

The Monstrously Memorable Winter of 1963

Marilyn Monroe had died in August. The Cuban Missile Crisis took place in October. In the UK Harold Macmillan had been Prime Minister for 6 years and a pint of milk cost 8 pence h'penny. 1962 was drawing to a close. Elvis Presley's 'Return To Sender' was the Christmas Number One, and the movie showing at the local cinemas was 'Lawrence of Arabia' starring Peter O'Toole and Omar Sharif.



Although there was no White Christmas in 1962, high in the sky an anticyclone hovered over Scandinavia, drawing cold winds from Siberia all the way to Britain. A westerly Atlantic wind bringing mild, wet air, which would usually have kept it at bay, suddenly weakened, allowing a second anticyclone, that normally stayed over Greenland, to come down and join the Siberian one, bringing a whole lot of freezing air from the North Pole with it. Significant snowfall occurred as the air mass moved south, and parts of Southern England had heavy snow late on Boxing Day evening.



In Bratton, Sheila was 20 and expecting her first baby in mid-February. Having spent Boxing Day at a family gathering in Erlestoke they were travelling home that night in the fresh snow. "When we came back down The Bash the 8 o'clock bus was stuck. All the people on there, and the buses were full in those days, they had to walk back to Trowbridge."

Carol had only just turned 11. "I remember waking up the following morning and realising the world outside was really bright and all I could hear was the sound of people shovelling snow from their paths."

Claire was 10 years old. "Oooh, it's snowed. Great, let's go and play in the snow."

Sheila: "Some people used to say they love the snow, because their gardens looked as good as the next door one. So they didn't have to worry about the weeds."

Mary was 16 and worked at the Trowbridge branch of Boots the chemist. "I went in there as junior as junior could be. My friend I'd made when I went to Boots, whose still one of my best friends now after all these years, she lived at North Bradley, and we'd been to a dance and I'd stayed at hers. We got up and there was all this snow, and I had to get back to Bratton somehow. She had two older brothers and one had an A35 van, that was Nigel. 'Tony and I will take you home. Jenny can come as well'. They thought they'd go round a quieter way and, course, nobody had been that way and 'Oh dear'. Well I don't know how many hours it took us to get home. They had spades and shovels and really the snow was that deep. And they got me home. We were laughing about it at the time but it wasn't funny really. It was horrendous. And, course, we didn't have a telephone in the house at the time, and neither did Jenny, and when I eventually saw her, which was weeks later, I didn't go work for about more than a fortnight, and I said 'Hope you got home alright' and she said 'Eventually'."

Although Bratton had only received 2 to 5 inches of snow, nobody could have possibly predicted that this blanket of snow that fell on Boxing Day night would remain on the ground until March 4th, 67 days later, due to the persistence of near freezing temperatures.



Through the weekend after Christmas a belt of warm air tried to push up from the South but by now the cold front was so dug in that it resisted the warm air and became firmly established. The combined high pressure from Siberia and Greenland had created a self-perpetuating system that stayed pretty much the same for the best part of two months. Even with the temperature as low as -5.5c on December 28th, nobody could have realised at the time that Britain was entering a mini ice-age. On December 29th and 30th, before the first snow had any chance of melting, a series of vicious blizzards, the worst for 15 years, brought driving snow and gale force winds, up to 90 mph, raging through the night all across South West England. Un-drifted snow was recorded as being over 2 feet. Where snow drifted it reached up to 20 feet deep in places.

Claire: "It went under the roof tiles and my Father and Grandfather had to get up in the roof and shovel down these bucketfuls of snow."

Linda was 9 and her family had only moved to Bratton just a week or two earlier. "At our back door the snow was in the porch 6 foot by the morning. I can remember it as if it was yesterday. We couldn't get out. My Dad had to dig his way out with a shovel he used for the Rayburn."

Mary: "Of course at the time we had outside toilets. Dad opened the back door and the snow was up nearly as high as the back door where it had blown it on. He had a shovel inside, which he'd had the sense to bring in, so he shovelled that away from the door and made a passage way to the toilet. Mum and Dad had an oil heater which they kept out there so the water and everything didn't freeze up. And that was the warmest place to be after that. We had no central heating or anything at the time. We used to sit round this open fire in the living room which was always blazing up the chimney."

Linda: "The only heating we had was the Rayburn. All our pipes were frozen up in the house, so we had no water to make a cup of tea. My Mum and Dad had to fill up snow in a saucepan and melt it on the Rayburn, so we could have a drink and have a wash."

