

The Brinsea Area by Jean Darby
(Written in 2015. Additions in italics by Chris Short)

In the 1930's Brinsea commenced this side of the railway line which ran from Congresbury to Blagdon.

This branch line from the main Strawberry Line ran across Wrington Vale . It was also closed in 1963.

Poplar Farm was the first property. This was occupied by Mr & Mrs Williams. They had cows and an orchard which had cider apples. After Mr Williams died Mr Boon came as bailiff and ran the farm for a number of years



Poplar Farm c1921

When I was young I was told that at the junction with Stock Lane and Brinsea Batch there was a stone cottage, all can remember is a lot of stone which sloped as you came from the Batch to get down to Stock Lane. At one time it was said that an aerial view showed the foundations but I doubt if that can be seen now as the junction has been changed so much.

The Farm at the top of Brinsea Batch, (*which runs off Brinsea road towards Churchill*) was occupied by Mr & Mrs Stuckey senior and with their 3 daughters, Hilda, Eva and Marion in one part and their son John and his wife Rose and their 4 children, Ruth, Eileen, George and Olive. (they ran a small farm – cows

only as far as I can remember) in the other. Mr & Mrs Stuckey senior decided to let his son have the farm and moved into a house which they had had built near the junction of Honey-Hall Lane together with their 3 daughters. I used to play with Ruth and loved going to their house as it had a cellar (we didn't so it was like an adventure to me) I also liked it when we were met from school by Mr Stuckey senior in his pony and trap, the children rode in the trap and Mr Stuckey walked beside the pony, stopping every so often to pick up fag ends from the side of the road so that he would have free tobacco for his pipe. When John and his family moved to Hinton Blewett, Mrs Williams purchased the farm as the land adjoined hers. When Mrs Williams died, her Farm House was sold separate to the land and this has since been developed.

Brinsea Batch Farm was purchased by Mr & Mrs Jack Parrott and they moved in in 1946. During the following years they had 5 children, Sylvia, Michael, Margaret, Derrick and Pamela.

I remember Jack coming down to our house to use the phone as we had a shared line with Mr Maunsell-Eyre at Rosses Orchard owing to my Father being connected to the Ministry of Food. Derrick and Zoe have recently given up farming and moved into the bungalow which had been built when Jack & May retired.



Brinsea Batch Farm c1921

Coming back down the Batch and turning right into Brinsea road we come to Elm Farm which was occupied by Mr Philip and Mrs Murial Grace with their daughter Elizabeth. Like most of the Farms around here it was on a small

scale and was cows and a couple of cart horses used when hay making etc. Mr Jim Avery, who lived with his wife at Brook Cottage, (more about that later) worked for Mr Grace – he had two speeds, slow and stop!!!



Elms Farm c1921

When the war was on Mr Grace asked my parent's if we would share a family of evacuees – a family of 6, Grandmother, Mother, and 4 children – we had Grandmother, Mother and the baby and the 'Graces' had the 3 girls who used to come over to us for meals, in fact they only slept at 'The Elms'. To help out on the farm he also had a German prisoner of war – he slept above the shed where the machinery was kept. When he reached retiring age he sold the farm to Mr Gosling who made it over to his son George but he didn't want the Farm House and sold it on to Mr Ray and Mrs Jackie Cole. They lived there with their children, Cheryl, Gary, Nicola and Simon. Sadly, in 1968 Nicola was riding her bike down the Batch, swung round to go home and got knocked off her bike and was seriously injured and later died in hospital. They sold it in the 1980's to Mrs Squires and Mrs Pearl who opened a Residential Home for the Elderly' and this has continued to this day.

Opposite is Brinsea Cottage which was occupied by Mr Wilfred and Mrs Gladys Cleverdon and their daughter Jean (that's me).



A young Jean with mother and father

Mr Cleverdon collected eggs from the farms around the area, going as far as Sparkford Market for 3 days a week then at the end of the week sold them to shops in the Bristol area. He also sold butter, which he collected in 56lb boxes (which came from New Zealand) from a warehouse in Bristol and then made it up into 1lb and 1/2 pound packs. At Christmas time he bought chicken and turkeys from farmers which he also supplied to butcher's shops in Bristol. When the war began he joined 4 other men who were in the same business and The Cheddar Valley Egg Distributors Ltd., was formed, my father becoming the Managing Director. The business was based at Mark, near Highbridge. My father had purchased the house in 1926 for £700 – the front looked much the same as it does now but the back had been a lean-to, with 2

bedrooms which couldn't be used. In 1936 he had the back pulled down and rebuilt as it stands to-day, this cost £300 so in all the house cost £1,000.



