the Castle Car Park. They were busy briefing the torch bearers who were about to do the Dunster Run. I was told I was too early and to come back at 4 pm.

Off to the Lutterell Arms for a tray of tea. Then back to the Car Park to wait and watch the helicopter take off. The other torch bearers arrived, we were seven in all.

The two girls in charge offered us bottles of water or cola – they were following the torch daily and were only managing 5 hours sleep at night. I asked to hold a torch to compare with the homemade one I had been training with. It felt top heavy but only 800 grams and quite comfortable. We had a couple of group photographs together – but I had no camera of course. The Bomb Disposal team asked if they could join in too and the atmosphere was friendly and jolly.

4 pm We got into the shuttle bus. It was good to sit down at last. There

was a special rack designed to hold the torches. We were three men, three women and a boy.

5 pm After various radio messages we moved off in cavalcade to Washford where people were lining the streets. We dropped off the first lady – we all cheered and moved on, then dropped off the two Frenchmen in succession. Then it was Jeremy's turn - he was greeted by his Parkinson supporters in blue t-shirts.

Next it was my turn. When I alighted I was delighted to be greeted by my daughter, granddaughter and friends who had located my drop off point. There was time to greet everyone and take photos whilst we awaited the arrival of Jeremy. It was several minutes before the cavalcade arrived. One of the Police checked the gas in my torch as Jeremy arrived – then Jeremy's torch "kissed" mine and I was given a little prod to move off. The torch was no problem as I had rehearsed it so often. I tried to

acknowledge all friends on both sides of the road "Go for it Dot". It was lovely to be cheered by so many familiar smiling faces. I tried to move at a smart pace.

My flame was then transferred into a lantern and my torch extinguished. A hasty *hi* to my friends and I was bundled into the bus to speed on to Williton where the last two torch bearers were to run. – the boy was first then the final lady of our group of seven. When the final torch bearer got back in she was panting – and that was it! We then had to turn around and go back to Dunster which was difficult in the crowd and traffic chaos.

It was an experience I shall never forget, and over all too quickly.



Dot's yoga pals give her a yoga mat guard of honour



First and last Challenge

Bleadon Guide leaders Janet and Jacqui took five girls from the Bleadon Guides to the Malvern Challenge in the summer to join over 3000 other scouts and guides.

The girls took part in an activity hike and came 321st out of over 500 teams, not bad for a first attempt.

Especially as it was their first guide camp too.

Unfortunately this was also to be one of the last activities for our Bleadon Guides. When the group returned after the summer break only two girls turned up for the Tuesday evening sessions. So the leaders had little option but to shut the unit down. This must have been disheartening for the voluntary leaders who have worked so hard to keep the group going.

This is a great loss for the youngsters in our community, but I guess that young people these days are looking for other activities and ways of socialising.



The Olympic Torch

As the torch seems to be my constant companion I realise many are unaware of its qualities and its effects on those who handle it.

Comments like "You have made my day" are quite common.

Everyone seems to want to touch and hold this piece of golden magic.

My torch has already travelled to Plymouth, Walliscote School, Bleadon Toddler Group, Mark WI, Mark School & Pre-school, the Friendship Club and more.

It may be just 10 cms wide and less than a metre long, but the Olympic torch is one of the Games most potent symbols. Over 600 agencies submitted proposals to design it. The winners were Edward Barber and Jay Osgerby of East London.

The torch has 8,000 holes created with lasers which gives it its transparent appearance and also prevents heat from being conducted down to the handle. The holes represent the number of people who took part in the relay. The London torch is triangular, a first for the Olympic torch which are usually cylindrical. The flame is kept alive by a gas burner held in the centre of the torch. There was enough fuel to keep the flame burning for at least 10 minutes.

The material used for the inner and outer skins is aluminium and the whole thing weighs just 800 grams.



Quiz fundraiser

This year's 4th annual **Phoenix Quiz** in aid of Clic Sargent was a very lively affair as usual, with a close contest resulting in Philip Stevens' team finishing just ahead of Steve Hartree's, thus preserving the hierarchical order for the time being. Even the 11th team were only 15 points behind the winners, so the average scores were good. The financial result is £355 for the charity funds.

The main contributors were obviously the free-spending competitors, but one must also mention the sterling work put in by Reyn Badger behind the bar (where else?) and star caterers Lynn Riding, Jean Stott and Doreen Ward, whose appetisingly-presented ploughman's supper left hardly a scrap behind.

Probably the most enjoyed question was the one about Brigitte Bardot's appearance on Desert Island Discs.

Les Masters

Bleadon Toddler Group held a fancy dress competition to celebrate the Diamond Jubilee, where all the children came dressed as either a king or queen. We all enjoyed a cream tea with scones kindly supplied by Batch Country House.

They also had a visit by Avon & Somerset Fire and Rescue service, giving parents / carers some fire safety advice whilst the younger ones enjoyed sitting in the fire engine, trying on uniforms and even cooling off with a spray from the hose!

The Toddler Group meet every Wednesday in the Coronation Hall from 9.30am to 11.30. If you've got a toddler or are expecting one pop in and see us.



Two trees planted as living memorials

The parish council was recently approached by two families who wanted to celebrate the lives of two men who loved Bleadon and who will always be very special to them. The council was delighted to use these kind gifts to smarten up the garden area in the front of the Coronation Hall.



On Saturday, 24 November 2012, a Chanticleer Pear tree was planted in the garden to the front of the Coronation Hall by the family of **Graham Lockyer**.

Libby, daughters Karen and Zoë, sons-in law Steve and Jon, grandchildren Luke and Charlotte share Graham's love of trees - may it grow tall and flourish.

Thanks go to Debbie Chard for sourcing the two Chanticleer Pear trees and arranging their safe delivery. Plus Dave Baxter, who prepared the groundworks and removed the old Rowan tree which had gone well past its "Best Before" date.

Saturday 10 November - Pat Palmer and daughters Debbie and Susan nurture the tree that celebrates the life of **David Palmer**.

David Palmer loved Bleadon all his life. He was born not far away in the village of Loxton, but his family moved to Bleadon when he was very young. They lived at first in 'Pear Tree Cottage' and later in 'Chestnut House' (which is now called 'Barley Cottage') on Purn Lane. Much later on David's father, Fred Palmer, and his second wife moved to a cottage further down the lane belonging to Dick House.