Mary: "We had a coal shed full of coal and wood, but I don't think they could get out to deliver, so you were really being quite careful what you were using to make sure it lasted. Dad could get oil, paraffin or whatever you called it at the time, for the heater from Doug Reed's garage."

Claire: "We had one of these stove things that you filled up with coal eggs. That was the sort of heating. We wouldn't normally have kept that in overnight, but because it was so cold, it was made up to last overnight, so that at least that room was warm in the morning when we got up."

Linda: "The windows in the house were metal and in my bedroom there were icicles inside and out. So, so cold. You couldn't see through the windows outside as it was all ice, which formed very pretty patterns."

Mary: "You went up in the bedrooms at night, there were lovely patterns on the window. You could scrape it off and look out. But we knew no different. We had nice warm beds with a hot water bottle. You were cosy enough then. You could lay in bed and see your breath. But it was getting dressed in the morning."

Claire: "We built a monstrous great snowball on the lawn. We couldn't roll it any more, cause it got too heavy, so then we brought snow to it and kind of packed it round it. It didn't happen in a day, obviously, we built it over time. It was really hard ice more than snow. And then we tunnelled it out and made an igloo. We couldn't stand up in there, but we could sit up. We had chicken feed sacks on the floor to sit on. We did play in it like you would in a tent. So it was a sizeable thing. It was too cold to stay in there for very long. Mum would have to put our clothes to dry and then 'Oh, we want to go outside again'. 'Well you can't, your clothes are still wet'.



Carol: "The village was cut off from the outside world at the beginning. There were no buses or cars getting through."

Claire: "As you go from Bratton to Westbury all that was covered in drifts. We were cut off. You couldn't get to Westbury unless you walked, and then it was a bit of a dangerous undertaking."

Sheila: "It was backed up. It was really awful. I mean, Dr Higgins used to go round on a tractor."

Carol: "There were problems with food getting through to begin with. I vividly remember walking to Edington with my sister and our Dad to buy bread. There was a bakery there, Berrett's, and they were still baking."

Mary: "We had more than one shop at the time, a butchers and what was the old post office, that was a little grocers shop as well. But there was a shortage of things. It was a different way of life to what it is these days. Like my Dad grew all the vegetables, so had onions and potatoes and things you could store, already in. But you couldn't get to others. They were snowed in, and you were really messed up in that respect because you then had to buy vegetables. If you could get them."

Claire: "If Dad wanted to go out, or for Mum to go up to the village, perhaps to get something from the shop, he had to dig a pathway up through for her."

Mary: "People just got on with it and helped everybody else. I know we had quite elderly neighbours and I can remember Dad going up and clearing their paths so they could go out, if they needed to go out."



Linda: "In the day time we would all go out and try and clear the snow away from the paths and the steep drive. There were four houses up there, so we all helped each other and put salt and ashes from our fires to help clear the path for the milkman to deliver our milk. It was a while before we got any milk, as the milkman couldn't get around. We always kept a tin of 'Marvel' in those days."

Sheila: "The milk was all delivered on tractors. I don't know whose tractor."

Mary: "We had the local milkman. George Drewett. We used to have a quart bottle, with about that much cream on the top, a pint bottle and a half pint bottle. Mum used to say it was the best milk she'd ever tasted. It was so creamy. If you left them out too long the milk would come up through the bottle with the silver top still on the frozen milk, so that just came up with it and stayed on the top."

Carol: "We had the chickens, and Mum and Dad used to sell eggs, and I remember, because it was so cold, we had to pick the eggs up several times a day or they froze in the nests. The shell would be cracked and you could see that the white was frozen inside."

Linda: "We had a lot of stews to eat. Also rice puddings."

After a week, living in a polar landscape felt a little less enchanting. New Year's Eve brought another blizzard sweeping in from the West. When New Year's Day saw a rise in temperature and a slight thaw optimists believed the worst was over. But then another blizzard struck the region on the following two days, followed by freezing rain, causing chaos and adding to the already abysmal state of affairs. The AA described the conditions as a "Witches brew of hard packed frozen snow, ice patches and fog".

Sheila: "A lot of the poles did come down from Westbury. My Aunt in Castle Road didn't have any electric for 10 days. It used to take them for ever. Well you just lived on candles and everything. You always had candles in the house. Always."

Claire: "Mum's got an old oil lamp, which was given to my father's parents as a wedding present. I do remember that being lit, and it gave out quite a reasonable light, so there must have been power cuts at some point."

