

COLWALL VILLAGE SOCIETY

Newsletter

September 2001

**Next Meeting – Monday 24 September 2001
at 7.30 pm in the Village Hall**

'Field names are fascinating'

A distinguished prize winner in the local history field is our guest speaker at the Society's next meeting. Ruth Richardson, of the Woolhope Club, instigated the Herefordshire Field Name Survey – a set of 243 booklets, one for every parish in the county, which lists the field names from the 1840 Tithe Maps. It won one of the prestigious British Archaeological Awards for the Club.

Refreshments after and an update on activities. Do come if you can.

Wild flowers on Colwall Green

A month by month survey of flora on Colwall Green has been carried out over the past year by James Ferguson. His aim was to compare the area of the Green cut regularly by the Conservators with the area left uncut. His findings show that many more varieties appeared in the cut area while the flower population decreased dramatically when the grass was left uncut.

Beginning last August, the main flower on the Green was the four petalled tormentil. This is a plant that does not survive in long grass because of its creeping habit. By the start of September a lot of scabious was out, as was a small colony of cyclamen under the western lime avenue. Colonies of red and white clover and dandelion were fairly small.

In February this year there were upwards of a thousand pale purple crocus with scattered clumps of late snowdrops, also lesser celandine to the west of Green Close and a solitary dandelion near the bus-stop. By April, lesser celandine and dandelion were more plentiful. A few daisies were on the fringes as well as a small colony of red dead-nettle. The most attractive flowers were the wild daffodils near the junction of Evendine Lane and Walwyn Road (about 80 at the peak at the end of March).

By May, small clumps of bluebells (some white) were out under the lime trees, while elsewhere were white dead-nettle, dandelion, cow parsley, different types of buttercup and attractive small clumps of cuckooflower at the southern end. June brought a spectacular block of bright orange flowers thought to be a sub-species of *Hieracium auranticum* (orange hawkweed). Sneezewort (a damp lover) arrived in quantity in the cut areas in July and persisted for several months. By August, the tormentil and a very large population of scabious were showing again.

'Perrycroft' Joyce Ingledew

The architect C.F.A. Voysey (1857-1941) gained a name for himself according to his biographer W. Hitchmough by designing 'small pared-down country houses' for 'the middle classes who hankered after the rustic idyll but could not afford anything on the grand scale'. His trademark was for 'five or six bedoomed houses, devoid of ostentatious outer decoration, with buttressed roughcast walls, steeply pitched roofs, overhanging eaves and stressed horizontal fenestration'. 'Perrycroft' on Jubilee Drive is an example of his work and illustrates all the above features.

Voysey, in common with his designer contemporaries, also produced furniture, tapestries, cutlery, calligraphy, wallpapers, doorknobs, beds, pianos, even toothbrushes. His designs for clothes included men's suits without lapels or turn ups.

'Perrycroft' was built in 1896 and named after a field of that name by which it stands. It was at first the home of J.W. Wilson who served as liberal MP for North Worcestershire from 1895 – 1922. With time the house passed into the possession of the Boys Brigade and for years many a young boy from Birmingham would come to the upper reaches of the village for a week or weekend's break. By 1976 it was a listed building and as such became subject to rules on upkeep and preservation. The house has now passed back into private hands.

Not so much fun ...

The June newsletter quoted a suggestion that Iron Age hill forts such as British Camp and Midsummer Hill might have been used for seasonal gatherings rather than permanent settlements. This was based on the lack of evidence for internal trackways, domestic refuse and general farmyard activities.

Irene Southall, however, writes to say that most of these Iron Age hill fort settlements in our neighbourhood do show clear signs of village life when excavated. 'From as long ago as the late Bronze Age, the buildings we now call hill forts were being set up in Britain: there was a style which persisted and developed for some 3000 years before the Roman invasion. Sometimes many were being built, sometimes most were deserted. Then would come another period of re-use, enlargement and many new buildings.'

Our ancestors here were living at a level much below that found in the area of the country covered by today's Home Counties. About half the hut sites that have been opened up show signs of a domestic hearth, but the kindling was probably chopped with a sharp stone. The warriors had iron weapons, and seldom were careless enough to lose them. So the "finds" at these border sites are scanty – poor people do not leave much behind them.'

'Personally,' Irene concludes, 'I find the loom weights the most convincing argument for villages "up top". They are roughly fired clay pyramids which held the work steady and are found quite frequently, though the wooden uprights have decayed. I just cannot imagine any housewife setting up one of those elaborate looms in a place she only used for occasional weekends.'

Malvern Hills Byelaw

4a No unauthorized person shall have in his possession whilst he is on the Hills any bow, crossbow or other weapon capable of firing or propelling any missile unless it is so covered with a securely fastened cover that it cannot be fired.

Village Design Statement goes to press

The Colwall Village Design Statement was endorsed by Herefordshire Council on 20 April 2001. This means that it is now a material consideration that the Council must take into account in planning matters.

The Design Statement is being printed by Quorum Technical Services, Cheltenham, with the help of generous grants from the Malvern Hills AONB, Colwall Parish Council, and Herefordshire Council, and will be available very soon. We are also investigating the cost of producing a number of CD-ROMs which would contain the document in Acrobat format, readable on most PCs.

History projects

More of the Society's history projects are coming to fruition. For instance, Catherine and Tony Sear have produced a splendid topic booklet 'Golf in Colwall 1908 – 1921'. If you are engaged on a project, don't forget the Society is always willing to help if the going gets tough. Derek Turner, who has been co-ordinator with Michael Burke, has passed the baton on to another Derek – Derek Lewis, the Society's Vice-chairman [REDACTED]. He will be making himself known to you so that he can keep everyone informed on projects in hand.

Archive Group

The archive group stores and records the collection of items of local interest that have been given to the Society. We are also building up an electronic archive of computer files and images, for example, a database of the Colwall field names from the Woolhope Club Survey, with the names of their 1840 owners.

In the future, the Millennium Room will allow space for developing the archive further, and making it accessible. But how should the items be stored and catalogued? How should they be made available? If you would be interested in helping to take the archive forward, please contact Susan Bond [REDACTED]