David had a happy childhood in the village. He was an outdoors child, as children were in those days. He spent his days scrambling over South Hill or Hellenge. He attended Bleadon Primary School and was taught by Mrs Bell and Mrs Parker. When he was 8 years old he had a bad accident on South Hill. The Home Guard was practising with dummy hand-grenades and one hit him in the head. He was taken to Weston-s-Mare hospital by his future sister-in-law on the bus! His mother couldn't go as she had just given birth to his sister Barbara. Barbara now lives in Bleadon in 'The Chestnuts' on Purn Lane, next to their former family home. The hospital performed emergency brain surgery and David missed a year of school.



However he was quite clever and still gained a grammar school place.

At 15 David joined the boys' service at the Army Apprentice School in Harrogate. At 18 he went into adult service with the Royal Corps of Signals. He married in St Peter's and St Paul's church in Bleadon in 1957.

He first met his future wife in 1941 when her family was evacuated to the village. She remembers seeing a blond boy sitting on the wall outside Pear Tree Cottage. Her family resided first in the Rectory with Rev Powis-Davies and his wife, who was famous for her large hats and enthusiastic singing in church. The family moved on to share 3 Eastfield Cottages with a local family. After the war the local family was allocated one of the new council houses and David's mother-in-law, Elizabeth Gore stayed on. She lived there until 1971 when she got one of the bungalows in The Veale.



His romance with Patricia Gore started in 1956. He went to visit his Aunt Hilda at 9 Veale Site, where his cousin Brian and his wife still live, and his future wife was there in the kitchen. They went for a ride on his motorbike and stopped at 'The Rock of Ages' in Burrington Combe. David went back to camp but the romance continued and they were married the following year.

David always loved Bleadon and often came over to South Hill or Hellenge to walk his dog. He was keen on amateur radio and spent hours on Roman Road where the reception is good. David was always surrounded by females with 2 daughters and 3 granddaughters. A large house party was held for his 40th wedding anniversary in Mulberry House in Mulberry Lane.



The idea for this book occurred to me about three years ago. Fifty subjects were eventually chosen from information available, and which would make suitable illustrations.

Research sometimes proved difficult or sparse, other times more could have been written had space permitted.

These events and people of the past formed our history, the foundation and framework of Bleadon today. Learning about them was intriguing. With imagination, history became revealed in the village and the surrounding hills.

If my illustrations can start the process in others, my time will have been well spent.

I should like to thank those who encouraged the book, and those who support its sale.

John Hickley 813924
lornajohn@talktalk.net

Over the next couple of pages Bleadon Village News readers are treated to a glimpse into some of the fifty colourful spreads that tell the story of our village from the Ice Age to the present day.

Copies of John's delightful hardback book are available from him at just £25.

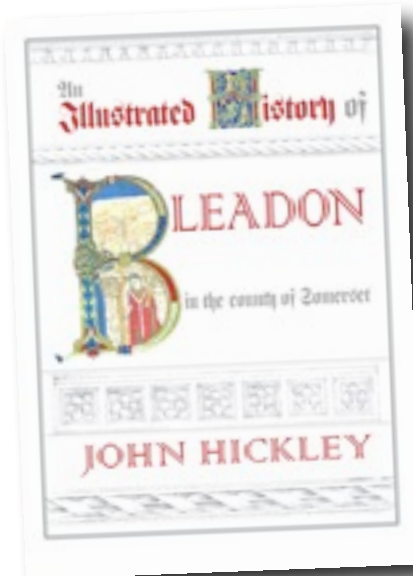
Call John or Lorna on 813924 to reserve your limited edition.

You might think Bleadon is too ordinary a village to deserve a history of its own. I used to think so too. It was the research started by Margaret Cullen that encouraged me to think that there might be enough material for a book.

We were off to a good start. Viking raids on the village, the oldest Parish Map in the whole of Somerset, and the Domesday Book tells us that Bleadon was worth a lot more than Westminster, Hampstead and Knightsbridge. One of our parish priests was martyred by King Henry VIII, and another was murdered by his own brother. In the past the youth of the village "charmed the birds from the trees". There are tales of brave, courageous and inventive people who have lived here.

Tragedies too, floods and the earliest of windmills. Reindeer relics from the Ice Age were revealed at Purn Hill and then, of course, there is Bleadon Man.

There turned out to be more than enough to fill fifty pages. At the outset I was far more interested in illustrating the text than in writing it. I even tried to persuade others to write it. However, the research soon proved quite fascinating in itself.



Each illustration has been given a border according to the period, repeated on the text side, with a colourful initial letter. This limits the text to one page for each subject - not a bad thing! The finished result perhaps could be said to resemble more a grown-up picture book, rather than a conventional old style history book.





BLEADON WAS

in the possession of Earl Godwin, the richest man in England. As advisor to King Canute he had been made Earl of Wessex, the southern third of England. It was a powerful unscrupulous family. He and his wife Gytha had ten children, a future Queen, a future King, and three more Earls. The eldest, Sweyn seduced an abbess, fled to Denmark, committed some other crime, fled to England, murdered his cousin, fled to Flanders, and died on his way back from a much-needed pilgrimage to Jerusalem. Earl Godwin had persuaded the King, Edward the Confessor to marry his daughter Edith even though he had killed the King's brother. The marriage was never consummated.

In 1051 the entire family were exiled by Edward, but within a year Godwin had threatened his way back to Earlhood. Gytha's exile had taken her to Flatholm 'with the wives of many good folk', and then to St. Omer, Calais.

Earl Godwin died dramatically in 1053. His seal initiates this page. He either had a stroke at a Royal banquet or choked on bread while denying his disloyalty to the King. It may be that he ensured the King's lack of a successor in order to see his son accede, and when the King died, Harold Godwinson did indeed become King, but not for long. It was 1066.

Gytha had given the Manor of Bleadon to the Priory of St. Swithun at Winchester, in 1056. Perhaps she had become familiar with the place during her enforced time on Flatholm, or perhaps during the hunting expeditions to the Bristol Channel enjoyed by Edward and his entourage. She retired to Winchester, a sharp contrast to the little island. Her widowed daughter, Edith was probably already there and another, Gunhilda, a nun, also may have been.

The city was, with Norwich, a rival to London. It had been a centre of the Belgae folk in Roman times, then abandoned, but restored by King Alfred. It had a population of between three and four thousand, and had its own Bishop as early as 662. The Cathedral was started in 1079 by Bishop Walkelin, who owned Bleadon at the time of Domesday. The importance of the city diminished in 1154 when Henry II transferred the exchequer to Westminster. Walkelin's successor as Bishop was Henry of Blois, nephew to Henry I, the richest prelate in England, a great art connoisseur and also owner of the first legal brothel in London.

