

Broad Street



Early 1900s

Introduction

During lockdown I have been sorting Congresbury History Group documents and photos. I found an article on Station Road by Arthur Westcott and have published this after adding a few photos. I thought another subject which might be of interest would be Broad Street, Congresbury. This is not a definitive history. Its just a light-hearted attempt to rekindle memories and provide a bit of diversion during this difficult period.

Chris Short
April 2020

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The cross

The focal point of the village is its 14th century market cross which faces the medieval planned street whose name reflects the once needed space required for the weekly market and annual fair.



The earliest known depiction of Congresbury village cross, c1818. Note that south is at the top.

'The first definitive reference to the cross comes in 1390, in a document dealing with the Dean and Chapter lands in Broad Street, which refers to *'la polecross'* there, presumably MidE *'pole'* = body of water and *'cross'* = cross, i.e. the cross by a pond or slow stream, ideally named given the streams visible on the 19th century map of Broad Street.'

Vince Russett

Fair Day

In 1227 Henry the Third granted to Joceline, Bishop of Bath and Wells, the right to hold a weekly market and an annual fair for two or three days in the Manor of Congresbury



'You could not move for people around the cross and in the Ship and Castle. There were little stalls called "standings" where a variety of things were sold - cockles and mussels from Pembroke, which you could eat on a plate with vinegar and pepper for only 1d. "Fairings" were little biscuit-like cakes. After lunch the roundabouts would come, brought by firms like Pruetts, Rogers and Hills. Sideshows too would come from Bristol.'

Jack Weaver, Parish Magazine, 1976.

'In bygone days the highlight of the year for Congresbury folk and those of neighbouring villages was the annual fair. Station Road was the scene of great excitement and activity as the business side of the fair was centered in the open space opposite the old Post Office and the whole road was blocked with livestock. The funfair was sited in a field near the river bridge, the gingerbread stalls etc. in Broad Street.'

Arthur Westcott.

After the first World War the fair gradually declined until its cessation in the 1960s.



Fair Day in Broad Street looking north. Early 1900s

The Fair in the 1920s by Ray Atwell

'It was chiefly a sheep fair and the sheep used to come off the Mendips. They would be driven off the day before by the drover and his dog and very often the sheep were put overnight in a field on the outskirts of the village.

The next morning they came into the village and put them in pens in Broad Street - hurdles forming the pens. About eight to ten or perhaps a dozen sheep were in each pen and there were hundreds of sheep sold at the fair. The village used to smell of sheep for weeks after, until there was a thunderstorm to wash it all away.

All the sheep and cattle were driven to Congresbury fair by road. There were no cattle trucks in those days - all were took by road and took back by road. Perhaps they had to go ten miles. They didn't care - time didn't matter. If they couldn't do it today they would do it tomorrow - that's how they used to go on.

There were stalls round the old cross, from which they used to sell home-made sweets and fairings (like a swelled-up ginger biscuit) and all that sort of thing. Before these stalls were put up the stall holders came on the Sunday, the day before the fair, and put a piece of their stall (a bit of batten, that's all) on the cross. That was where they were having their stall the next day and nobody offered to move it. The next would come along and he'd put his piece where he thought he'd have his

stall and all around the cross there were these bits of board and there it was till next morning and that was their pitch.



Fair Day in Broad Street looking south. Early 1900s

Gypsies came on the day of the fair and sold pigs and nanny goats as well as ponies. They used to trot the ponies up and down the road and smack their hands and make a deal, like they used to years ago. Down the road you would hear a bit of a scuffle. That was two gypsies having a bit of a set-to over something or other. Off would come their coats and they would have a good fight and that was how they would settle their differences.

The fair went on all day and t'was a real good do. There were two lots of roundabouts, Pruetts was where the library is now and Hills in a field on the opposite side of the road. That was when the river came right against the Ship and Castle. There was no other road then but the street to Kent Road. Kent Road and Broad Street were in one line straight down through.

There were all sorts of amusements there besides the roundabouts - usual things like coconut shies and all sorts including a shooting gallery. This was five or six jets of water and they had to shoot the balls off with an air gun. That was no easy affair, because the ball was popping up and down on the water all the time. So I heard this fellow say "Do you know I knocked down all five balls with one shot?" "How did you do that?" someone said, "I shot the bloke on the pump, pumping the water up."

