

LITTLE LONDON – Part one

Some years ago the County Archivist made a weekly appearance on local radio answering queries. He said that places called Little London had acquired their name from before the advent of road and rail transport when sheep were driven across country to the London Wool Markets and it was necessary to have places for the drovers and horses to rest and for the sheep to be safely penned up overnight. There is another Little London on the outskirts of Longhope and altogether throughout the country there are 46.

The original roads were sited over the firm stoney hills because lower down the valleys were very wet and muddy. The old London road came up from Bowbridge via Rodborough Lane and Dark Lane. It then went up the wide track in front of the Fort and over the common to where the sheep were penned up overnight in the paddocks attached to “Braeside” before continuing on their journey to London.

When my father (born 1908) was a boy Mr. Frederick Clarke owned the property and Dad earned his first pocket money by fetching milk from a farm in Kingscourt and delivering it to “Braeside” early each morning.

From about 1925 the property was owned by Mr. & Mrs. Wright who were retired missionaries. They had a close relationship with Rodborough Tabernacle and in the summer hosted barbeque events for the young people. They had two daughters, Molly and Elizabeth. About 1953/4 Elizabeth returned from India with her fiancé who had retired from missionary work there. They married and Mr. & Mrs. Archibald gained planning permission to have the bungalow “Inglewood” built on the lower paddock.

Unfortunately, at that time, there was no vehicular access to that piece of land and, in order to bring in their materials, the builders used the “Braeside” drive off the Minchinhampton road, then, without seeking permission, they took the liberty of continuing down over the common to the site. This churned up the ground considerably, badly scarred the common and caused very serious problems with an outraged National Trust. Sadly, the resulting anxiety brought about the sudden death of Mr. Archibald. The National Trust then placed a sturdy seat at right-angles to the “Braeside” wall to prevent any further vehicular access.

Later on, after some old cottages were demolished and a couple of new houses built, access was improved when a loop road to Little London was created just above Bowl Hill (Kingscourt), and, at the same time, “Inglewood” acquired its own drive. At last cars and the refuse lorry could get up to Little London and down again easily! Previously the rubbish was either dumped in the old quarry or in one of the gullies but back in those days it was mostly ashes. Mrs. Archibald lived on at “Inglewood” for many years into her 90’s. I have mislaid my copy of her memoirs which were purchased years ago in the Christian Bookshop in London Rd. Stroud.

I remember “Braeside” being advertised for sale, in the mid-1970s, for the sum of £27,000. It was then purchased by the late Mr. Paul Dangerfield whose son Mark now lives there. In recent years some new buildings have been added in the paddock but sheep can still be seen there keeping the remaining grass under control.

.....Maureen Arthur, copyright.....

(E. & O.E!)