Brinsea Cottage c 1921



Brinsea Cottage (1940s).



Mr Wilfred Cleverdon & van
C1926.

During the war we had a number of evacuees, the first was Mrs Sams and Winnie who came from Poplar in London. I couldn't understand them and they couldn't understand our Somerset brogue. They returned home after 3 weeks saying it was the best holiday they had ever had. The second was Mrs Williams and her daughter Rose together with her mother. They came from Hastings. Mrs Williams other 3 daughters were at Elm Farm. After they returned home we had Mr & Mrs Trivett and Roma, Mr Trivett had been moved with his job to Bristol and they eventually bought a place in Yatton. After they left we had Mrs Perry, Mrs Whiting and Granny Day, mother of Mrs Perry and Mrs Whiting. They came from Bristol and the 2 sisters used to return to Bristol during the day and come back by bus to spend the night here as the bombing of Bristol was quite bad at that time. We also had Mr & Mrs Frank Winston – that was the parents of Reece Winston the photographer, they too came from Bristol. During the week Miss Booker another Bristol resident would come out to sleep on the sofa in the lounge just to get a nights' sleep. When they had all returned to Bristol we had Mr & Mrs Livingstone and their son David – Mr Livingstone worked for Bristol Bus Company having been transferred from the London area, they eventually rented a house in Bristol, so by 1946 we had the house to ourselves again.



Evacuees at Congresbury cross

The first house in Brinsea Lane (*off to the right past the Elms*) was Rosses Orchard, occupied by Mr and Mrs Maunsell Eyre (his father had been Vicar of Congresbury 1883-1920.) They had 2 daughters both out to work and Mr Maunsell-Eyre was retired. They had an orchard at the side of the house which Mr George White rented to keep poultry. During the war Mr Maunsell Eyre was in the A.R.P



1963/4. Rosses Orchard

The next property was Manor Farm run by Mr Reginald Edwards with his wife Grace. They had 4 children, Nancy, John and twins Caroline and Alison. I used to play with Nancy and often joined them to go in the car to visit their grandparents at Kingston Seymour. During the war they had evacuees but in Peace time they had paying guests. Reg Edwards made cider at Manor Farm, I can remember watching him turning the press and when the juice began to drip he caught a cup of cider for Nancy & I to drink. Besides his cider apples he would use any we picked up from our trees, said it gave it a different taste. He was also in the Home Guard as was my father and Herbert Norton.

After the war Mr Maunsell-Eyre had a bungalow built at the end of his orchard and rented it out to Mr & Mrs Acary – he sold fire extinguisher's to households and firms. They purchased a property in Honeyhall Lane eventually.

Next was Brinsea Green Farm where William (known as Bill) and his wife Evelyn Edwards lived with their two boys David and Geoffrey. (Bill was brother to Reg at Manor Farm) the family are still running the farm to-day.

Only one virgate or yardland survived intact until 1567. That held by Agnes Johnes

based on the site of the present Brinsea Green Farm, although no evidence of any early occupation has been recovered from its immediate surroundings. Thirteenth century pottery has however been derived from the garden of the adjacent 'Green Acre' and in 1928 'The Gentleman's Magazine' contained a note recording that 'In pulling down part of an old farmhouse, the property of Mr Beake (then owner of Brinsea Green Farm) at Brinsea in the parish of Congresbury, the labourers lately found a small screw box containing 115 silver and 23 gold coins. The silver ones are groats of Henry V... The gold included a noble of Henry VI and a noble by Edward IV called the rial...' (Gentleman's Magazine 1928 Pt1: 464)

Broomhead, Congresbury Parish Survey

As we reach the junction joining Brinsea Batch we come to Brinsea Batch Lodge occupied by Fred Pincott and his wife who ran a small shop selling sweets – I loved to go in and get toffees or boiled sweets all out of a sweet jar and put into paper bags.



Brinsea Batch Lodge c 1985



*It is shown as the Swan Inn on the Ordnance Survey Map 1840-88.
(right) Silvester Say was landlord here in 1861*

They had a house built in their garden and called it Quetta a place Fred had been stationed at during the first world war. Miss Johnson and Miss Madaver moved into Brinsea Batch Lodge and were there until the 1990's.