Sheila: "As a kid I loved the snow, like all children do. But when you've got to go to work it wasn't fun."

Claire: "Dad was working at John Wallis Titt in Warminster, on the dairy van. He couldn't get to Westbury and I think the Trowbridge roads were not really passable, so he didn't go to work very much to start with. Carol's dad worked for the Pioneer Benefits Society in Trowbridge and he used to cycle there every day. So I'm sure he didn't do that for a while."

Mary: "I didn't go to work because no buses could get through. I mean, it must have been at least a fortnight."

Richard was 14 at the time and remembers Bill Knight, a train driver. "He walked from Bratton to Westbury station when it was totally snowed in. And he was 15 minutes late. His charge-hand said 'You're late!', and Bill said 'If you'd walked 4 miles you'd be late', and he turned round and walked home. Didn't do any work that day."



Richard's father Bill owned a movie camera. "An idea occurred to me that we should put on record some of the things that we do in and around the farm in the whole year. And so we planned to start filming on January 1st and go through the seasons. Well, it so happened that that was the beginning of the very hard Winter of '63. And so, on this film you will see the snow as it fell in and around Bratton and the type of landscape it left us with all around the downs and the escarpments, and some of the problems we had in trying to keep the farm going."

Richard: "We managed to get up and down the Imber Road, but past our grain store and then up

Ridgeway Road the road's so deep down in the ground, that it just fills up level with snow. Back in the '60s we didn't have the tractor power or the fork lifts or anything like that to move snow, like you can today. It was just an ordinary two-wheel driver tractor with a loader on."

Linda: "My father worked for Bill Gale at Reeves Farm. They had to go and help rescue the sheep that got buried in the snow drifts."

Richard: "Some sheep would have been buried. That big basin, Luccombe Bottom, where the wind was blowing snow and making it stack on top, there was a bank of snow all round the rim at the top coming out several metres and then it'd drop straight down to the bushes underneath it."

Bill: "Up on top of the hill we have a reservoir, which was all frozen up for weeks on end and our cattle were getting desperate for water."

Richard: "The reservoir was half way along the perimeter as you go along, what we call 'Middle Ranges', that was frozen solid. There was no lagging on the outlet or inlet pipe. So it was a large lump of ice, 25 foot off the ground. My father stacked bales of straw all the way up right underneath the reservoir and we had a portable drier with hot air, which you connected onto it, cause it was driven by a diesel engine. And that wouldn't even thaw it. So he dropped a match on the bales and let it burn. The only water trough we had on the farm ran off of Luccombe, because that was on the mains supply from the reservoirs up under the Picquet. We'd let the cattle out of the sheds at Imber Road and be running them down to drink out of the water trough every other day, then have to gather them up and put them back again."



On Monday January 7th Bratton Primary School wrote to the Chief Education Officer at County Hall explaining that "In view of the present weather conditions, it has been found necessary to delay the re-opening of the school until Thursday 10th January."

Carol: "Those of us due to take the 11 plus that summer had lessons in Miss Page's cottage in The Butts."

Claire: "We had to battle our way through in the morning to get to her small house. It was a small room, and she had a dining table. There was 10 or 11 of us, and we all had to get round this table to do Maths and English. Some had proper chairs, some had stools, and I remember myself and somebody else sat on the arm of the armchair. I don't even know what we did with our coats, cause obviously we all had a lot of big coats. I thought it was grossly unfair that we had to go to 'school' in the morning and nobody else did."

Carol: "Eventually the men of the village managed to dig a pathway through so that people could walk to Westbury. To me as a child the snow seemed to tower above me on either side as we walked along."

Mary: "I think they got anybody. There was a chap who lived nearby us, he worked for Parsons, which was a firm in Westbury and course they couldn't do any building or anything and they had them out clearing snow and things like that. But when they cleared the road, they didn't clear the whole road, course, there wasn't the traffic then. It was really just one sort of thing, and then they'd have little bits where you could pull in there sort of to get by if somebody came."

I had another friend I worked with actually. Diane lived at Edington, right up the other end, and we used to work nine 'til six. We could get there in the mornings, all be it that we were late. We left work at six, about quarter past six we'd get the bus. That wouldn't come that late in the evening. Well our manager let us go at five, because if we came out at five we could get a different bus that come via Westbury to go to Warminster. And then we'd have to walk from Westbury home with snow like this either side. At the time we didn't really think anything of it. We just got on and did it sort of thing. Course there wasn't the traffic on the roads like there is today. We hardly ever saw a car. So we'd start off and actually it turned out the man who lived next door to me, he used to work for Parsons, which was a building firm in Westbury, and he had the work's van, and if Diane and I were walking along the road, if we were lucky enough at the time he'd pick us up in the van. But if we didn't get a lift we walked all the way home from Westbury. Five o'clock at night. Well the snow made it lighter."

