
COLWALL VILLAGE SOCIETY

Newsletter

January 2003

Next meeting – Monday 27 January at 7.30 pm in the Village Hall

‘Restoring the Hereford and Gloucester Canal’

The idea of a canal connecting Hereford to the Severn at Gloucester was first put forward in 1789. An Act of Parliament was passed, £75,000 of capital was raised, work started and the canal was opened from Gloucester to Ledbury in 1798. However the Navigation Company was heavily in debt and no further progress was made until **Stephen Ballard**, a young man of 23 from Malvern Link, was appointed as clerk and engineer in 1827. With renewed enthusiasm, the canal was finally completed from Ledbury to Hereford in 1845.

We are promised an interesting insight into Stephen Ballard’s accomplishment at our next general meeting when our guest speaker is Nigel Bailey of the Hereford and Gloucester Canal Trust, the enthusiasts of today.

Refreshments afterwards. All welcome.

An EGGs-acting problem to FOX you

Graham Cowan

The other evening (September 2002) whilst watering the garden I put the hose onto the small rose planted in a container underneath our kitchen window. The water washed away some soil around the base of the rose and revealed what I thought to be the head of a mushroom. As I lifted the apparent mushroom out it turned out to be an EGG which had been completely buried under the surface.

The rose was planted in the container some 18 months ago using a proprietary potting mix and always placed near the house. Our first thought was that a practical joke had been played but this was the second egg found in curious circumstances. Earlier this year, in the Spring, whilst digging in a rose border away from the house we uncovered what we thought was a very cold white china egg, the sort one used to put under broody hens. I thought no more, popped it into my jacket pocket and carried on working. “Phew!!!” - I no longer have the jacket.

The rear garden adjoins open fields where foxes and badgers have been seen but there are no hens or ducks nearby. Squirrels often raid the nuts we put out for the birds.

What is the explanation ?

Margaret Rist remembered reading about a field study at Ravensglass where foxes were observed stealing gulls eggs and caching them away for future consumption, and

suggests this as the explanation. The Nature Trust at Hereford tended to agree with this explanation.

ANY OTHERS?

Rock bottom

Irene Southall

The September 2002 earthquake was a reminder that we are living close to a very ancient weakness in the crust of rocks upon which we live. In Colwall the basic material which underlies the whole of Britain is visible to the most casual observer because large quantities of it were once squeezed upwards through this weakness and survived to form the Malvern Hills millions of years later. The lumps of rock which lie alongside the summit path are very dull to look at, worn down by so many feet. To appreciate and enjoy this complex of granite, wait for the sunny end of a wet day and go to look at one of the quarry faces with the setting sun lighting the bare rock. Then there is a blaze of colour – reds and yellows. Go closer and you will find greens and blues. In fact there are so many variations on the mix of chemicals in the Malvernian granite that geologists recognise and name more than 25 different rocks.

All this material was processed and made plastic deep within the crust – some of it as long as a thousand million years ago and long before there was any life on the surface far above. A small area of volcanic matter round the Giants Cave is actually lava and may once before have been part of an ancient surface. Owing to the expense of drilling into this brittle ‘Precambrian’ rock, let alone cutting fine sections for microscopic work, much less is known about its nature and history than about the much younger rocks lying along the flanks of the Hills, where fossils have stimulated interest and understanding since at least the beginning of Queen Victoria’s reign.

Colwall in 1901

The 1901 census provides a detailed picture of the village at the beginning of last century. One thousand and thirty two people lived here of whom four hundred and eighty two were males and five hundred and fifty females. There were two hundred and twenty five houses, all but three of them occupied, and of them ninety five were scheduled as 'tenements' with less than five rooms.

The Rev. George Custance lived at the Rectory with his wife and daughter. He had one boarder. They were cared for by two female servants. Also living there was one adopted daughter but it is unclear whether she was adopted by the Rector, his lodger or one of his servants.

The Hewitt family were living at Hope End. Charles Hewitt is described as a magistrate and farmer, born in Ireland. His wife's Christian name was Sarah and they had a son and a daughter. There were ten indoor servants. This number of domestics was about matched at Barton Court. There were nine there. The head of the house was Rowland Cave-Brown-Cave living there with his wife Honora, daughter Phebe, and step daughter Honora. The girls had a Scottish governess, Miss Marion Simpson.

Upper Grovesend was unusual insofar that it had only a single occupant – the seventy year old school master Charles F O'Connor, a widower born in Derbyshire but living out his days here. Another Charles, this one Charles K. Dipple, described as a shepherd, lived with his wife at Stamps Cottage. Both were Colwallians, born in the village.

Herbert Jones, a Yorkshire man, was head of the Downs School. He lived on site with his wife Ethel and her cousin Ada. There were four boarding pupils, all of them boys aged either nine or ten. One cook and a housemaid were also in residence. The parish nurse, Olive Maddox, lived with her four children at Hardwicke Terrace. She had been born in Ledbury. Perhaps she had been busy about six weeks before the date of the census, at the Silver Street home of gamekeeper William and Emily Horton for, besides a daughter, they had a son William aged just one and a half months. Was this the family that produced the well-known Colwall sportsmen?

The 1901 Census in all its detail can be seen at the Record Office in Hereford. It can be searched online at www.census.pro.gov.uk

Joyce Ingledeu

Trees in the wind

The strong winds on the night of 26/27 October 2002 blew down many trees in Colwall, blocking roads and causing some chaos. Several large oaks lost boughs, probably because they were all still in leaf – oak leaf fall was complete a whole month later.

In Evendine, the fire brigade was called to free 2 people trapped (unhurt) in an outbuilding. While they were working a second tree fell across the lane, blocking the way out for the fire engine. A Wellingtonia came down at Chase Road and a Lime and a Lombardy Poplar in a field on Mathon Road. The lime was decayed, but the poplar was a real loss. It was over 106 feet tall with an 8 foot girth and had developed buttresses as poplars do in maturity. Like lots of trees in Colwall it was probably planted between 100 and 150 years ago.

None of the trees lost was the subject of a Tree Preservation Order.

Millennium Room Archive

The Society was delighted to receive a gift of the Woolhope Club 150th Anniversary volume 'A Herefordshire Miscellany' from member David Hodgson, to mark the opening of the Millennium Room on 18 October 2002. The book is a fascinating collection of articles on all aspects of Herefordshire county and village history and is a valuable asset for our collection. Our thanks go to David for having the idea and for his generosity.

The archive group meets each Friday morning in the Millennium Room (10.30 am – 12.30 pm) to record and index the archive items we hold. Visitors are welcome to look at the collection or to research a particular topic. If a Friday morning is not possible for you, please contact Susan Bond [REDACTED] to arrange a suitable time.