I've seen in Broad Street, by the trees, a black man it was who used to come every year, and he pulled the teeth out there. No injections at all, he didn't give the farmer, or who was having his tooth pulled out. I've seen them sat in the chair and black man yank the tooth out. He couldn't say spit in the bowl, 'cos there was no bowl to spit in. They used to end up two or three yards from where they started and the chair was going along the road. I don't know what they had to pay for it. There was another chair with the forceps and tongs and pincers, and whatever he had to put the teeth out. So people did go and have their teeth pulled out right in Broad Street. That's when they were really tough that was.'



Above- early 1900s. Roundabouts to the north of the cross and a coach outside the Ship and Castle (Now the Congresbury Arms).

Left Ray Atwell on the cross. September 1989.

Events



Home Guard. First World War.



1937. Coronation of George VI



Left: Taken in Broad Street during 'Salute the Soldier Week, in August 1944.

Ken Pike (right) is in his Home Guard uniform. The little chap was a refugee from London. The lady on the left is said to be Mrs London who kept the Broad Street grocer's shop throughout the Second World War.



1941. Weapons Week. (Raising money to make weapons)



Evacuees from Hastings



1944. Front row seated: ?, ?, ?, possibly Kelly Blackmore , Reg Bailey, Donald Harvey, Jack Bown, 'Pinky' Pincott. Remainder includes Cecil Allen, Fred Hunt, Harold Allen and Freddie Tucker.



VJ Day 15 Aug 1945.



VJ Day 15 Aug 1945.



VJ Day 15 Aug 1945.



Carnival – late 1940s / early 1950s



Date unknown. 1950s?



1950s? Harriers.



1965. Morris men.



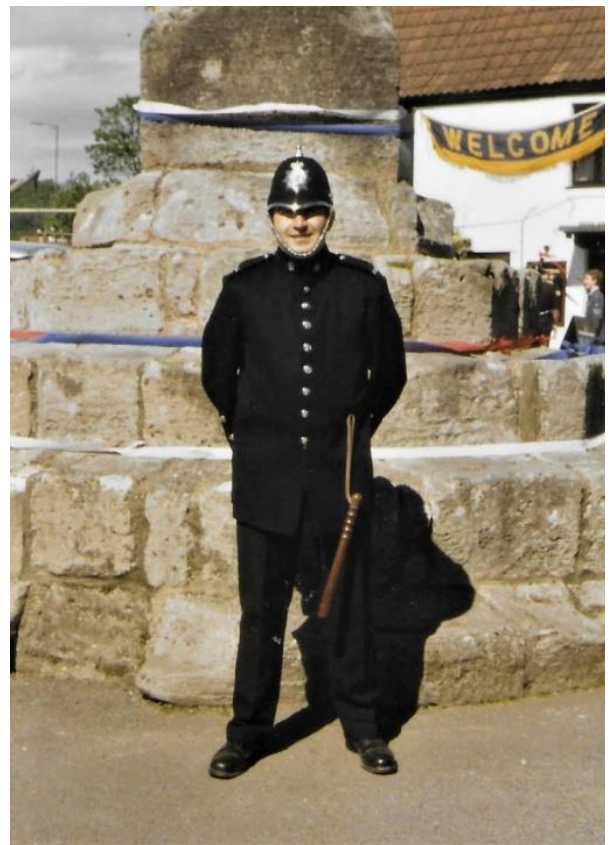
1977 Queen Elizabeth's Silver Jubilee



1977 Queen Elizabeth's Silver Jubilee



VE Day 1995. Right: PC Hunt.





1997. Tributes to Princess Diana.



3 June 2002 Queen Elizabeth's Golden Jubilee.



2012. Queen Elizabeth's Diamond Jubilee.



1965. Morris men

Floods



1950

1950 Flood by Mervyn Davis

'Families were trapped and much damage caused on Tuesday November 25th when the river Yeo overflowed its banks near Congresbury bridge.

Swollen by Monday's heavy rain the river rose during the night and could not get away in the morning owing to the incoming tide at Weston super Mare. Before 8am the local constable PC Harold Mallett was cycling round the village warning people in the danger area to be prepared for flooding. By 9'clock the water had made a breach about 20 yards wide over the bank and was rushing through the caravan camping site behind the Ship and Castle Inn.