Being a chemist, people still wanted their medications and things like that, so we were still busy. The thing I remember, it was so jolly cold. And of course in those days it wasn't gas or anything, we had a cellar where we had a porter had to go down and light a fire every day to warm the shop up. So when you got in there first we were allowed to wear our coats, or jackets, or cardigan or whatever, cause we always had overalls and uniform, sort of thing, but it was jolly, jolly cold. By the time it was getting hot it was time to go home. It just never seemed to get warm. The people were stocking up, you know, 'We better have two of those, in case this comes again', you know, and all this sort of thing. Cough mixtures and things like that. 'So-and-so got it, I s'pose so-and-so will get it now, so I better have two bottles of that'."

By January 11th clear skies allowed the night time temperatures to plummet and by January 14th temperatures as low as -13.5c were recorded in the region.

The school was soon writing to County Hall again to say "It is regretted that it will not be possible to open the school until Monday 14th owing to shortened fuel supplies." Fuel was a problem as coal merchants were overwhelmed with orders but could not get their delivery lorries on the road.

Carol: "As I recall we had plenty of coal. I think Dad took some of ours to my grandparents to help them out."

	Max. Degrees		Min. Degrees	
	C	F	C	F
<i>Dec.</i>				
26	2	36	1.5	35
27	0.5	33	2	36
28	-0.5	31	-5.5	22
29	0	32	-3.0	27
30	1.5	35	-3.0	27
31	3.5	38	-2.5	28
<i>Jan.</i>				
1	0	32	-3.5	26
2	-0.5	31	-3.5	26
3	-0.5	31	-1.5	29
4	1	34	-3.5	26
5	2	36	-1.5	29
6	2.5	36	-2.5	27
7	0	32	-4	25
8	0.5	33	-7.5	18
9	0.5	33	-7.5	18
10	-1	30	-12.5	9
11	-3	27	-16	3
12	-4	25	-11.5	11
13	-1	30	-11.5	11
14	3.5	38	-13.5	8
15	2.5	36	-12	10
16	1.5	35	-8.5	17
17	-2	28	-9	16
18	-0.5	31	-7	19
19	0	32	-7	19
20	-0.5	31	-7	19
21	-2	28	-12	10
22		21	-16.5	2
23		22	-16.5	2

On January 13th The Guardian reported that "the Central Electricity Generating Board asked housewives to postpone the morrow's washing or, at least, to put off the ironing until later in the week."

Claire: "Just as you're going out of the village towards Westbury, there's a little road down to the right, The Hollow. I can remember Carol and her sister Shirley and I walking up that on the top of the snow and then back along the top road."

Mary: "You wouldn't have known it was a road there if you didn't know. You would have thought that was one field, it was up level. That was never cleared. Until it went on its own."

On January 20th, after a week-end of blizzards in most parts of Britain, conditions were worse than ever. At -16.5c, January 22nd and 23rd were the coldest night of the Winter. Even after a month of such ferocious conditions nobody could have known this harshest of Winters was only half way done.

Claire: "My Mum's birthday was in January and the snow was still there, and I do remember saying to my Grandmother, 'Do you think the snow will still be here on my birthday?', which was a month later in the middle of February. 'No, of course it won't, it's bound to be gone by then'. And come my birthday we still had snow."

On January 23rd the school wrote to the Chief Education Officer for a third time. "I beg to inform you that it was necessary to close the school as from and including 22nd, owing to a burst in the water pipe outside the school, thus cutting off all water supply to the school, which is therefore without heating. It is hoped to re-open the school on Monday next, January 28th."

**Anti-Freeze Freezes—Gas Short—
Electricity Cut—
Water Off At Bradford**

**Temperature At
Freezing
For 27 Days**

25/1/63

TEMPERATURES low enough to freeze the anti-freeze solutions in the cooling systems of vehicles have been experienced in Wiltshire this week, and as the severe cold spell continues fuel and power difficulties become more pronounced.

The minimum temperature in Trowbridge has been below freezing point now for 27 days, and only on 10 of those days has the maximum gone a degree or two above freezing.