THE PRIORY OF
ST SWITHUN
WINCHESTER

STEPHOLM

PLAT HOLM



The Domesday Book

of 1086, credits Bleadon with a rental value of fifteen pounds. Westminster, Hampton and Knightsbridge together had a value of ten. The lord of the Manor was Walkelin, Bishop of Winchester, and the rent was for the sustenance of the monks. The full extent of the village was described as 15 hides, roughly enough to support 15 households.

Most of the land was in the hands of villans, villagers, cotars or borlars, cottagers, or hut-dwellers. They had various obligations to the lord, and a few benefits. For example, a cottar would work for the lord each Monday, and for three days a week at harvest. He should have 'at least 5 acres', work as needed on the lord's land, and pay his church dues at Martinmas. The duties of a tenant farmer were to work for the lord two days, and three at harvest, and from Candlemas till Easter. He should pay 10 pence tax at Michaelmas. Some paid tax in food, honey or even ale. A shepherd, describing his work, says "at early morning I drive the sheep to pasture at the top of the hill, stand over them in the heat and cold, lest wolves devour them, lead them back to the fold, milk them twice a day, move their folds, and make butter and cheese". As a benefit, a shepherd would be given a lamb each year, a fleece, and milk from the flock for 7 days after the equinox. The serfs, those of the lowest economic status, were to have Christmas and Easter supplies, a "handful" of the harvest, and an acre for ploughing. Originally an acre was as much as one could plough in a day.

These fascinating, complex and arcane rules existed for the governance of the village. They applied to each occupation, and level of society, and would have been overseen by the Bishop's representatives. The manorial reeve, who was possibly elected by the villagers, or nominated by the Bishop, organised communal work, under the lord's bailiff. He in turn was subject to the steward, who was probably in charge of several of the bishop's holdings.

Handwritten Latin text from the Domesday Book, including the heading 'De Bleadon' and several lines of entries.



Bleadon's pulpit is a rare treasure

There are only about sixty Mediaeval stone pulpits of this form remaining in England, sometimes known as wingglass pulpits, often in oak and occasionally painted. Several others exist nearby, in Barwell, Locking and Ilton, Kewstoke and Worle. It suggests a skilled master mason with his apprentices working in the area around the year 1460.

A wide range and variety of decorative elements is employed in his work to create uniquely individual masterpieces of stone carving. His work in Bleadon church deserves a close look. For example, the lower band of decoration, grapes and vine-leaves, is angled downwards. It is carved as carefully as any part, yet would seldom be seen by anyone. In the restoration of one of Michelangelo's sculptures, when it was removed from the niche where it had stood for four hundred years, features were discovered that were never intended or expected to been seen, and were there only as a sign of the craftsmanship and integrity of the artist. This same integrity is present in the humble journeyman whose beautiful decorative carvings grace Bleadon church.

The tower of the church is earlier and dates from about 1190, probably replacing the original central tower, which had been there before the alterations to the chancel in 1317. Church towers are part of the glory of the Somerset countryside, some richly decorated and elaborate like Wington, Barwell and Winscombe. Although others are more modest and restrained, they too play their part in the scene.

At the time that Bleadon's pulpit was being installed, Gutenberg's printing presses were being carried across the Alps by mule train. On their way to Rome, the printers spent time at a monastery. The monks, familiar with the manufacture of copied books, soon learned the new skills. By the time the presses had been in Rome for ten years, 160,000 books had been printed. Like many new inventions, print mimicked what had gone before, narrow Gothic script. The 'horaxless carriage' did the same, until it became familiar as a concept and we were comfortable enough for it to be designed as a 'motor car'. Italian printers redesigned their type, based on their handwriting, familiar to them and us, with its italic variant. Despite the printing presses it was some time before William Caxton or William Weysham would be preaching in Bleadon with a printed Bible before them. The initial above is based on one from Gutenberg's Bible.



These thumbnail sample pages can only hint at the scope and beauty of John Hickley's Illustrated History of Bleadon with its 50 double-page spreads

SHOPS & GARAGES

In 1724 Daniel Defoe visited these parts and described trade in his "Tour through the Whole Island of Great Britain". Coal came from Swaney and merchandises from Britain. Iron, oil, wine, pitch, tar and hemp all came to local wharfs. Tobacco for some reason came from Barnstaple. Of course these were not available locally in a village which was otherwise near to being self-sufficient. The imports were mostly raw material for craftsmen, like iron for the blacksmith. Tobacco and illegal brandy would go direct to the innkeepers. There was no need yet for a shop. In some experts consisted of "Fat men, as large and good as any in England, large Cheddar cheese, the greatest in England, and cobs in great numbers". The fields around the village were productive, so food was usually plentiful. The village bakery was in Mulberry Lane. Milk was available from dairies, and most other needs were met by local craftsmen. Linen makers might bring essential snappers, and eye-catching hair ribbons, otherwise the village was indeed self-sufficient. Later, as fewer people grew their own food, and more worked elsewhere than on the land, general stores opened and deliveries were made of bread, milk, and meat.

In 1841 John Sellick of Hillside Farmhouse described himself as a grocer, by 1851 he became a 'shopkeeper'. He and his father provided gun powder for use in the quarry. Workers were paid a shilling a day, but powder cost £4 14s 1d, a month. His 'shop' however was merely a hatch into the hallway, or even an open window in the summer. A postcard of about 1900 shows a shop in Bridge Road run by G. Harston, eventually ending its days as an antique shop. At the end of the road, at Bridge Street Mrs. Vinson sold ironmongery, boots, and caps and sunsets, while her husband ran the garage. There were two other garages in the village. Central Garage, behind Church Cottages, where the bases of the period pumps still can be seen, built into the wall opposite the bus stop, and at Park, the Fork Filling Station was run by Ray Goodall, who repaired cars, while Mr. Newsham sold the petrol, and charged automobilists for the early wireless sets.

When Hillside was developed by "Pussy" Parkin in the 1920s and 30s a shop opened there to serve the relatively isolated community at the top of the hill. At about the same time, Newsham Stores, a tobacconist and general store, opened near to the Queen's Hotel, as it was then called. For a short while 'Ye Olde Welfie Shoppe' opened to sell what now might be called 'collectables', in part of the Well House. Incidentally, the form 'Ye' is incorrect. The Y involved is in fact a misnomer of the Old English and Old Norse letter called 'Thorn'. It looked a bit like a Y, but was in fact a 'th' sound, so we should never say 'you', and so for the extra 'e' on the end! 'Welfie' it may have brought more customers, especially as it was painted with a 'Gothic' type face.