The proprietor Mr CC Hall and his wife sought refuge in an upstairs room. Mrs Gardner who lives with them tried to stem the flow but soon the kitchen was a foot under water with furniture floating about in it.'

1968 – Major Flood.

Viewpoint, the parish magazine, reported in its August edition:

" The great flood of Wednesday night, July 10th, has caused wide-spread havoc in the village. Over 90 houses have been inundated."

The "In the Village" column of the magazine, written by Mervyn Davies, provided an accurate and eloquent account of the disaster:

'Floods following phenomenal rainfall, brought terror, drama, havoc and untold damage to many parts of the West Country. Congresbury suffered less than some, more than most ... Houses and shops in Broad Street, Station Road and High Street, were quickly flooded in varying depths. In the lounge bar of the Ship and Castle it was six feet five inches: in the Old Inn it was four feet and in the Plough about two feet. Telephones were out of order and in many buildings the lights failed. ... Water swilled into property in Kent Road.'



'A wall of water hit the cottage at the bottom of Broad Street.' Janet Kitt

The car on the right was washed there from the Ship and Castle car park.

'High Street Broad Street Paul's Causeway and Station Road were under water in depths varying between a few inches to some seven feet.'
Congresbury Parish Council report.

1968.

Businesses

The parade of shops in Broad Street replaced Bridge Farm which was pulled down after the 1968 floods.



Bridge Farm is the building behind the boy on this photo from the early 1900s



Looking north the end of Bridge Farm is on the left in this early post card. Church Road is incorrect.



Martin's timber yard at Bridge Farm.

Bridge Farm by Ray Atwell

A parade of shops stands on the site of Bridge Farm. In the 1920s part of this farm was the site of a timber business belonging to Mr John Martin who it is said made spars for thatching hay ricks. Fred Hunt recalls him:

"Frank Martin's father John used to go to Bristol with the timber. He would go out one day and cut down the timber in the woods by Woodlands off Wrington Road, the next day go to Bristol. They always had to hitch on (put another horse in front to take the weight) to go up over Congresbury Bridge which was steep then. They would go to Claverham to avoid Rhodyate Hill and on to Cumberland Basin, then come back over the "Rhoddy."

Frank Martin took over the business on the death of his father. "He were a big chap", relates Ray Atwell, "solid. I ran into him once on a push bike. T'was dark and I only had an oil lamp on my bike. It was just like riding into a wall. I can remember what he said, 'Where in the hell bist thee going? Hasn't got a minute or bist going to fetch a doctor?'"

"Opposite Martin's timber yard are the trees at the side of Bailey's shop where we used to play football, using two trees as goal posts. We would kick the ball into Martin's garden on purpose because he had a lot of black currants, red currants and gooseberries. After we retrieved the ball we came back with our pockets full. Frank Martin would get cross about this. One day I remember he said to me, "I've told your father, and I've told Greedy, (the local policeman), and all he said was - nothing!"



1986. Note Lloyds Bank on the left. Aunt Lucy's on the right.



2005. The bank has gone, replaced by Mendip Office and Art. Centre is Heaven Scent Florists and right Robin King, estate agents.

Then comes the building which was a fish and chip shop and is now a Kebab takeaway.



1986 Cottage fish and chip shop.



1986: The business also sold wet fish.



June 1998 when it was an Indian takeaway

The next business down the street was previously a grocery shop.



1950 flood. The shop was then E B Sully



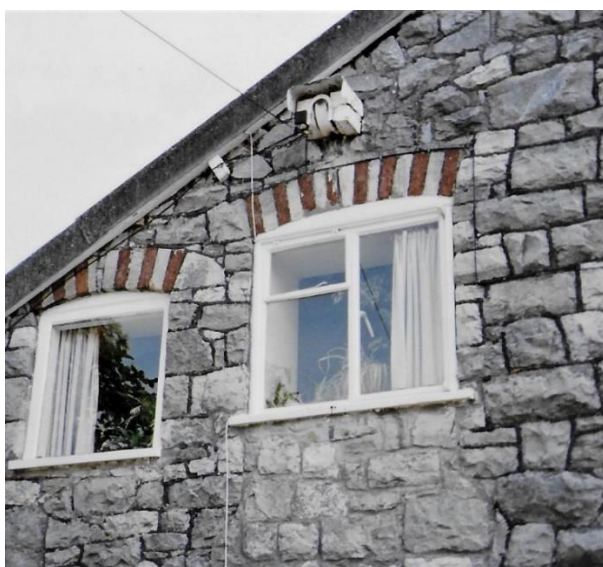
C 1998? Later it became Foodstore run by Mr & Mrs Wyatt.