*Mr & Mrs Pincott with Mrs
Pincott's sister
occupants of Quetta.*



Quetta and Redcliffe House

After Quetta was Redcliff House where my grandparents Edward and Charlotte White lived with their son George. He kept poultry and rented the orchard from

Mr Maunsell-Eyre for a number of years and also purchased the paddock which now belongs to Brinsea Batch Lodge to keep his poultry on.



Redcliffe House. The original cottage on this site was built on waste land, at one time part of Brinsea Road. It is shown on the 1815 Enclosure Map.



Charlotte White nee Hebditch c 1940s. She occupied Redcliffe House from 1927 to 1952.



Mr George White, poultry farmer



Mr White senior

Next was Brook Cottage where Mr & Mrs John Hollier lived – cannot remember anything about them as he died in 1933 and she moved away. Philip Grace then purchased the cottage and Doris & Jack Palmer (Jack was the nephew of Elsie Pincott) moved in then when Jack left Jim Avery and his wife came. Jim was a farm worker and did the milking for Philip Grace he rode his bicycle, to work each morning – I could walk faster than he could ride his bike and as I said before his speeds were slow and stop. They had one son

who was married and lived in Weston super Mare and had a fish and chip van and was always in Congresbury on a Friday evening.



Brook Cottage Mr & Mrs Hollier 1930s



Brinsea Lodge, Redcliffe House & Brook Cottage late 1930s

The next house was occupied by Herbert and Marjorie Norton with their 3 children. Reginald, Peter and Sheila. They had a few cows and Herbert helped out at Reg Wear's Farm at the end of Honey Hall Lane mainly milking. Reg still lives in the house to-day and I'm sure can give you more information.

Next on was the house built by Mr Stuckey senior, It was from there that Eva married and went to live in Sandford. When his wife died, he with Hilda & Marion moved to Churchill and the present owners purchased it.

Further up the road on that side was a gate which after following the footpath across two fields you came to Park Farm. This is now in Churchill Parish but when I was an apprentice at the Post Office I can remember the postman (all the mail went out from Congresbury Post office then) saying he couldn't get across the fields for snow (they cycled in those days) and the postmaster, Mr Jim Cornish drove up to Park Farm every 2 or 3 days with their post, even then he had to drive up a track to the farm.

On the right-hand side was West Brinsea Farm which was occupied by Mr & Mrs Avery and with the help of Ella looked after Joe Sweeting who was in his 90's then – he lived to be over 100 years old. Ella was called up during the war she was very 'old fashioned' in those days – always wore black. When she got to the recruiting office she said she wasn't going to war as she had to look after her 100-year-old father. She got her exemption. The Avery's had cows as well as poultry.



Joe Sweeting. Left - outside West Brinsea Farm, When he died in 1946 he was nearly 105 and was said to be Britain's oldest farmer. At 104 he was still taking a keen interest in his farm, could eat with his own teeth and scorned spectacles.

Just over the brow towards Churchill is a cottage which was occupied by Mrs Griffiths. I was always scared of her as to me she looked like a witch. By this time I had left school was an apprentice at Congresbury Post Office, so the day I was told I could have an extra half an hour for lunch if I delivered a telegram to her was one of the scariest I can remember. I got to the track leading to the cottage, had to leave my bike by the road as it was all overgrown found my way to the door, knocked and when Mrs Griffin came I quickly handed over the telegram, turned and ran back to the road. I can laugh now but at 14 it really was scary.

We now go down Honey Hall Lane. The farm on the right, now the Golf Club was Mr & Mrs Burge – I can we remember we used to collect eggs from them but that's about all.

The farm cottages were occupied by Mr Griffin and his wife and 2 sons. He was the son of Mrs Griffin in the cottage towards Churchill. He suffered mental problems and was unable to get permanent work. I cannot recall who lived in the other cottage (they were semi-detached) but it was the one Mr Acary purchased. Now the 2 cottages have been combined and made into a beautiful house.

