

# BLEADON – *brimming with life*



A view from Roman Road in Bleadon sent into iWitness24 by Sally Griffiths

Rich in history, Bleadon dates back to the Domes Day Book and is now home to around 1,000 villagers who enjoy a warm and varied community life

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**T**he village diary is brimming over with events and activities for all ages including horticulture, photography, yoga, bridge and art. Those who live there are understandably proud of the village they call home.

## Horrible Histories A Local Legend

It was once suggested that the name Bleadon derived from Bleed Down, the legend being that in the year 485AD marauding Danes attacked the village pillaging and raping as they went.

An old woman resident, unable to flee, hid by the River Axe where Danes had moored their longboats. Finding a hatchet, she cut the mooring ropes setting

the boats adrift.

The Danes were left stranded and villagers, realising the Danes were caught between their retribution and the sea, set about slaughtering the invaders. So much blood was let that it ran down the hillside by the gallon - hence the name Bleed Down.

Of course, it is untrue, but nevertheless a delightful local legend which first surfaced in 1670. There's an inscription on the wall of Lympsham Village Hall which runs "Ye vessels lay, On Axe's quay, Ye Danes ye swords uplifting. A Bleadon wife, Fetched forth a knife, And sent ye ships a-drifting".

## The Righteous Rector

Edward Powell had been a Catholic rector of Bleadon, but got into serious trouble when in 1534 he spoke out against Henry

VIII's divorce.

For his trouble he spent six years in The Tower, then was hanged, drawn and quartered at Smithfield (today's London meat market). The Roman Catholic Church declared him a saint in 1970 and a stained glass window in Corpus Christi Church in Weston-super-Mare commemorates this martyrdom.

## Market traders

Every month people from Bleadon and surrounding neighbourhoods come together for a market in the heart of the village at Coronation Hall.

Jo Jones, of Bridge Road, was one of the founders of the market back in 2002 when the Post Office and shop temporarily closed. Jo explains: "There was no hub in





Phil Langdon

the village at that time. We wanted a social place for the village but also a fund-raiser for the village hall - so the market was born."

Run by a team of around 10 volunteers from the village hall committee, the market has doubled in size in its 12 years. The variety of products now ranges from local cheese and meat to antiques and art. Stallholders include commercial businesses and those that are simply indulging their hobbies for fun.

Scott Pring from Truly Scrumptious travels up from Brent Knoll with his son Aaron to give people the chance to buy his range of pies and cakes. Scott has been executive head chef at Bridgwater College for the past 12 years.

Now the villagers of Bleadon get to enjoy his high quality, locally sourced produce as his love of cooking overflows into a hobby of baking for the market.

Retired primary school teacher Judith Solomon, who lives in Bleadon Hill, has a regular stall at the market for her business Olivia's Crafts. She sells handmade iPhone cases, tissue holders, toys and wooden items.

Judith, who has taught at St Martins, Milton and Windwhistle Primary Schools, over her 30 year teaching career, said: "At school, I loved doing all the arts and crafts with the children. When I retired, I kept that going as a hobby and started having a stand here at Bleadon market to sell what I produce. It's an excellent event as I also get to catch up with friends and stock up on



Olivia's Crafts

my monthly shopping."

Judith often uses recycled materials in her items and currently has a denim range, re-using old jeans.

Recent additions to the village, David and Ruth Jacobs, moved in to their new home in Coronation Road with 72 boxes of antiques, ephemera and stamps. Their stand at the market is a collector's dream and a historian's delight.

With magazines from the earliest days of printing in the 1850s, a plethora of cameo brooches and a unique collection of handbags, the stand displays just the tip of the antique iceberg available from Vintage Wonders.

The couple have been antique dealers for 30 years and give talks all over the country. Ruth said: "As a girl I was doing the hair and make up for an opera singer called Elisabeth Schwarzkopf. She gave me a hat pin. It was so beautiful and I started collecting them."

Bleadon artist Phil Langdon has had a stall at the market for five years. Selling prints of his work, Phil's pictures often have a maritime theme. Usually watercolours, Phil also uses oil and acrylic. The love of painting all things maritime comes from Phil's previous times working on a sand dredger in the Bristol Channel called the Harry Brown.

Other stallholders include Hills Bakers, Fresh and Fruity, Moorland Farm Shop, and Let Them Eat Cookies, as well as many more. ■

## Bleadon Country Sports celebrates 75 years

Bleadon Country Sports is celebrating its 75th Anniversary on 30 August. The event sees villagers gather together for a variety of sporting events. This year, there will also be a celebratory lunch for everyone who has been involved with the event over the past 75 years.

It all began back in 1931 when hunting on Bleadon Hill was taken over by Mr Arthur Wilmot from Mr Herman Tiarks, and to celebrate, it was decided to hold an event, which was to be like no other.

The first sports were held on Mr Poole's land at Caterpillar Hill, but later transferred to Mr Tucker's land on Windmill Hill. It was said that on Hill Sports days, laughter from the hill could be heard in the village below.

Tossing the sheaf of corn has continued to the present day. This involves using a two-pronged pitchfork to throw a sack of straw over a high bar.

Another event that has survived over the years is the dog race. Dogs and their owners chase across the field after a 'hare'. The hare is actually a very old piece of rabbit skin on a rope that is wound in on a bicycle wheel with dogs and handlers in hot pursuit.

In 1986 the sports moved from Bleadon Hill to Mrs Goodall's Whitegates Farm and there was a display by the beautiful black horse that was used in the Lloyds Bank advertisements.

In 1988, Grand National winner Aldiniti, made a guest appearance.

In 1994 the sports moved once again to Mr and Mrs John Frost's Appledore Farm at Lympham. The event now includes a very popular dog show, classes for native breed ponies, carriage driving, dressage, show jumping and gymkhana, as well as the traditional sports.

All proceeds from the show go to two different local charities, chosen each year, and many thousands of pounds have been donated over recent years

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A previous Country Sports event

