

CHARMOUTH - 100 YEARS AGO



A selection of the photographs of Charmouth taken a century ago by Claud Hider.

Claud Hider was one of a number of photographers who supplemented their livings by producing small quantities of photographic cards of their neighbourhood. During the first three decades of the 20th century there had been a golden age of postcards with many hundreds of millions bought every year and often collected in albums, some of which have survived to this day. Before the telephone, they were used as a way of sending a message, as the postal service was cheap, regular and reliable. Often on the back of a card you would read that someone was inviting a friend for tea the same day and would expect them to receive it in time for them to come. As well as the large firms, such as Tuck, Valentines and Frith, there were smaller publishers who would sell real photographic cards. These had a glossy finish, the photograph having been developed directly onto a piece of card with a postcard back. Many village photographers were able to produce their own postcards. It was their local knowledge that allowed them to capture the kind of scenes that are so eagerly sought after today. Claud Hider was the most prolific of these in the Bridport area. He could produce small quantities, often no more than ten or twenty of each card that would be sold in his shop or other outlets. The location would be handwritten on the negative and thus appear in white on finished card with a reference number. Though only 4 inches by 6 inches, when scanned and enlarged their quality is so good that even at poster size they are very sharp.

Hider has provided a unique and comprehensive record of Charmouth almost 100 years ago that I have only now been able to piece together. He had covered most of the village with his camera and there are few areas that he had missed out and even these may still turn up in time. Claude Robert Hider is something of an enigma to collectors of postcards and lovers of local history as thanks to him we have such a marvelous record of Bridport and the villagers around. He is particularly relevant to Charmouth as he seems to have recorded the village from as early as 1922, sometimes returning to the same building or view after many years. He would often photograph a significant event such as the 1926 Landslip, which closed the Lyme Regis to Charmouth Road for which he produced a series of postcards.

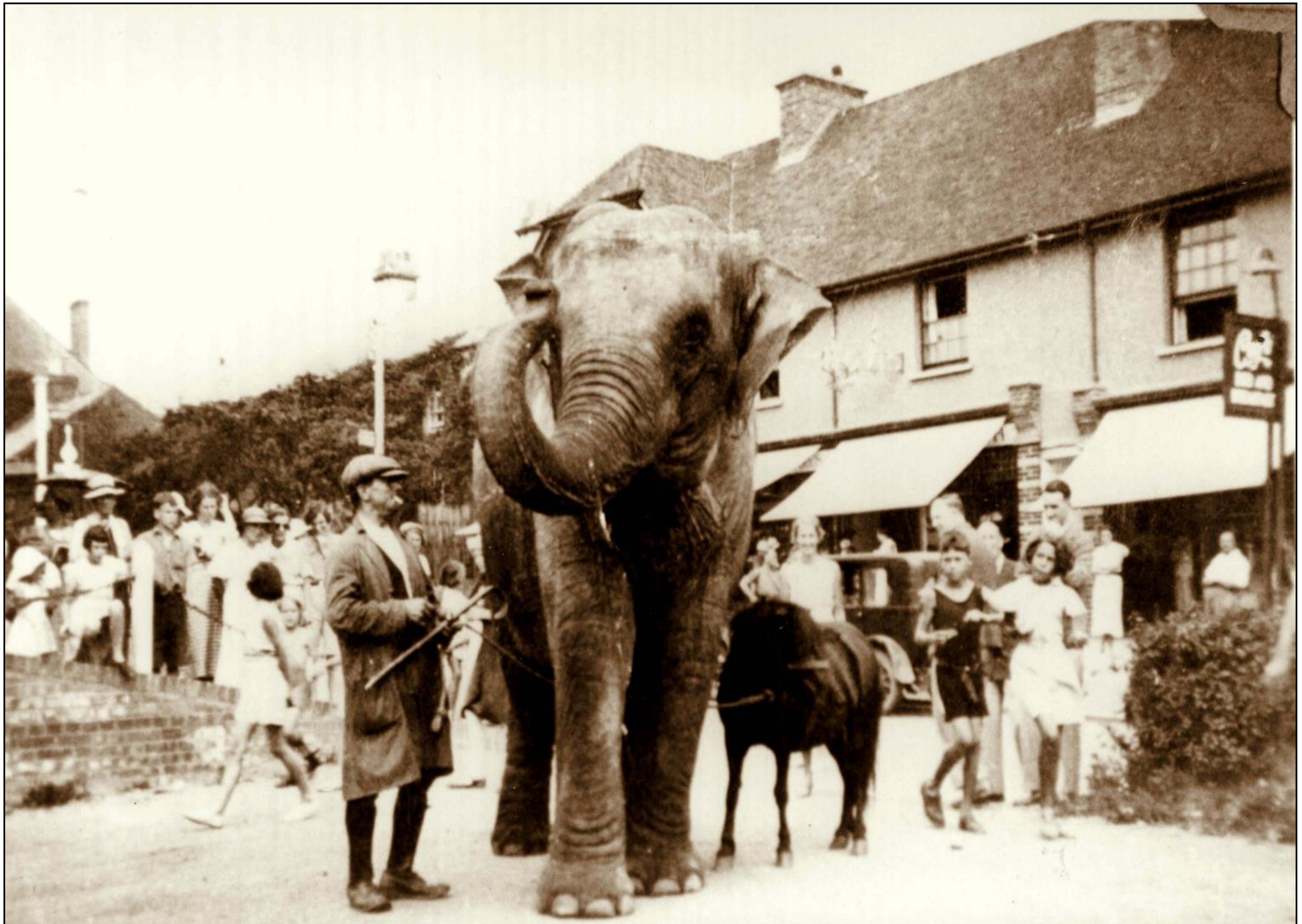
He was born in Gravesend in Kent to Robert and Clara Hider in 1888. His father appears as a professional Photographer in Directories of the time, and no doubt Claud learnt his trade from him. Robert Hider had photographic studios at 22 Banks Town in Sheerness and also 183 Parrock's Street in Gravesend. His *Cartes de Visite*, which were the size of visiting cards showing Victorian sitters in his studios from these times come regularly on to the market and I have shown some below. These were very popular and by the 1860s every small town had its professional photographers and it has been estimated that up to 400 million *cartes de visite* were produced each year. Topographical views occasionally come to light, and I am fortunate to own some of Charmouth dating back to 1870 produced by William Barrett of Bridport. They provide some of the earliest images of towns and villages in the area.