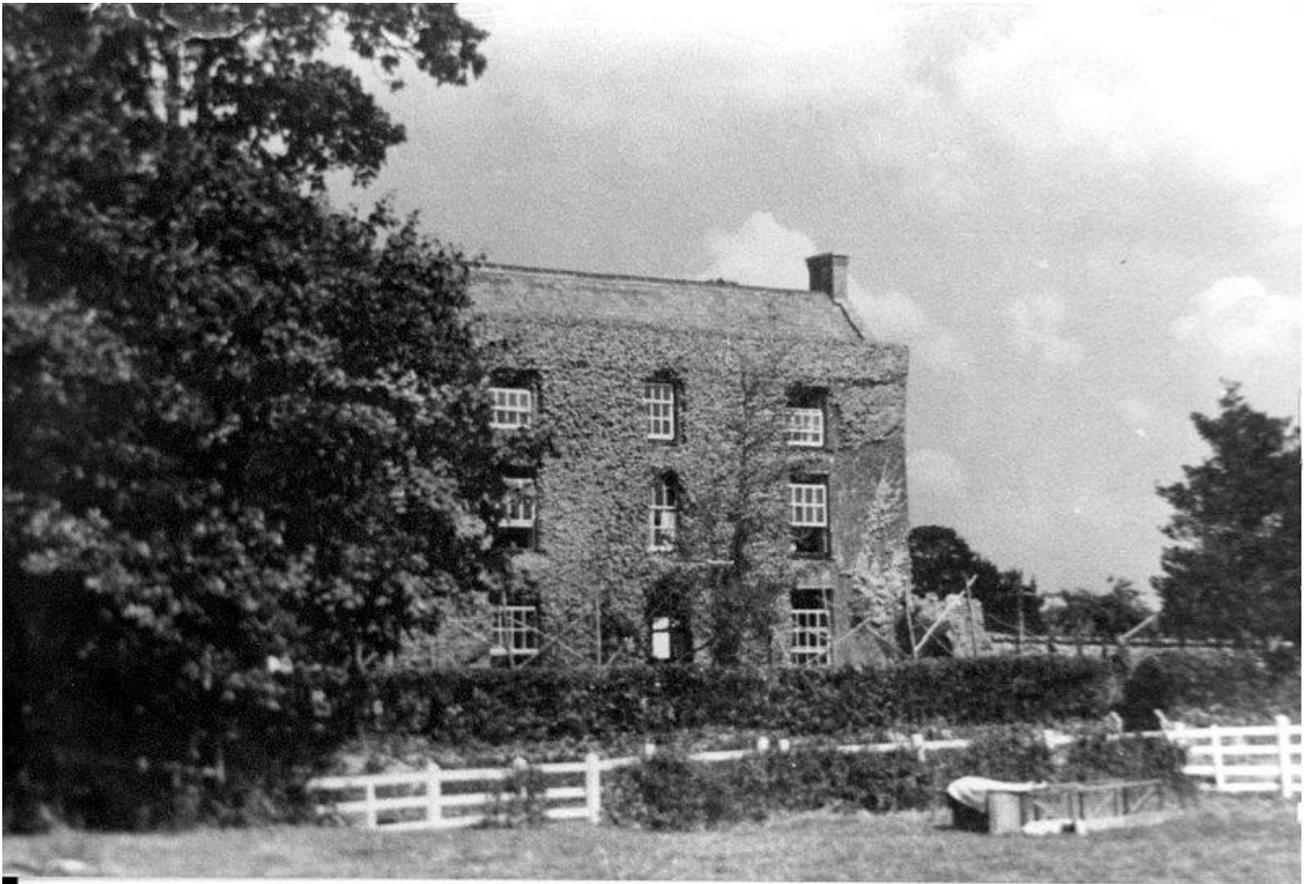
Red Brick Farm was owned by the Clark family who had moved there from on the Mendips. Mr Clark was very much into horses and I guess traded them at Fairs etc. I can always remember his funeral – They had a hearse drawn by 4 horses and a wagon with the mourners. It was a misty day in the 70's and I had come home for lunch, I knew they would be leaving Honey Hall about 1.30pm so went down the drive to see if I could see it. It turned out to be quite eerie as suddenly out of the mist came the hearse with the horses decked out with shining brass and head plumes. Quite a sight at that time.

Next was 'Old' Mr Stallard – he lived on his own in this very large house and kept a few cows I believe. I used to call on him when I collected for Dr. Banardo's and he was always quite generous.