Beyond Bleadon Bridge, a roadside stall selling produce grown nearby, slowly developed over the years into Sanders' Supermarket. It achieved a high national reputation, providing a range and quality which was greatly missed by many villagers and visitors when it was 'disappointed', and became a site for houses. In the centre of the village the popular Post Office had started its days as a Receiving Office in 1833, where villagers could pay to collect whatever mail they might have. The Post Office eventually grew to become a well-stocked and well-used conventional village shop, and as the others all closed one by one, it was the last to remain. When it finally went, the village was very fortunate that a Post Office was re-opened together with the latest reincarnation of the shop - a Country Store.





THE ROAD SOUTH FROM WESTON WAS BUILT

Twenty-eight years after the railway made the first cut through Bleadon Hill. The early 19th century population of Weston was no more than that of Bleadon. Without even a road to Uphill, the beach sufficed. The railway brought growth and prosperity from 1841. It also brought the need to deliver people to the stations from outlying areas. Later, with the advent of motor transport, the road network had to be considerably improved to increase access and reduce congestion. The original road south from Uphill crossed over the railway at Devil's Bridge, past Hillcote, or 'Pansytown', so called after its builder, 'Pansy' Perkins. It then followed the present road down through the village. Petrol for early motorists was available in the village at Central Garage, opposite the Rectory, and at Bridge Stores. Over the bridge, the early road meandered to left and right, to the Crescent, Hobb's Boat, Boat Lane, and Easterdown. An alternative at Uphill was to use the Turpika level crossing, owned by the General Estates company, which avoided using the hill. This tollgate closed in 1908, having made £500 in its final year of operation. At a cost of £3000 the road then became the property of Weston Council. The maintenance of the six miles of road within the parish boundary of Bleadon was no longer the responsibility of the village after 1894.

In building the A370, the 'cutting' was excavated, and a bridge built over the railway. It had also caused the demolition of several cottages opposite the Aschou Inn. The new road cut through the centre of the little hamlet, burying its well, and forming another lay-by, Facam, or Fakenham Lane. In widening the road at that point, layers of natural gravel were cleared revealing the 'find' of reindeer antlers, referred to earlier. Local tenants had been allowed to use this filling for farm gateways, sand, shingle, fossils, and seashells. This sediment had been formed millions of years ago when Mendly was desert, surrounded by sea.

The bridge carrying the new road survived for about seventy years with few alterations until 2001, when it became necessary to make major repairs. The *Daily Telegraph* then describes how residents of Bleadon were given 'Pansports' to enter the village, while the A370 was closed for the repairs to take place. Barriers were manned by Gurkhas who, contrary to some versions of the story, were not armed, neither was barbed wire in evidence! However according to the Temporary Traffic Regulation Order, it was an offence to use Bleadon as an alternative to crowded roads. For a short time the road through the village was very quiet.

Few people travelling past the Somerset levels on trunk roads or motorway will realise that they are passing the place where, four and a half thousand years ago, 'Sweet track man' had created his first 'road' across the marshes, just above water level. It could be said that this was the very beginning of road building in this country.



Green piece

Ash trees in danger?

As you may have heard on the national news, there is a new disease - Chalara fraxinea - targeting ash trees. North Somerset Council have already received numerous phone calls from residents who are worried about their own trees, or trees on other land.

Ash dieback is a disease of ash trees caused by a fungus. The disease causes leaf loss and crown dieback and may lead to tree death.

The most up to date information is available on the Forestry Commission website www.forestry.gov.uk/chalara and there is a Chalara helpline for people to call: 08459 33 55 77 (open 8am - 6pm every day) as well as an email address for enquiries: plant.health@forestry.gsi.gov.uk. Concerned residents should check the Forestry Commission website to familiarise themselves with disease symptoms, there is both a video clip and a pictorial guide available.

The main advice at the moment is that the disease is unlikely to affect mature ash trees in a way that they become dangerous. North Somerset Council are currently not pruning or removing any mature ash trees unless an inspection shows the risk to life and limb is unacceptable.

Reports of sightings of the disease in ash trees should be made to the **Forestry Commission using the phone number 08459 335 577**.

It would be useful if the location of the trees showing symptoms is emailed through to North Somerset's tree officers, either Linda Saretok on linda.saretok@n-somerset or Jason Cox on jason.cox@n-somerset.gov.uk.

In North Somerset, the council is carrying out good plant hygiene when working on ash trees; they are keeping an eye out for symptoms and are not approving landscaping schemes which include ash trees.

Symptoms to look out for
Symptoms of *Chalara fraxinea* can be visible on leaves, shoots and branches of affected trees. In severe cases, the entire crown shows leaf loss and dieback and there may also be the formation of epicormic shoots on branches and the trunk.

Foliage

Leaves can suffer from wilting and black-brownish discoloration at the leaf base and midrib. Dieback of shoots and twigs is also very characteristic.



Branches and stems

Small lens-shaped lesions or necrotic spots appear on the bark of stems and branches and enlarge to form perennial cankers. These cause wilting and dieback of shoots and branches, particularly in the upper crown. Underneath the bark lesions, the wood has a brownish to grey discoloration which often extends longitudinally beyond the bark necrosis.

Whole tree

Trees with withered tops and shoots are very characteristic. Heavily affected trees have extensive shoot, twig and branch dieback and often have prolific epicormic shoots. *Chalara fraxinea* has also been isolated from the roots of symptomatic trees, as well as from leaves, shoots and branch/stem lesions.



Sociable Bleadon

Check the village notice boards for regular up-dates on the dozens of activities and events in the village.

Bowls Club Turkey and Tinsel

Just in case a practice run for Christmas was needed, sixteen members set off one Friday at the beginning of December for a weekend on the Isle of Wight. The journey was uneventful for most, though one group of culture lovers paused awhile amid the ancient charm of Salisbury doing a circular tour of the Cathedral, and all arrived safely at Sandown via the Lyndhurst ferry. However the local lifeboat crew did pay a precautionary visit to the hotel that evening.

Saturday was 'Christmas Day' and a competition began to see who could eat the most - full English breakfast, midday wine reception followed by a traditional Xmas lunch, then afternoon tea and in the evening just a light supper buffet. Santa and Elves also attended, their bin liners bulging with presents. Bowls was obviously taking second place to all this food and frivolity so our sporting standards suffered when playing against local teams - well for most of us anyway.

Sunday suddenly became 'New Years Eve' with an orgy of prizegiving: cups and medals to grace the cabinets of winners and for the losers bingo pens hinting of other pursuits to try. Prize for winning the Club's own local knowledge quiz was a tube of Smarties - get it? Dancing, by the few so able, was followed by a popular round of 'chase the Ace' when more serious money changed hands.