The 1901 Census shows that the family were living in Chatham in Kent, which would have been near the two studios. By 1911, the next Census shows Claud, aged 23 boarding with Charles Speight, a photographer in Kettering in Northamptonshire and working as a dark-room assistant. Three years later he marries Edith Wilkin in Kettering. Later they have moved back to Kent and their first child is born to them in Maidstone in 1916. They then move on to Bridport in Dorset, where two further children are born in 1922 and 1925. My earliest postcard is dated September 1922 when he teams up with another photographer named Lawrence (H&L) and record Charmouth from Cains Folly, shown below. This must be one of a series as another view of Charmouth shows the former Battery at the bottom of Higher Sea Lane that was demolished in 1922. The following year Claud shows the same view with the newly built Thalatta, where I live, as part of a panoramic view spread over 4 cards. I am also fortunate that at the same time he took a close up of the house, which I treasure. The first directory entry for Claude is in Kelly's of 1927. He would travel around the area in his Model T Ford open top car, which often appears in his images, photographing all that he felt was saleable and produce small quantities for resale probably through his shop at 42 South Street in Bridport. He had a wonderful eye for taking superb studies of the views, often with people in, which was unusual at the time. The fact that they are real photographs and not printed allows us today to enlarge them and almost relive the village as it was between the wars. He appears to have run his business until at least 1952 and a directory for that year shows him still using the 149 Bridport number. His wife, Edith sadly died in 1948 and Claud is shown as passing on in 1954, aged 65 at Kingston On Thames. He left a magnificent legacy in all the many hundreds of photographic postcards that have survived to reveal a long lost era in our village history.

An aerial photograph taken a century ago looking down on the village with St. Andrews Church in the centre.



The Circus comes to Charmouth a century ago with the group of village shops in the background.



Billy Gear opened his new garage shown here in 1922 on the Street with its Pumps, Workshop and Offices.



