

THE BLUE LAGOON

a.k.a. Sandown Canoe Lake

By Dave Bambrough (Part 3 Conclusion)

After the war the Sandown Canoe Lake Company relinquished possession to Browns Golf Course, a private limited company, managed by Mr A. Kennedy, son of the previous managing director Mr. A.R. Kennedy who had died in 1942. The two enterprises would now be run in conjunction with one another, Mr Kennedy stated that they hoped to carry out considerable improvements but were finding it difficult obtaining licenses for constructional work. The café did not re-open for the 1946 season but the boating lake did, the boats had been stored in various parts of the town during the war years and maintained in good condition. Mr Kennedy promoted one of his sisters, Edith, to manage the Boating Lake whilst the other, Lorna, managed Browns Golf Course.

The Lake's former title "The Blue Lagoon" was transferred to the new swimming pool, built at the western end of the esplanade, opening in 1934 and from then on it was simply referred to as the "Canoe Lake". (The Napoleon Landings flats now occupy the Blue Lagoon swimming pool site).



In 1948 the then manager of Browns, Mr A.G. Wittamore applied to the Isle of Wight County Council for planning permission to extend the existing bakery for which to satisfy the ever-increasing trade.

The restructured building consisted of a café, china washing dept., cloakroom and bakery, which required an inspection every five years by the health department for approval of continued use.

The eventual result of the modern facilities were the production of the

finest doughnuts and cakes to be found anywhere on the Isle of Wight. Coupled with the famous Browns Golf Course ice cream (also made on the premises) this magnificent combination attracted thousands of visitors and local people every summer who purchased these delicacies in large quantities.

Occasionally there were a few unsold cakes at the end of the day (seldom doughnuts) and these would be distributed to local boys at the Café closing time of 6pm, who would be eagerly waiting at the back of the bakery, where a window opened to the adjoining Sandham Grounds Park



Having extended the bakery the next quest was to improve the redundant land adjoining the two ventures so as to provide vehicular access between the golf course and the bakery. Claude Pardey would be seen regularly driving a three-wheeled vehicle (that the staff endearingly nicknamed "The Pony") between the two concerns, transporting the deliciously baked cakes as demand required.

Close scrutiny of the top picture shows the state of the land at the emergence of the two businesses,

very much in the hands of nature. Some well spent money and a bit of hard graft soon produced the beautifully landscaped area in the adjoining picture. This not only provided the required connection between the two businesses it also gave the public a pleasant walk from one amenity to the other and a rest if required on one of the seats provided, but additionally and more importantly to certain locals, a flat area of grass.

The flat newly grassed area provided local boys from the Avenue Road and Fort Street area with a piece of land where they could play football. Prior to this they had had to make do with the streets or perhaps the beach when the tide was out. Throughout the 1950's hours of football and cricket were enjoyed not only by the boys but also by the many visitors who would stand and watch the entertainment. The situation was kindly accepted by the management, as there was never a word of complaint from the owners when the youngsters initially descended on to their newly created lawn for purposes other than which it had probably been designed for. Eventually there were times when the ground was fenced off due to flooding, in order to protect the grass. This was initially a bonus as it provided greater protection to the ball ending in the Canoe Lake from wild shots at goal, which sometimes meant a long wait before the game resumed. There were occasions when a boat would be requisitioned in order to retrieve it post haste, the wind being the determining factor. Eventually, fencing was erected through the middle of the lawn, which meant waiting until the ground dried out in the spring when the fencing would be removed and normal service resumed. Three of the boys who played there on a regular basis, namely Ron Heatley, Oscar Stretch and Ray (Tich) Pardey went on to play for Brading Town football club, winning many honours over the years.

Whilst the Golf Course remains today, sadly the Canoe Lake bakery and boating area succumbed to closure in the late 1990's, amidst a plethora of ideas for developing the area, which as of yet have not come to fruition. Browns football pitch ceased to exist with the building of the Dinosaur Museum in 2001.

Both businesses were purchased by a Mr & Mrs Snelling in 1979, (entrepreneurs from Bembridge), they in turn sold out to Leading Leisure, (a company full of radical ideas that unfortunately went bankrupt), South Wight Borough Council then took over for a period, followed by the Isle of Wight County Council. The Lake is now jointly owned by the Isle of Wight County Council and Colonnade Developments. The Council own the seaward half, whilst Colonnade Developments own the western end and land beyond.

Finally, I would like to thank Ken and Maureen Chiverton for their help with the photographs in this article.



Youngsters have other interests these days, the Canoe Lake devoid of business in 2001 and the football pitch rendered extinct by a dinosaur museum.

THE END