With its beach location the hotel is perfectly situated to view the spectacular island sunrises and the weather on land and sea was good, as was the planning and organisation, once more in the capable care of Malcolm and Grace.



Horticulturalists' summer excursion

Bleadon Horticultural Society's summer outing was to Otter Nurseries and Bicton Park.



Building bridges

It's two years since Village News first met up with our Parish Rector, Philip Stevens. It's time for a catch-up. Philip talks about how it's been.



"It's been an exciting couple of years. Bleadon is a surprisingly busy, friendly and sociable place. I am amazed at how many groups and organisations there are that thrive in this small community. The number of people that you know as you walk along the street makes it a very welcoming and comforting place to be - especially if you have a dog!

For the past year we have been holding special services in the church on the third Sunday of the month. Celebrating special events and welcoming different groups from the village. One of the most unusual of these was a pet service. Initially I was rather sceptical and it ran against my better judgement. People kept saying, "It'll be alright, just think of the Vicar of Dibley". That's exactly what I was thinking! I had never done a pet service before, so it was a first for me.

Despite my reservations it all worked out brilliantly. We had around 30 pets in church and the funny thing was it felt as if we were in someone's front room. A really homely feeling. We were with friends and in church. It was lovely. Only a couple of "accidents". Everyone was very well behaved.

It brought home to me that it's not God's house, it's our place to go to focus our thoughts. A place we think of as somewhere special to go. So now I'm quite converted to the idea of pet services, and special services are now part of our monthly calendar. We've already welcomed the WI; the parish council held a Civic Service; the Bleadon Players came along and did a rehearsal in church. Great fun! Over the coming months we are looking forward to welcoming the Art Group and the Camera Club. I'd like to see the Croquet Club and the Bowls Club giving a demonstration and bowling down the aisle! The whole thing is about an enjoyable celebration of what people do. A chance to build bridges with the people in our parish.

Earlier this year we held the first Confirmation service in the church for 32 years. That was really good. We Confirmed 30 people from around the Diocese that day. It was busy.

Ahead of us we have the challenge of raising around £40,000 for a complete electrical rewiring of the church. It's early days yet because the specification is just being drafted. But we are looking at new lighting, power sockets, heating and wiring throughout. Making it fit for the 21st century and all within a Listed Building. It's giving us the opportunity to look hard at how we can best use the building in the future."

Coming soon....

Flower power workshop

Following a number of requests from villagers a Flower Arranging workshop will be held in the Coronation Hall on Thursday 21 March. Starting at 10am we shall have two hours of inspiration and practice.

There will be a short demonstration followed by everyone making an arrangement to take home. Please bring a favourite vase or container. Flowers will be provided. Small charge on the day to cover costs.

Call Penny Skelley on 815 331 to reserve a place.

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Business directory

If you want your Bleadon business to be included here free of charge contact:
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To advertise your local business in Village News

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Advertising rates start at just £15

Sociable Bleadon

Check the village notice boards for regular up-dates on the dozens of activities and events in the village.



Sunday Club

On the first Sunday of the month youngsters of any age can join Chris and Stevie for fun

and games in the Church Meeting Room. Starts in the church at 10.15 and usually goes through until about 11.30.

Friendship Club

If you are missing some of the company and friendship of others please come and join us on Friday afternoons in the Coronation Hall.

If you have difficulty getting to the Hall we can arrange for the community bus to pick you up from home.

We try and make Friday afternoons a bit of friendly fun with quizzes, talks, bingo and music. We are just a small group of senior citizens waiting to welcome new ladies or gentlemen.

Friday afternoons 2.15 – 3.45.pm. £1
Audrey Lee 814517

Short Mat Bowls

In the Coronation Hall on **Tuesdays** 2.30pm, **Fridays** 7pm and **Sundays** 2.30pm. Brings out the natural born killer instinct in a genteel way.

Monthly Village Market

In the Coronation Halls on the **third Saturday of every month** From 9am - 12.30pm. Dozens of stalls packed with delights. The usual refreshments and a chance to catch up with friends.



Bleadon Ladies Club

Meets the **second Tuesday of the month** in the Coronation Hall at 2.30pm.

We're looking for more new members, so come and join us for an afternoon and see what you think. I'm sure you will enjoy it. We're very friendly and have some fascinating speakers.

For information call Barbara on 814362

Baby & Toddler Group

In the Coronation Hall **Wednesday mornings** from 9.30 - 11.30 during term time. Open to all pre-school children in the village and the surrounding area.

Bleadon Youth Club

Fun and social activities for young people 10 to 18yrs from 6.30 -9.30pm.

Tuesdays: social and creative activities £1.50 per session.

Thursdays: open social access, games and activities £1.50 per session.

See the BYC notice board for full programme details.

Regular Coronation Hall events

Mondays

Bleadon Bridge Club 2-5pm
Exercise Classes** 7-8pm + 8-9pm
British Sugarcraft Guild 1st Mon 7.30pm
Bleadon Parish Council 2nd Mon 7.30pm

Tuesdays

Bleadon Ladies Club 2nd Tues 2.30-4pm
Short Mat Bowls 2.30-4.30pm Sept-May
Bleadon Brownies** 6-7.30 pm
Bleadon Guides** 7.30-9.00 (term time)
Bleadon Photographic Group 1st,2nd,4th,5th Tues 7.30 pm (Sept-May)
Bleadon Horticultural Soc 3rd Tues 7.30 pm (Oct-June)

Wednesdays

Toddler Group 9.30-11.30
Yoga Class** 9.30-10.30
Bleadon Players/Rehearsals 7.30pm
Bleadon Pilates** 7pm

Thursdays

Bleadon Art Group** 10-noon
Bleadon WI 7.30 2nd Thurs
Bleadon Folk Dancing Group 8pm 3rd Thurs (Sept-June)
Bleadon Sugarcraft Club 7.30pm 4th Thurs

Fridays

Bleadon Friendship Club 2-4pm
Short Mat Bowls Club** 7pm (Sept-May)

Saturdays

Village Market 9-12.30 3rd Saturday

Sundays

Short Mat Bowls Club** 2.30 (Sept-May)

**in the Jubilee Room

See notice board for contact details

The Halls are available for hire by private individuals or organisations.

There's a reduced rate for Bleadon residents. Call Joanne Jones on **812370**.