The Queens Armes, now renamed The Abbot's House, where King Charles stayed in 1651 with its Tea Room.



The dilapidated rear of the Abbot's House and the entrance of the building with T.C. inscribed above the doorway for the Abbot, Thomas Charde.



A view of the old Bridge crossing the river at the bottom of The Street.



A close up of the old Bridge , which was widened in 1957.



A wagon passes the Old Toll House, built in 1826. On the right are the Catherston Cottages.



Claud Hider would have driven to the village in his automobile, seen in many of his photographs with Stonebarrow Manor in the background.



Stonebarrow Manor as it appeared a century ago when it was run as a Girls School.



A rural view of Newlands with Catherston Manor in the distance. A large hoarding promotes the Coach and Horses Inn.



A view at the bottom of the village with the bridge in the foreground and its sign informing any one who damaged it would be sent to Australia.



A group of workman stand outside Firlands Terrace. The building was later demolished to create an entrance to Barney`s Close.



A View looking up the Street which has changed little over the centuries with Bow House and the George Inn on the right.



Billy Gear is seen here on the right with his bow tie and his workmen outside their first Garage at the rear of The George Inn.



The ancient George Inn is seen here on the left. It was originally owned by the Abbot of Forde who ran it as a hostelry over 500 years ago.



The imposing Sunnyside Hotel rises above its neighbours in 1922. It was built in 1894 after a disastrous fire destroyed the former thatched Bakers.



An animated view looking down The Street . To the right of the Sunnyside (Devonsedge) Hotel is Lansdowne House with its forecourt Garage.



The tall trees on the left were to give Charmouth Lodge its original name: The Limes. The building on the right was Bragges Grocery Store.



This photograph taen in 1922 shows William Dampier`s Charmouth Stores on the left with a sign to The Star Inn which exited at that time behind it.



William Dampier on the right with his son Donald and assistants. The Store was opened in 1807 by Joseph Bradbeeer and is still running today.



The tall building now called "Harding" was originally part of Backlands Dairy. On the left are 1-3 Hillside Terrace



Two ladies are seen here in conversation in front of the Conservatory of Albury House. 1-3 Hillside were designed by Sir Jeffrey Wyatville in 1824.



A Close up of 1-3 Hillside Villas. On the right is an alleyway that led to Backside Dairy Farm where locals would buy their fresh milk in the past.



The newly erected War Memorial is seen here on the left. It was constructed by local Stone Mason, Harry Pryer in 1922. The Court is on the right.



A view looking down The Street with Monk's Rest on the left and the War Memorial and The Royal Oak Public House on the opposite side.



Miss Tarr ran the Stationers on the left for nearly 60 years until her death in 1939. The Stone House and Monks Rest are seen further along.



A group of villagers pose for their photograph in 1922. The thatched ivy clad building in the distance is the ancient Charmouth House.



This magnificent candid photograph taken by Claud Hider a century ago shows how busy the top of the village was then with a number of shops.



A view looking up to Old Lyme Road. A notice-board was put up in 1921 warning drivers that they used the road to Lyme Regis at their own risk.



The thatched house on the left was demolished with road widening. The ivy clad building was the former New Commercial Inn.



A close up of the New Inn. It was built in 1883 after the earlier thatched building was lost in a fire. It has since closed and is now three houses.



The New Inn is seen here on the left. The adjoining property (Charm Cottage and Heron Cottage) had once been the village hospital opened in 1867.



Claremont is see here on the left . To the right was the former farm house to Foxley Farm which stood between the Street and the coast .



This photograph was taken in 1922 by Claud Hider from the window of Claremont. It shows Mis Tarr`s Newsagents and Stationers on the left.



A candid shot of the Street with a chap with a walking stick posing as Claud take his photograph of an early open top automobile full of passengers.



The Court built by Mrs Napier Stuart in 1864 is seen here on the left. Opposite is the War Memorial and the Royal Oak Inn.



The Royal Oak was opened in 1867, although the building is much older. The sign commemorates the tree that King Charles hid in after his escape.



This photograph is of a group of villagers outside the Royal Oak on Remembrance Day in 1925. John Hodder is seen seated with his dog.