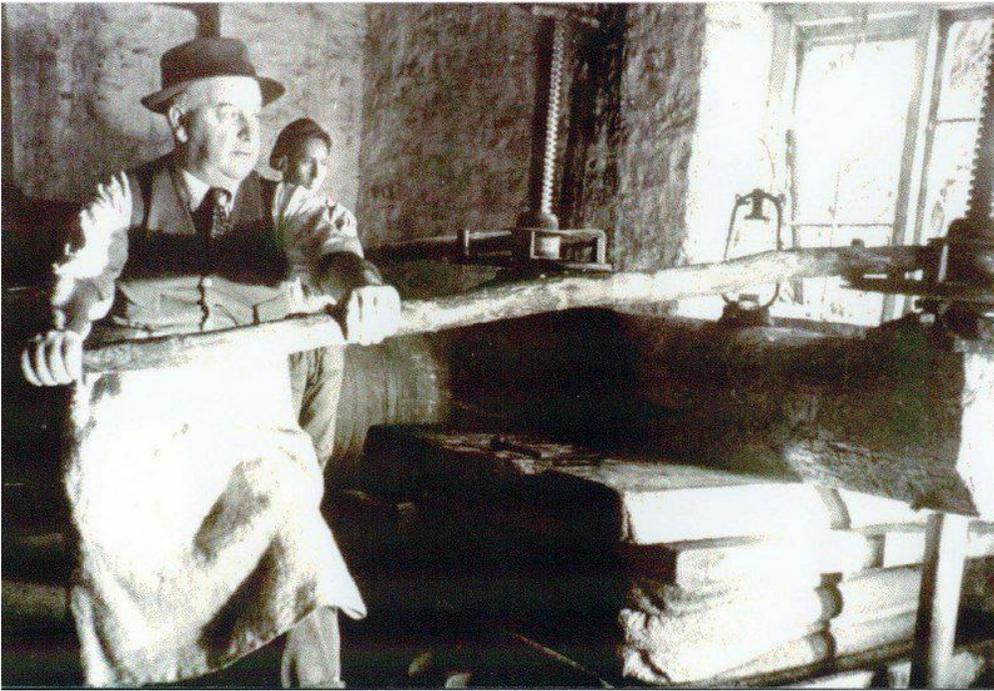
Opposite was this large house and it seemed to be divided into two. At the rear lived the Tratt family – to me it seemed more like a lean-to as it had 2 large double doors which were kept open in the summer as there was no window in the place. At the front lived the Polehampton family. Mr Polehampton was a perfect gentleman but I don't think had much money. They had a son and I can remember cycling back from the village on my new bike and his son was

coming in the opposite direction. We were both in the middle of the road and crashed head on. My bike had to go back to the makers to be straightened out.

At the bottom was Honey Hall Farm. Mr & Mrs Wear lived there with their two daughters. Mrs Wear did 'Bed & Breakfast' during the summer and it was a very popular place. During the war they had some evacuees, It went back to bed and breakfast as soon as possible after the war finished. Mr Wear kept cows and sometimes Herbert Norton or George White would go down to help out with the milking if one of the farm labourers was on holiday.



Honey Hall c1950



*Reg Wear cider making at Honey Hall.
According to Alex Cran, then vicar at Congresbury, in the 1950s Reg appeared on TV making cider. The camera caught a mouse dropping in the brew. Reg looked at the camera and said 'that will make a wonderful drop of cider.'*



Honey Hall 1983

Honey Hall by Gill Bedingfield

The Wears made some alterations to the accommodation and had paying guests for many years before and during World War II. Mrs Wear charged £2.12s.6d per week for a "front" bedroom and £2.2s for a "back" one, including 3 meals a day.

In the summer of 1939 a Welshman called Mr Morgan stayed for several months. He would not allow anyone into his room except for the cleaner, who he would watch. On one occasion, however, he was persuaded to play tennis with Esme Wear and some friends and while his room was left unattended, Mrs Wear had a good look round. On the desk was a plan of a British ship with foreign writing all over it. It was only after War was declared and Mr Morgan gone leaving no forwarding address, that the Wears wondered whether he had perhaps been spying!

At the start of the Second World War the Wears took in some evacuees from London, but they did not stay long as according to Mrs Wear "there was no fish and chip shop and they could not stand the open space". Other paying guests stayed for much longer, some for as long as 8 months. Sometimes, there were as many as twenty people in the house, with eight or nine camp beds set up in the cellar for the more nervous. But in 1942, when petrol rationing became stricter, most of Mrs Wear's guests departed.

The Wears continued to farm Honey Hall until 1960 when Reg retired. The house and farm buildings with by then 1081 acres were put up for auction and bought by Samuel and Lois Porter for £18,900. (Reg had bought two fields before the Second World War, so increasing the acreage).

This concludes my memories of the Brinsea Area. Now more bungalows and houses have been built and farms have disappeared. At the time of writing I believe Ross Edwards is the only one that still milks and at one time there were at least ten in this small area.