Fresh Local Produce. Cheeses. Jams, Honey & Preserves. Somerset Beef. Fairtrade. Crafts. Handmade Jewellery. Books. Collectables. Bric-a-brac. Cards. Gifts. Refreshments & friends

Bleadon Village Monthly Market & community cafe

SAT
19
JAN

SAT
16
FEB

SAT
16
MAR

SAT
20
APR

in the Coronation Halls
from 9 to 12.30

Call Joanne on 01934 812 370 for more info

We are well blessed with over 20 clubs and social groups here in our little village. If you would like to join in the fun just pop along and introduce yourself. You will always be welcomed with a smile and a warm handshake. Many groups meet in the Coronation Hall. Check notice-boards.

Sociable Bleadon

Friends of Bleadon Church

Very many thanks to all those who supported all our events over past year. A special thanks to those who helped us to put on these events.

The May Day Fayre was again a success although the weather deterred many from attending. We also had to curtail some of the activities scheduled for the day due to health and safety rules. It was too wet for the Jazz Band to be outside so they were, somewhat, hidden in the Coronation Hall. We could not use the Skittle Alley and the Bouncy Castles were too wet to attract many users. To answer the question that is often asked, I can assure everyone that ALL monies made at the Fayre are used for the upkeep of Bleadon Church. The church is a Grade 1 listed building and needs constant attention. It is an iconic part of the village. At the present time funds are needed to upgrade the lighting and heating etc. So all the money you spent at the Fayre will be well used.

In June we supported the Scarecrow with teas in the Hall and in July we had cream teas in the Rectory garden.

As usual our Harvest Supper was a sell-out. Entertainment this year was provided by the Smoke Stack Blues Band. Many thanks, John, for putting

on such a wonderful evening. You had them dancing in the aisles!

This was followed by an evening of Entertainment with John Crockford-Hawley and Chris Manners excellently arranged by Sandra Lowton. A wonderful evening, enjoyed by all.

Our final event for the year was the Punch and Pie party in the Coronation Hall in December. Mulled wine, mince pies and hearty carol singing.

Time to hand over the reins

I have been chairman of the Friends off and on for some years now and it is time for some new blood, so I am retiring as chairman at the end of the year.

I am very pleased to say that Mary Hollis has agreed to take on the task of chairman and, with the help of fellow members, I am sure she will do an excellent job. I would like to thank all those who have given me such wonderful support over the years and I hope that I will now be able to support Mary in all the tasks ahead.

Brian Drinkwater



Look out for news on a NEW LOOK for the May Fayre in 2013 as the Friends team up with the Youth Club to bring a fresh format to this favourite annual village event.

We have already planned events for next year so take your diaries out and make a note of the following dates:

Saturday 16 February. Sweet Valentine Pudding Party.

Monday 6 May. May Day Fayre.

June. Jazz or R & B concert in Church.

July. Wine and Cheese Party.

Saturday 28 September. Harvest Supper.

Saturday 26 October. Big Breakfast in the Coronation Hall.

Saturday 7 December. Punch and Pie Party

All our events are advertised in the Church and Village magazines. We also put details in the village and church porch notice boards. For most events tickets can be purchased at the Village Shop and any member of the Friends committee.



Harvest Supper photos by Pete Williams

Looks like Philip was putting himself about a bit on the dance floor; while Penny does her usual charming Chugger routine with the raffle tickets.



Sociable Bleadon

Coronation Hall improvements

Managing and maintaining a much loved building like the Coronation Hall is no easy task yet the volunteer Hall Management Committee has succeeded in doing so for many years. They are fortunate in having amongst them a small group of people who have the expertise to undertake remedial maintenance, decorating and project managing the bigger tasks that require more professional help. This is invaluable in getting things done quickly and at minimal cost. We won't embarrass them by mentioning names but to all of them we offer a big 'Thank You'.

This year alone has seen expenditure to date of some £13,600 for maintenance and improvements. This included decorating the main hall, decorating the Bleadon Man lobby, re-sealing the main hall floor, damp-proofing the external walls, new windows in the main hall, new heater in the main hall, new push-down taps in all toilets and, quite recently, installing a new and more efficient hot water system to replace the old heater which had developed a major problem. Even so, more needs to be done.

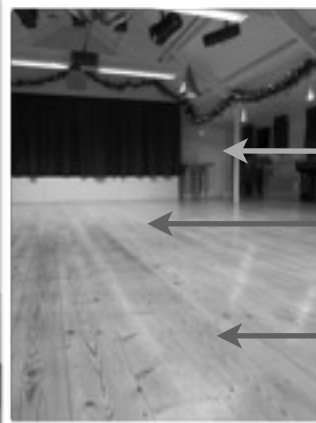
Fortunately, the halls are well used which has meant that much of this work has been funded directly by hire charges and donations. Your continued support of this valuable community asset is welcomed and much appreciated.

Clive Morris, Hall Treasurer



Poppy Appeal tops £1000 again

For the third year in a row Bleadon has raised over £1000 for the Poppy Appeal, £1022.82, to be precise, which is cause for gratitude and congratulations. Thanks to all those residents who gave generously to house-to-house collectors Caroline Bayntun, I.D. Clarke, Jayne Derrick, John Hastie, Jill Hobbs, Susan Oldfield, Pauline Rider and Sarah Ripley or contributed to the boxes in The Anchor, Catherine's Inn, the Church, Escape, the Post Office and the Queen's Arms.



New hot water boiler

New interior paintwork

New heater

Refurbished floor

New UPVC windows

Cleared away plant (weed) beds and damp-proofed walls



Royston Walters continues his revelations about Bleadon villagers. Here he meets up with Audrey Lee.



I'm 64 and my knees hurt. I get backache if I spend more than half an hour in the garden. I

have an eye which has taken to watering constantly and must have an operation soon to fix it, but, for the moment, I can wink only with one eye which means my chances of attracting a member of the opposite sex have been cut by 50%. That is.....if I actually wanted to attract a member of the opposite sex! Truth is, I am beginning to feel that old age has me firmly in its grasp. For consolation, in idle moments I read what others, wiser than I, have to say on the subject. What mush I find. Here's an example: "I've finally reached the age when my wild oats have turned to All Bran". There are other quotes that pay homage to the 'tranquillity of the evening' or trite sayings like "It's important to have a twinkle in your wrinkle".

Oh please....SOMEONE...give me strength.

Audrey Lee, it turns out, might just be that someone, she turned 90 this year and I feel I can look to her for some kindly wisdom about white hair and softening of the brain.

Audrey loves Bleadon, she's been here ten years now, came from Bristol, widowed, to live with her brother Len to help him care for his sick wife and when she died in 2005 Audrey stayed on, persuaded by the love and friendliness she's found here.

