**Bere Alston-from 1913**

**Shops, Churches, Chapels and Ihe Parish Hall**

Fore St, There were three butcher shops, "Blackmore's", "Wadge & Pugsley", "Polkinhome". One saddler; Mr H Clemens, one saddler and general dealer; Mr Sid Hunt. Two dairies; Mr Squance and Mrs Faul. Two general shops, an ironmonger (Irwin). One baker; Mr T Dawe. Three public houses; "The Edgcumbe", "Victoria Inn" and "Commercial". Two chapels, the oldest church was turned into a workshop and barbers shop at the rear of Glebe property in Fore St. Holy Trinity Church was built to replace the one used as a workshop. Mr Wilcocks was the carpenter who had the workshops, his two sons, (Ned and Charlie) were later carpenters.

The old vestry was used as a barbers shop, run by Mr Prideaux, he had a range of photos dating back several years of the old people in the village and football teams. I used to be amused to listen to some old men describing what went on in the village years ago. One gent, Mr J Callaway, would tell some tale and the tears of laughter would roll down his cheeks. One did not require television for any amusement in those days, just to listen was enough.

At one time Mr Harry Cole, who was at one time the landlord of the Victoria Inn, was the owner of the dairy at the top of Cornwall St, he also had a horse and trap which he kept at a yard in Cornwall St. for taking marketing etc to Bere Alston Station. He had a horse called "Bluebell" which he used to haul the trap. My mother kept a sweet shop as well as other goods (now owned by Mr Smith). Mr Cole used to catch the early train to Plymouth with go\_ods and people, approx 6-30 am every morning my parents were woken up with the sound of Mr Cole's loud voice "Come on Bluebell, you so and so, to make the horse get a move on. On Valentines Day, my parents sent Mr Cole an advert for Bluebell Polish, he knew who sent the advert, and from then on Mr Cole was known as "Bluebell" Cole.My parents bedroom was on the comer of Cornwall St and Fore St, after the pubs closed at night, men used to stand on the comer and discuss what went on during the day. My father remarked that there was more hay saved during their conversations than the whole of the parish.

Most of the pavements in the village were cobbles and the roads were made with stone (cracked by the roadside) and earth collected from the clearance of the water tables on the roadside. The stone was laid and the earth spread over, then water was sprayed from a watercart and rolled in with a steamroller. This compacted and was left to dry out, winter time it was a real mess. The steamroller driver used to live in a caravan with a rough bed (staw mattress), small coal stove etc, most times it used to be parked by the wayside up at the Grove. We as boys used to sit with the driver around his stove in winter evenings.

There was no mains water until approx 1927, or any electricity until around 1929, nearly everyone had a well.

The Parish Hall was built as a rifle range by the Earl of Mount Edgcumbe, my father helped to build the walls. Messers Richards were the contractors and their workshops was behind what was the old chapel in Fore St, it was burned down many years ago,

when I was young. During the time the Parish Hall was being built, Mr John"Teeler" Richards was constantly watching my father and Mr "Lucky" Luxmore the other mason, one day, "Lucky" said to Mr Richards, "can you play draughts", he replied "yes why"? "Lucky" retorted "well its your move, and if you do not, you will loose two men", this was enough as the visits were not so frequent. We have carried out work to the Hall structure, the tie beams were too high leaving the principle to spread, this allowed the roof to sink and the wall move. We, under the instruction of Mr Large, built in bars across the width of the hall which could be tensioned, this cured

the movement.

Copied from letters written by Mr Rex Toll.

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