"The South Western Gas Board have asked their customers to turn off all appliances for 9 hours a day, between 9pm and 6am.", the local paper reported. They went on to say that "Birds have been unable to find enough food because of the frozen snow.". The report continued, "Roads are strewn with their corpses, for those which are too weak to fly have been hit by cars."

Linda: "It was very sad seeing so many birds dying due to the cold. They blew themselves out to keep warm. I can remember so many pigeons and other birds landing on some of the wires and just froze to death."

Claire: "The trees were all bare. People put out nest boxes now, and small birds get in there overnight to get out of the weather, but there wasn't any of that about then, so they had to go in any odd shed or out building they could get into."

Country File's John Craven reported that "Ornithologists believe that about half of the wild bird population died, either through the cold or starvation or both."

Linda: "We used to throw bread out for them and hang up pieces of fat off the cold meat."

Claire: "That was the first time I remember consciously saying 'Right, we're gonna feed the birds'. It gave me an interest in feeding birds. 'What have you got I can give the birds today Mum?'. And I've done it ever since. I can remember a robin, cause he was quite tame. And blackbirds. I know bread's not good for birds, but they didn't know that then. And it kept them alive. Then we did have chicken food, so we used to put a bit of that out. Or perhaps a bit of cheese that had gone a bit dry."

The Wiltshire History Centre report said "It was estimated that millions of small birds only survived because of food put out in gardens. Foxes, squirrels, and other wildlife apparently became 'tame', appearing in gardens in search of food as they were starving."

Claire: "Rabbits and squirrels weren't as wary. You saw them more cause they were looking for food. We had a visit from a fox or a badger, I'm not sure which. It caused a bit of havoc with the chickens. So wildlife was a bit more prominent, but there again, I suppose it showed up more because everywhere was white. They aren't built for white landscapes."

On the morning of January 26th warmer air had moved in from the Atlantic and that was the beginning of a temporary thaw. The Guardian reported that "A weekend thaw coincided with the worst power failure in the National Grid in 35 years of operation." On the few occasions when the temperature rose a degree or two above freezing the result was the creation of some spectacularly splendid icicles.

Claire: "We had some good icicles off the chicken houses. They'd melt a bit in the day I suppose and then get a bit longer and then freeze again. They'd be quite thick, cause they grow. They lasted a long time, unless you went along hitting them off, which we did sometimes, as kids do."

Sheila: "That thatched cottage on Melbourne Street, oh the icicles were huge."

Carol: "I do remember seeing icicles reaching almost to the ground from the thatch on Dr Higgins' house on Emms Lane. It left quite an impression on me."

The Wiltshire History Centre records that, although road accidents in January 1963 rose to 478 from 387 in the previous year, fewer people were injured, suggesting the ice meant vehicles were travelling more slowly when they collided.

Richard: "I think the District Nurse was Nurse Blandford. She used to drive a little Triumph Herald. Going into Westbury, my father met her on an icy road with a Land Rover. She was coming up the middle of the road, and father just turned right and drove straight into a snow drift cause it was the only place he could go. He had a brand new Rayburn, that was going to go into Fitzroy Farmhouse in the back, and it went forward and it cracked the thermometer on the oven door. And it stayed like that for 20 years."

Mary: "I can remember we thought nothing of walking over to Edington to the youth club in the snow. Why not? What I remember more than anything was walking back from Youth Club one night along the road between Bratton and Edington, the straight bit, they call that The Clay. It was so high, way over our heads each side, and I can remember the moon was shining bright and the white snow, and it was really light going along there, but a bit eerie. It was so quiet as well."



On January 26th The Guardian reported that "Factories making disposable nappies were working overtime after supplies had sold out. Millions had been sold because the icy weather had prevented mothers from drying conventional flannelette nappies."

The following evening Sheila recalls "I didn't feel very well. This was probably about 8 o'clock at night. My husband went down to Mrs Chadwick's and said 'Sheila doesn't feel very well'. So they phoned Dr Higgins and he said 'Oh, get the ambulance'. So the ambulance came. Normally they would have gone to Trowbridge Hospital West Ashton way, but you can imagine, that road wasn't very good. The two ambulance men said 'Come and sit in the front with us Missus, 'tis a bit warmer'. And I'll always remember, along underneath the White Horse, it was a moon lit night, and it was deathly white with all the snow, I mean it really was backed up. My daughter was born 6 o'clock the next morning, 28th of January."