A Royal Man Van is seen here outside the village Post Office then run by William Holly who had taken it over in 1896.



A view of the Post Office. The ivy clad building on its right is Littlehurst which is now the village Surgery. Opposite is The Court.



A view of The Post Office as seen a hundred years ago. The left part now Wistaria Cottage was built on for a branch of Lloyds Bank.



St. Andrew's Church was built in 1836 on the site of an earlier edifice dating back to 1300, which had formerly named after St. Matthew.



The interior of St. Andrews a century ago has not changed too much. Although a number of the fine memorials seen here have been lost.



On the left is stone sculpture of an Abbot that once stood on the apex of the former church. The Silver Goblet was given by Sir William Petre in 1575.



The Coach and Horses was rebuilt after a fire destroyed the earlier ancient thatched building in 1882. It has since closed and is now appartements.



Billy Gear is seen here at the wheel of his car leaving his Garage in the former stables. On the left are the sons of Fred Marsh, the Butchers.



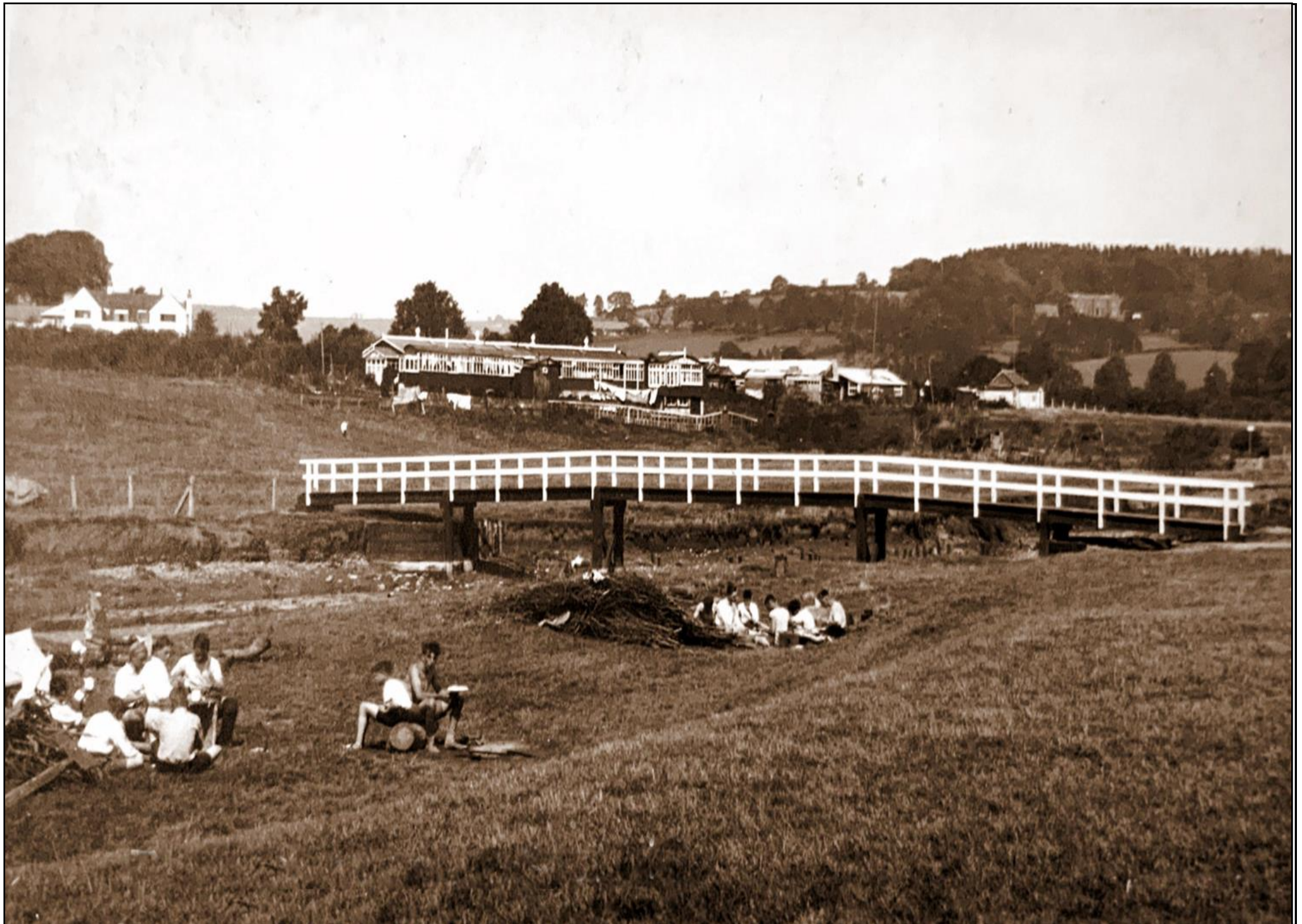
This wonderful photograph taken by Claud Hider in 1922 shows the Bus that still runs from Bridport to Axminster outside the Coach and Horses.



