
COLWALL VILLAGE SOCIETY

Newsletter

June 2003

In the Swim

More copies of the footpath map of Colwall produced by the Parish Council have recently come on sale – and at the bargain price of 75p compared with the original £1.50! In addition to the map (approx. 23ins by 17 ins) there is a historical tour of the Parish Church of St James and brief descriptions of 34 places of interest.

The map itself repays careful study. Following the footpath towards Lugg's Mill, one comes across a rectangle marked 'swimming bath'.

The people of Colwall over the years showed a remarkable determination to have a dip. A number of swimming pools existed at one time or another. Probably the most spectacular, with views to British Camp and across Herefordshire, was the pool at the southern end of Jubilee Drive. This was an attraction that must have brought the hotel a lot of custom in the summer months, with people not only climbing the hill from the village but arriving from Malvern via the Wyche and Wynds Point and from the other direction, Ledbury. The Park Hotel also realised the value to trade of a swimming pool and had one built. The Park's pool drew families who enjoyed picnic teas particularly at weekends.

One wonders how warm the water was. A third pool almost certainly chilled the young swimmers who used it. This was an early one at the Elms School and it was filled with spring water directly from the hills. According to tradition, there was an agreement whereby water could be piped off the supply from Primeswell. Fantastic to swim in, but not on grey mornings.

Derek Lewis

Formation of a Village History and Archaeological Interest Group

At the annual general meeting 10 members expressed an interest in forming a group. The aim would be to chart and draw together existing information and findings in the parish, rather like a large jig-saw puzzle, tracing the history of our village. We shall meet in the autumn to plan a programme of tasks.

(contd. in next column)

The idea that there was such a need grew from several sources, first from the booklet 'Colwall through the Millennia' where a time line on page 29 started off around 50 B.C. with British Camp, jumped to 1086 with the Domesday Book and four more entries took us into the Victorian era. The pages of the booklet give us a fascinating taste of hidden history but deny traces of visual evidence. The second spur came from the Jubilee Pictorial Map in a round-about way through the many aerial photographs taken to support its creation and comparing the map against the 1842 Tithe Map. Thirdly in collecting data for the 'Colwall – Then and Now' slide shows we have found in the Hereford Record Office a wealth of records on modern day archaeology, copies of which ought to be in our Millennium Room.

Contact has already been established with the Herefordshire County Archaeologist's Department who are offering advice, assistance and encouragement. *Graham Cowan*

Aerial photos on display

All the aerial photographs taken for the production of the Pictorial Map will be displayed in the Millennium Room on Saturday 12 July from 10 am to 12 noon, when it will be possible to order a 12in by 8in print of any photo at £8 each.

A tale of two tunnels

From the 'Ledbury Reporter and Guardian'
January 29th 1923

The Great Western Railway Company promoted a Bill in Parliament last year for the construction of a new tunnel through the Malvern Hills. Work has been in progress for some weeks, and there are now about 100 men employed. This number will be increased as the scheme proceeds.

The new tunnel will be substantially larger than the existing one. The old tunnel has a semi-circular arch with vertical side walls, and it is 12ft. wide and 16ft. high above rail level. The new tunnel is horse-shoe in shape, and 18ft. high and 17ft. wide. One of the ventilating shafts will be an entirely new one. Some idea of the immense amount of material which will have to be removed from the hills may be gathered from the fact that to make a clearing of 170 feet for this shaft 15,000 tons will have to be lifted.

Mr. E. Hollowday, who is in charge of the work, said that they did not expect any insuperable difficulties in tunnelling. The task of constructing a tunnel in these days of air compressor drills and other efficient appliances is quite different from that of constructing one in the days when the old tunnel was made, and when it was recorded the contractors had great difficulty in penetrating the adamant nature of the rock. Modern inventions and appliances had revolutionised such tasks.

Stephen Ballard described the severity of the navy's work involved in building the first tunnel, which opened in 1861

'A full day's work consists of fourteen sets a day. A "set" is a number of wagons. - in fact, a train. There are two men to a wagon. If the wagon goes out fourteen times, each man has to fill seven wagons in the course of the day. Each wagon contains two and quarter cubic yards. The result is, that each man has to lift nearly twenty tons weight of earth on a shovel over his head

into a wagon. The height of the lifting is about six feet."

Quoted in 'The Day the Trains came' Helen Simpson 1997

What were they digging through?

Rock bottom (part 2) Irene Southall

The first guesses about what the land round Colwall actually looked like, only look back to a period some 570 million years ago. They are based on tiny marine fossils and types of sandstone found at the southern end of the Malverns – though there are specialists who claim to have seen early, almost transparent, forms in the rock face at the Wyche Cutting, not a very easy place for concentrated viewing. It seems as if this was an area of coastal scenery with fluctuating sea levels, while scattered traces of volcanic material indicate the beginnings of violent earth movements.

In fact this was the beginning of a very violent period of Britain's geological history. The traces of volcanoes and earth movements are more obvious in what is now Wales than they are here, for all this was so long ago that erosion has removed almost all traces of what happened *above* the present Malvern hills – it is misleading to think of our hills as 'stumps of ancient volcanos'. But millions of years of violent earth movements have left other very visible traces – particularly the way in which the summit of the British Camp has been pushed far westward of the other hill tops, probably during the upheavals which created the Alps.

Notice too the innumerable cracks created during these periods – from the tiny ones in each piece of stone that was quarried for road metalling, to the faulting which made the passes at the Wyche and the Hollybush, and indeed at every place where a footpath crosses the summit ridge.

(to be concluded)

Committee 2003/2004

Chairman: Derek Lewis
Vice-Chairman: Michael Burke
Secretary: Lis Kirkness
Treasurer: Susan Bond
Membership Secretary: Margaret Matthews

Committee members:

Graham Cowan
Marion Percy