Audrey was born, the eldest of five, in Bristol at a time when 'The Charleston' was a phenomenon. Before the 1920's social dancing meant strict tempo and rarely involved movement of the arms and upper body. The Charleston changed all that, Audrey was enchanted by music and movement as a child and cherished the idea that one day she would be a dancer. Her Dad is part of the family business started by his father in 1902, a wholesale confectionary and tobacco company, G Chamberlain & Sons Ltd, it trades grandly as the Royal Confectionary Company, their premises were in Stapleton Road, Bristol.

Grandfather started in retail by boiling his own sweets, Grandma made ice cream with 'Cremona' powder every day, they sold their wares first in one shop then two. In the twenties this was a very smart area and in the short street where they lived there was a pub on every corner. His second shop was in the busy main shopping area of Bristol, the Haymarket. Politician Ernest Bevin, later to become architect of the National Health Service, used to visit the area during general elections and address the crowds standing on a crate borrowed from George Chamberlain's shop, he was reminded there was a 6d deposit to be lost if not returned. George was an astute businessman, the business grew and the family left retail to go into the much more profitable area of wholesale.

By the time Audrey is starting her education her father, Frederick, is running the business, they have a small car and she attends a private school, they are not short of money and Audrey is happy and aware that she is loved and wanted. Socially it would seem they are in an enviable position but all is not well. Audrey is slight and underweight for her age, her teachers tell her mother to 'feed her up', it is, alarmingly, more serious than that, she is undernourished and as the reason is not lack of funds it must be neglect, even if unintentional.

The wholesale business takes a huge amount of Dad's time, he is rarely home before midnight and Mum is no domestic goddess - to put it mildly. Audrey begins to show signs of Rickets, this is a childhood disorder, common in the 19th century where bones soften and become prone to deformity and fractures, it is symptomatic, in most cases of severe and long term malnutrition. Urgent steps are taken to remedy the problem but the damage has been done. Dad cooks lunch on



Village people

Sundays and if it weren't for this weekly intake of solid food things would indeed be bleak. Mum remains infamous in family circles for cooking cabbage until it is brown.

At fourteen Audrey leaves school but there is no discussion about her yearning to perform, it is a less compassionate 'seen and not heard' world for children then. "But Dad". No question; she must join the family firm and in her soul a lovely flame dies. She now works closely with her father and as she gets to know him better she realises he hates the business as much as she does but, bills have to be paid. They are both trapped, they both feel it keenly.

In 1939 the company is employing ten men in the warehouse and at the outbreak of war, one by one, they are called to duty and the survival of the firm now falls to Audrey and her father. At seventeen she is driving and making deliveries all over the south west. Here she is, a slip of a girl encountering snow and fog with wartime regulations allowing only slits of light from the van headlights, there's a crash gearbox and no power steering. The Mendips are the worst for foul conditions, areas around Cheddar and Priddy were particularly treacherous. The fearlessness of youth helps her cope with the worst but there



are lighter moments too. A regular customer is a man with a shop in the front room of his house in Midsomer Norton, one Tuesday, after she deposits his usual delivery of Fruit Pastilles he, somewhat hesitantly, asks her to visit his bedroom. Audrey, somewhat hesitantly, follows him up the stairs! He closes the door behind her and exposes....half a pig hanging from a hook in the ceiling. "I can let you have a couple of pieces of bacon if you like".

As the war progresses, food shortages affect the business badly, there's little sugar for sweets and even less tobacco, worse, Audrey is now 18 and legally required either to join the forces or work in a munitions factory. If she leaves it will be the end of the Royal Confectionery Company. Dad manages to stall the authorities but in truth Audrey would rather like a chance to broaden her horizons, meet new people, do new things.

Dad knows a police commissioner who mentions he needs a driver (remember 'Foyles War'?) her duties with the police means she avoids the military and it allows her enough spare time to do deliveries for the firm. Her ambitions are thwarted once more.

Saturday nights are spent away from bomb prone Bristol, Audrey and girl friends head for a good time in Weston-super-Mare. One fateful night she meets a 6'3" god who serves in the rigidly disciplined Grenadier Guards. 'Danny', from London, is in Weston for specialist training and is, she decides, her future husband. Her driving job with the police comes to end and again the prospect of leaving home looms. Audrey's father is at his wit's end, he is hanging on to the business by his fingernails and her leaving would be the end. He comes up with the idea of her joining a Red Cross Voluntary Aid Detachment. Under this scheme the 'VAD's' were recruited and trained in first aid and nursing and Audrey was assigned to an auxiliary military hospital

in north Bristol. Here injured personnel would come for assessment before being sent to other hospitals for the appropriate treatment.

This time Audrey is grateful to her Dad, she still has to do two jobs but at least Danny is close by...for the moment. Anon they learn that

Danny, as part of the Guards Armoured Brigade will be part of the D-Day landings and they decide to marry before he goes. A three day honeymoon in Weston, a short period of bliss then, he is gone. Danny's battalion featured some of the tallest men in the British army and miraculously, from the beach landings in France fighting through to victory in Berlin, he remains unscathed.

On Danny's return Audrey's father offers him a position in the company as a representative, rationing is still in force but things are looking up. Audrey is not pleased, "Are we never to be released from this business?" In her eyes the business has become a monster demanding and devouring every bit of time they have. Although, before joining the army, he had been trained as a butcher it turns out Danny is a very successful rep and popular with customers, the orders come flooding in. Audrey resigns herself once more to the status quo and they settle into domestic routine. She is soon pregnant but joy turns to torture and grief when she miscarries at 6 months. They try again and this time Audrey carries the baby for 8 months before, again, tragically, losing the child; they were both boys. There's a great deal of heart searching before making another attempt at having a child, 9 months haunted by fears but then with unalloyed delight Susan is born, the doctors warn her that another pregnancy within four years would put her health at grave risk. After a suitable period David is born; Danny, Audrey, Susan, David.....complete.

As with all of us, the years bring the usual convergence of family circumstances, expectations dashed and fulfilled, sombre challenges incisively met or cheerfully avoided - everything

the womb of time can provide. Audrey and Danny rejoice in their children, they amuse and elevate them, David is bright and he wins a scholarship to The Queen Elizabeth Hospital (QEH) school in Bristol where he flourishes. Over a period, not long, his health deteriorates, nothing serious at first, a few crampy tummy pains, the legendary schoolboy appetite not what it once was. Their GP tells them the stress of joining a new school with increased intellectual challenges are having their effect but Audrey, who, increasingly often, is writing absence notes to the school, is not convinced. This is more than fifty years ago and it takes some time before Crohn's disease is diagnosed, David's body is attacking its own healthy tissue, it is serious and chronic. The symptoms come and go with periods of flare-ups, he has numerous operations, each one removing a piece of him, David's education is hampered and curtailed. It is to affect him to this day and it's hard to describe Audrey's pain and ache.