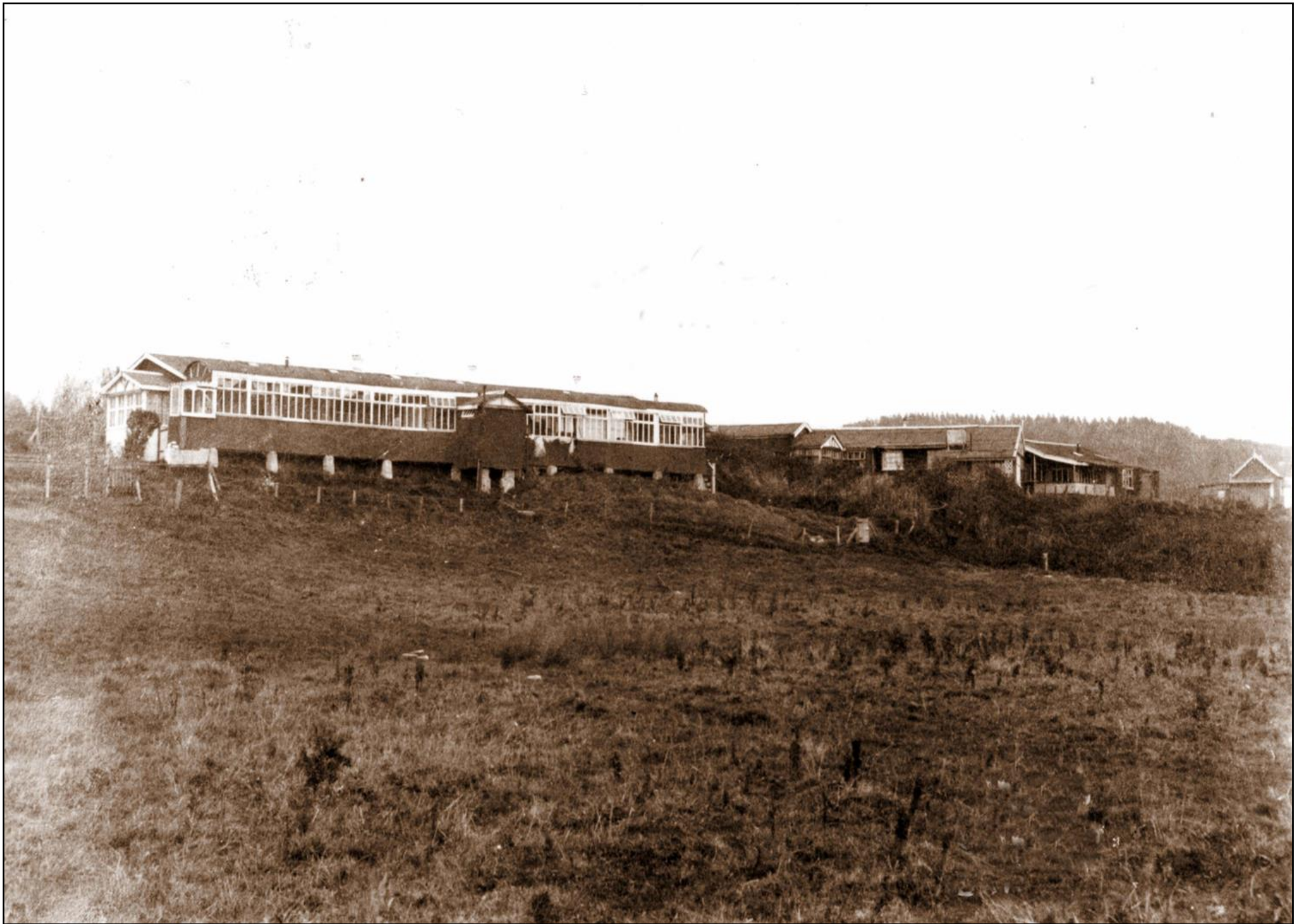
This view of the junction of the roads that left to Lyme Regis and Axminster has changed considerably after the construction of the Bypass in 1990.



