

The Duke Inn, Bungalow, Bratton.



THE DUKE INN'S CHALET

"There used to be a lady who came into church in her sou'wester and long coat". It's the early 1950s and a young girl is puzzled. "I remember asking my Mum why that lady left her Wellie boots in the porch. She said 'She's staying in the woods'. I thought she lived there."

Perched on the hillside high above the church once stood an annexe for the Duke Inn. The view it offered over the village and down to the railway line was described by one postcard correspondent as "magnificent". Photographs of groups dressed in Edwardian fashion and standing in front of the chalet offer an indication of the building's age.

In her memoirs Marjorie Reeves recalls that in the 1920s "One year a group of Oxford students took the bungalow on the hill-side opposite us for a reading party and came across the valley in the evening to play tennis." Others remember parties of teachers staying throughout the summer holidaying, groups of Boy Scouts, and even war evacuees.

The two-storied wooden building offered a living room and small kitchen on the ground floor, with a veranda for deckchairs. A wooden hut to one side housed the toilet. The bedroom was on the upper floor, with three bunk beds down either side. When a local newspaper printed a picture of the chalet, people wrote in recalling how, as children, it was considered a great novelty at bedtime to go out of the living room onto the veranda and climb the open staircase to bed.

Water supplies had to be fetched from the nearby Church Spring and stored in stone jars to keep them cool, while food and other supplies were carried from the village.

The chalet's owners have included the Flook sisters, Mr Linham, and finally Mr Grant, who had to make the decision to demolish the bungalow sometime in the early 1960's due to its deterioration. Its weathered concrete plinth is all that remains today.