I met Audrey some years ago having coffee at the village market, I was struck by her smiling, open face and now I come to think of it, dare I say it...yes, she had twinkles in her wrinkles! Now, she tells me about the good times, a flight on Concorde and cruises to exotic destinations among them, she tells me too about the downside, a spine curved by her childhood Rickets which makes walking painful and slow. Her delight now is to play whist and chat with cherished friends in the church room, "It doesn't take much to make me happy now", her children are still a heart warming presence and, apart from a vague idea that some of the songs of her youth were left unsung, she is content. She and brother Len eat out for lunch every day, her make-up is impeccable and her dress sense is that of someone 40 years her junior.

While talking to her it is easy to gain a positive awareness of ageing and reach the conclusion that the worst is not inevitable. While trawling the words of others in search of solace about the onset of my advancing years I came across John Donne's famous observation:

"No spring nor summer beauty hath such grace as I have seen in one autumnal face".

He could have meant it just for Audrey.

Bleadon Parish Council meets on the **second Monday of the month** at 7.30pm in the Coronation Hall.

An **Agenda** is published on the Parish notice boards and the website at least three days before the meeting. We welcome parishioners to attend meetings and get actively involved in things that matter to Bleadon.



You will be heard

Parishioners' Voice is your opportunity at the start of each meeting for you to talk briefly to the Council about any issues you have.

If there is a particular issue you would like to raise **please let the Parish Clerk know by the Friday before the meeting**. This will give him the chance to collect the most up-to-date information available.

NEW

email address for the Parish Clerk

parishclerk@bleadonparishcouncil.gov.uk

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If there is a particular issue you would like to raise **please let the Parish Clerk know by the Friday before the meeting**. This will give him the chance to collect the most up-to-date information available.

Send all correspondence about Bleadon Parish Council matters to the Parish Clerk:
Bruce Poole, Bleadon Parish Council,
Rooftops, 10 South Street,
Burnham-on-Sea TA8 1BS

Tel: 07887 802 922

parishclerk@bleadonparishcouncil.gov.uk

Visit the Bleadon parish website at:
www.bleadonparishcouncil.gov.uk

Your Bleadon Parish Councillors

Brian Gamble	Ashdene, Bleadon Road, Bleadon	Tel: 811 709
Robert House	Purn House Villa, Purn Lane, Bleadon	Tel: 815 588
Trevor Marshall	15 Bleadon Mill, Bleadon	Tel: 811 548
Clive Morris (Vice Chair)	20 Bleadon Mill, Bleadon	Tel: 811 591
Miles Orme	Purn House, Bleadon Road, Bleadon	07989 410767
Keith Pyke	8 Whitegate Close, Bleadon	Tel: 813 127
Mary Sheppard	Littlewood, Bridgwater Road, Lymphsham	Tel: 812 921
Penny Skelley (Chairman)	Mendip Croft, Celtic Way, Bleadon	Tel: 815 331
Pete Trevitt	17 Bleadon Mill, Bleadon	Tel: 813 391

Bleadon Village News is published quarterly by Bleadon Parish Council in March, June, September and December.

Contributions to this magazine are very welcome, so long as they are about Bleadon or can directly benefit its residents. Please ensure that your editorial or advertising material reaches the editor at least three weeks before publication.

Send your Village News contributions to:

Keith Pyke, *Village News Editor*

8 Whitegate Close, Bleadon BS24 0PW

bleadon.editor@btinternet.com Tel: 01934 813 127

Unless otherwise stated the opinions and comments expressed in this publication are those of the editor or contributor and may not be those of Bleadon Parish Council.

We aim to provide a copy of this magazine free to every household and business in Bleadon. Additional copies are usually available from the editor. We are grateful to the band of volunteers who deliver this newsletter to households. If you can help let me know.

The copy deadline for your contributions to the Spring edition of Bleadon Village News is Friday 15 February 2013.

Youth Centre makes a colourful splash

Judging from some of the comments we've had, the newly decorated Youth Centre is not to everyone's taste. But for the youngsters we are trying to attract to the youth club it's a big hit.

The interior and exterior walls of the building were looking tired and faded and desperately needing an injection of colour to rejuvenate this 50 year old building. Using a selection of blue, yellow, green and turquoise paints, 16 volunteers worked together to transform the area into a bright, welcoming and eye catching space.

The club's new look was completed as part of Dulux's Let's Colour mission to add colour to people's lives.

The 150 litre paint donation was kindly provided by Dulux Decorator Centre in Bridgwater, where the team was also on hand to provide expert advice on paint types and decorating tips.

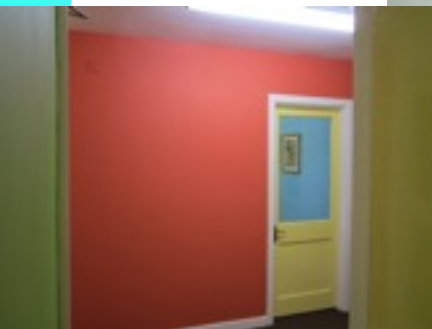
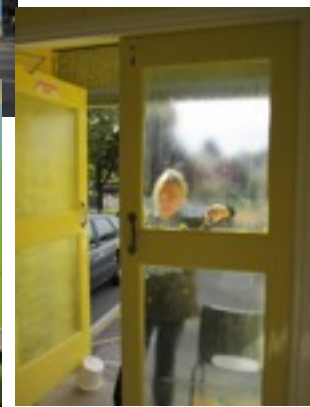
We were able to get youngsters and management involved from the youth club, parents, members of Bleadon WI, friends from the pub and villagers we bullied into submission. Maintaining their enthusiasm and energy over the many weekends that the project took was extremely challenging.

Perhaps our plans were too ambitious. Undertaking a big painting scheme whilst keeping the building fully operational is quite a challenge and involves repeated moving of equipment and making good as you try to progress.

Bright colours are polarising of people's opinions. Everyone has a subjective and often emotional opinion on colour. Our target audience of youngsters love it.

Importantly for us, everyone is now aware of the building's presence and purpose. This was our primary aim. To create a building that is appealing to youngsters and a focal point in the community.

A big Thank you to the volunteers who gave up their weekends and much more to make this project work.



Our Jubilee Scarecrow Festival