A Group of scouts are seen here by the banks of the River Char with its newly constructed Bridge in the centre.



The prefabricated building constructed after the 1st world war is seen here. Villagers gave the area the name of “Tin Town” as a result.



The River Char is seen here flowing under the new bridge. The buildings known as Tin Town are seen behind it.



This photograph taken in 1922 shows the village stretching below Stonebarrow Farm whose buildings and haystacks are seen here.



Scouts were regular visitors every summer to Charmouth. A group is seen here with a number of Bathing Tents and Huts behind them.



A close up of the fishing boats on the beach. Behind them are the Tents and Beach Hunts operated by the Hunter family.



A summers day on the beach a hundred years ago. The chap on the right was no doubt a member of the Hunter family collecting fees for the tents.



A similar view to the last with a close up the numerous tents and huts along the shore line.



Tom Hunter was a familiar figure on the beach. He is seen here in 1923 leaning against the fence of the Look out. He died in 1936 aged 79.



This photograph was taken in 1922 as it shows Thalatta in the centre being constructed in that year for Miss Grace Icombe



The Old Cement Works was originally built in 1854 by Harry Pryer . It was only used as factory for ten years and is now The Heritage Coastal Centre.



The old Cement Works was used as storage by the Hunter family. In the summer it provided accommodation for Scouts and Guides as shown here.



This photograph would heve been taken by Claud Hider in 1921 as it shows the Battery used by the Coastguards before it was demolished.



This is the same view the following year with the newly built Thalatta in the centre, where it was used as a rest home for wounded soldiers.



Sea View is the house in the foreground where the Hunter family lived. Behind is Hammonds Mead which had been built by Miss Evans.



The tall building on the left is Sea Horse House erected in 1805 in Higher Sea lane. The rear gardens of The Street are seen in the distance



The area between the Street and the beach had formerly been common land and it was slowly developed after the first World War as seen here.



The area along the beach before car parks were later to be built a century ago. In the distance are the many tents for the Scouts.



A fascinating photograph of the beach below the Old Cement Works before it was reconstructed and beach huts added to it.



A view looking across to Golden Cap with the fields covered with camp sites for the scouts. The fencing is for the garden of Thalatta.



A view of the road that led from Charmouth to Lyme Regis before it disappeared due to a landslide in May 1924



Charles Hodges left a £1000 to the village to provide a Playing Field. They were to purchase a field at the rear of The Street shown here in the 1920s



This photograph taken by Claud Hider in 1922 shows children outside the village school in Lower Sea Lane. On the right are The Alms Houses.



This view taken from the gardens of Claremont House shows Sea Horse House Hotel on the left and Higher Sea Lane below it.



A rare view of Higher Sea Lane taken a hundred years ago with some of the newly built houses along its length.



The view shows the piece of ground on which Thalatta was to be built in 1922. In the distance is smoke from the village dump near Old Lyme Hill.