C 1998? Mr & Mrs Wyatt in their shop.

In 1874 the building, then owed by Mr J Sheppy, was conveyed to Mr M Lidbury who, it is assumed, is the Michael Lidbury described as a baker by Kelly's Directory for 1861. By 1920 Mr Walter J Nichols was the owner.

Mr Nichols was a baker and his wife sold his produce and sweets in the shop. Walter's round included Hewish and Puxton, which he covered in a horse-drawn bread cart. The hoist used by the baker to haul the sacks of flour to the upper storey can still be seen (see photo below) on the gable end of the building.





1999. The shop had become a hairdressers, which it still is.

The next business down the street from the current hairdressers was a butcher's for over a century. (Building is left on the 1999 photo above.) Ray Atwell's grandfather Mr Samuel Taylor was a butcher here in 1875. By 1910 the shop belonged to Mr Harry Green, and after him to Mr David King, Mr Humphries, Mr Norman Wedlake, and finally Mr Peter Fowles who closed the business in the early 1980s.

Mrs Lorraine Coles' shop, Church House Designs, now replaces the butcher's. Her husband Robert is a furniture maker, who operates from the building at the rear of the shop and house. This was the former slaughterhouse where the butchers slaughtered their own animals. Mervyn Davies recalled that just after the last war a firm manufacturing "Wispy Crisps" was set up here. It didn't last as people objected to the smell!



Rear of one-time slaughterhouse (abattoir) in the 1980s

On the opposite side of Broad Street at the Cross end.



1975.

The first business was, in 1975, Hector's Hardware. Later it became Congresbury Hardware Store run by Brian Thompson.



*Brian Thompson
in 1999.*



Broad Street in 1934. Mrs Poultney's shop is on the right.

'Where the chemist is now in the 1910s and 1920s Mrs Lou Poultney ran a shop selling sweets, tobacco and "the most delicious cheeses". The sweets were stored in large glass jars and were weighed up by Mrs Poultney on a pair of brass scales kept on her counter. We called her Aunt Lou (she was my aunty).

She kept a parrot at the back of the shop which used to cuss. Aunt Lou was deaf and didn't always hear the customers come in. The parrot would call out "shop, shop, you b----r", Aunt Lou would call back, "Shut up, I'm coming, I'm coming!" This parrot could imitate and when a pony and trap passed by would call out "whoa, whoa" - and the pony would stop dead.

A taxi service was also run from this address by Ted Poultney (Aunt Lou's husband). He had a hansom cab, driven by a horse and sat in the open front, while his customers were inside the cab.'

Ray Atwell



Ted Poultney with his pony and trap.



1999. Cross Pharmacy centre.



For many years the business on this site was the Cross Pharmacy run by Deryk Cox, who is shown in the above photo from 1999.



2016. Cross Pharmacy right.



To the right of the chemist is an entrance leading to a garage, on the right-hand side of which is the only remaining wall of the church Tithe Barn. (See photo below and blue arrow on the 1818 map to left. NB. North is at the bottom on the map.)

'In 1650 it was described as "consisting of eleven bays of building, the walls of stone and covered with thatch, together with a barton or fold yard and garden adjoining.'
Dick Broomhead





The entrance leading to the remains of the tithe barn wall is on the left.

Paddingtons café, seen in this photo from the 1990s, was a much-loved meeting place for many years.



Run by Jeanette (Photographed left in 1999) who had an enormous cat called George.

She couldn't understand how George was still gaining weight after being put on a diet. So he was followed and found to make frequent trips to the fish and chip shop and even attended meetings in the first floor meeting room in the Ship and Castle where he enjoyed tit bits.