The next day the freeze returned with a vengeance. A long and intense 36-hour blizzard brought colossal great walls of drifting snow. "Snowplough Sunday" was how the R.A.C. labelled February 3rd. Conditions were now worse than ever.

Mary: "At Reeves, they did undertaking as well. I heard my Dad say if anybody had died they had to be kept at the time. They couldn't get into the ground."

Claire: "We were getting a bit bored with this now. It's time it was gone. I thought it would be quite nice if it was still there for my birthday, and it was. After that I didn't care. I suppose we just got fed up with going out and playing in the snow because it wasn't different any more. We probably drove me mother up the wall as well, the two of us, saying 'Mum, I'm bored. What can I do?'."

Sheila: "You had to stay at the hospital for 10 days in those days. When I did manage to get home I had a big 'Pedigree' pram but I just couldn't take my new baby out in it. All I was concerned with was just living day to day. The midwife used to call. At least it was getting lighter. It was still light at 5 o'clock."

On February 13th The Meteorological Office predicted that temperatures would shortly rise in all parts of Britain, but February 23rd, the last day of the official Winter period, came and went, and it was not until March 6th that the first morning of the year dawned in Britain without frost. 10 long weeks of struggles, chaos and misery were finally coming to an end.

Carol: "When it came to an end it seemed really warm. So a friend and I decided to 'sunbathe' on the hills behind Stradbroke. There was still quite a bit of snow around in patches but we lay down in the grass. My Dad found us and he was livid. The ground must have still been very wet."

Bill: "In March with the ewes down at Fitzroy Farm, lambing. They go out by day for exercise. You'll see the green patches and this is where the snow has just receded and thawed out. We felt it was better for them to have some exercise and they would be taken immediately inside and housed to make sure the lambs were safe and sound before they went back out again in about 3 days time."



Now, after more than a month of waiting, Sheila could finally take her new baby Debbie out for her first ride in the pram.

Mary: "My eldest brother Bob was in the Navy and he was away in the Far East, so he missed all this. My friend had a camera and we sent him photos of all this snow and he couldn't believe it. He didn't get back until March, and there was still snow up on the White Horse when they went up there, and I said 'Well now you know what we put up with'."

The thaw was gradual and slowly the damage caused to many roads by the atrocious prolonged conditions was revealed, to a depth of two feet in places.

At a Parish Council Meeting on March 25th, attended by around 30 parishioners, it was recorded that a preliminary report issued by the County Council showed "the estimated cost of snow clearance in the county was £390,000 (£10m in 2023 money), with a further £60,000 (£1.5m in 2023 money) for repairs to road surfaces, fences, etc."

The report went on to suggest that each Parish Council should "appoint one member to be responsible for raising and organising local snow clearance parties, if occasion arose, on the understanding that the County Council would pay normal roadman's wages and tractor hire rates." Fred Parker took on this role.

Claire: "For years afterwards they put these like wattle sheep hurdles at the base of the hill, a bit back from the road. That was supposed to stop the snow going out onto the road. It was supposed to drift up against the hurdles, and it didn't because we didn't get any more snow."

According to the Central England Temperature records, extending back to 1659, only the winters of 1683-84 and 1739-40 were colder. 1963 had been the worst winter for over 220 years.

Carol: "I think the heroes of the village were the men who dug the way through to Westbury. That must have been an enormous task. Also all the men and women of Bratton who just seemed to carry on regardless."

Claire: "The igloo lasted ages after the rest of the snow had gone. That was sat on the lawn, quietly melting away. It got to be almost like a permanent fixture out there for a while and then suddenly it was disappearing. There was a kind of sadness that it was gone. Course, we never had any blooming cameras, did we. It would have been nice to say 'Look, there it is'. It's quite vivid in my memory. We didn't know then that we were never going to have snow like that to do it again. And we haven't. Not in 60 years."

Thank you to Carol White, Claire Jackson, Linda Fitzgerald, Mary Wallis, Sheila Thompson, and Richard Gale for kindly sharing their memories. Other sources were Wiltshire History Centre, Devizes Museum, Bratton Primary School, 'The Bratton Farming Year' by Bill Gale, 'West Country Weather' by Barry Horton, 'The Weather of 1963' by R.A.U. Jennings, 'The Long Winter of 1962-63' by The Guardian, along with local newspapers and TV documentaries. Photos by Jean Morrison, Stephen Rocke and local newspapers.

If you have memories and photos of 'The Big Freeze of 1963' that you'd like to share please do get in touch with bobpearce2021@hotmail.com.