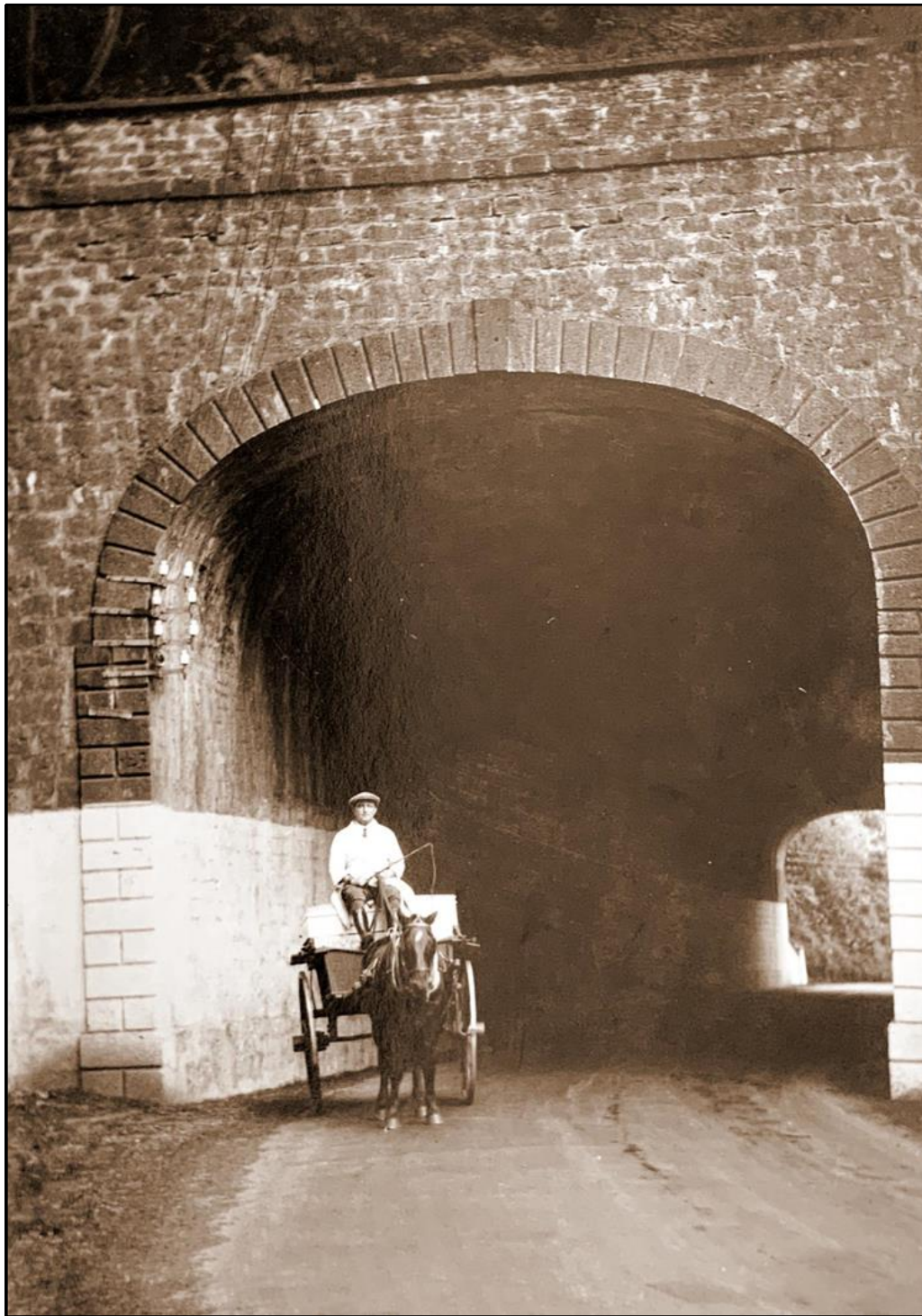
The newly built Thalatta is een here on the left with a number of the bungalows that were built along Higher Sea Lane.



The car on the left may well have been Claude Hiders. He no doubt left it there to take this photograph of the Tunnel constructed in 1832.



Another view of Charmouth Tunnel on the left. In June 1929 a traveling Circus had a Lion escape in the village, which was later shot dead.



This sweet photograph of a young girl, who could well be Claud`s daughter leaning against a bridge over a stream that passes through Charmouth.



Thistlegate House was originally the Dower House for the widow of Alfred Gapper Pass. It stands today on the outskirts of the village.



The view of Catherston Manor which stands above the village. It had been rebuilt in 1887 by Colonel John Bullen who was a large land owner.



In May 1924 as a result of torrential rain the road linking Charmouth with Lyme Regis sank considerably as seen in this photograph.



Another photograph of the landslide with the former road to the right taken by Claud Hider which he sold as a series of postcards.

