
COLWALL VILLAGE SOCIETY

Newsletter

September 2005

Next meeting – Monday 26 September at 7.30 pm in the Village Hall

The careful restoration of one of the most historic buildings in Colwall will be the subject for our next open meeting. Park Farm was, in the Middle Ages, a bishop's palace and hunting lodge. Over the centuries, the bishops' tenure over the manor of Colwall became reduced, culminating in 1647 when, by order of parliament, the farm was sold for £336.19.4. From this point, the farm changed hands several times before being bought in 1910 by the eminent Ballard family.

It was bought four years ago by the Duddy family. At our meeting, a video of the restoration will be shown by Keith Duddy. The major task has been the derelict northern-most wing which was in state of near collapse. The opportunity to take a building apart and put it back together again has resulted in the uncovering of some surprising information about the building's development.

There will be an opportunity for questions afterwards, and refreshments will be available.

Do come, and bring your friends – visitors are welcome at a charge of £2.

Proposed new projects

In a recent letter to the Society, member Ian Picton suggests that we should consider producing more short studies of history topics relating to Colwall. His suggestions include: Malvern Water and its associated buildings; Old Court, which he believes was once a school; Colwall shops; the railway station; the 'Aunt Alice' tower clock. The committee welcomed these ideas and would like to extend them. Further Topic Booklets like those already in our archive would be welcome, as well as much shorter notes. We should also like to establish collective enterprises, perhaps a survey of butterflies in Colwall or the investigation of specific issues, e.g. Are elm trees making a come-back? Are our bluebells under threat? Very important are older villagers' recollections which we should like to record and index for easy reference. It is proposed to hold a meeting (date and venue to be decided) to consider these and other themes and to co-ordinate the work. If you are working alone or wish to join a group project please look out for the notice of this special meeting.

(It is always helpful, but not essential, to let the Secretary have an idea of your interests in advance.)

Herefordshire Archives Forum

Three members of the archive group went to a meeting organised by the Herefordshire Record Office (HRO) to discuss starting a county Archives Forum for the exchange of ideas and experience on holding archives. It was suggested that the forum might, for example, provide for bulk purchasing of archive materials, or give advice on cataloguing and standards. Several local history societies were present, including Bromyard, Cradley, Fownhope and Marden, and archivists from the Cathedral and the Broomy Hill Waterworks Museum.

It emerged in discussion that the group would prefer to widen the scope of the proposed forum to 'local history'. The HRO agreed to ask people what benefits they would hope to gain from such a forum for discussion at a further meeting in October.

For the record

In August 2005 the road bridge over the railway was narrowed to one lane, and permanent traffic lights installed for the first time in Colwall. This was after a regular structural survey by the Highways Department indicated that a width restriction was required to ensure that only one heavy vehicle can be on the crown of the bridge at any one time. The lights are likely to stay for some years as full surveys, consultation with Network Rail, design, etc. takes a long time, not to mention funding.

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From the archive

A four-page illustrated leaflet of the history of the Wyche Mission Chapel, which was the predecessor of the present Free Church at the north end of Jubilee Drive, has recently been produced by one of its elders, Mr Ken Gaines, and a copy given to the archive.

“In the early 19th century,” he writes, “some years after the Royal Engineers had blasted out the Wyche Cutting, there was an abundance of ‘waste’ land on the now more accessible upper stretches of the Malvern Hills.

Among the many homesteaders attracted by the availability of land at Upper Colwall was a certain William Halford who, in November 1832, took possession of land ‘by the side of Malvern Hill’ and ‘on the east side of the turnpike road to Colwall.’ Little is known about Mr Halford, but in 1856 he made a declaration that he had sold for £18 a portion of his garden 10 yards by 30 yards or thereabouts to John Miles Evans, a draper and tailor of Malvern, for the erection of a chapel.

The chapel was built, and a document of 1858 sees John Miles Evans conveying it to Thomas Evans – also a draper and tailor and possibly John’s brother or son.

The chapel clearly prospered; by the beginning of the 20th century the premises were too small. In 1907, a meeting was held to ‘further the building of a new chapel on land already purchased and paid for.’ Mary and Maria Ballard and other helpers set about raising funds for the construction of a new building which was opened on 19th April 1911.

Two flats, one of which was to be for the minister, were built on the site of the old chapel in 1926, and they remain today for the use and benefit of the church.”

By a coincidence, a booklet has also recently appeared of writings by a former resident of one of the flats, the late Frank Farrell, who was for many years secretary of the Free Church. The booklet, Colwall Cameos, combines scriptural texts and teachings with descriptions of different parts of the village and its amenities and contains some excellent pictures. It is obtainable from the church bookstall for £1. The leaflet by Ken Gaines is free from the church, though a small donation would not be out of order.

The development of the Anglican Church in Upper Colwall parallels that of the Wyche Mission Chapel. Church services on Sunday were held in the ‘Girls’ School’ classroom, re-arranged with seating for about 70 persons. This became inadequate and at the Easter Vestry of the Parish Church in 1906 ‘a Deputation of working men from the Hill District attended and asked that a more suitable Place of Worship’ might be built for them’. (Source: New Church and Institute for the Hill District, Colwall, Appeal for £3,000. December 1908.) The property for the new building was bought for £450, and the site included part of the school playground. The new ‘Church of the Good Shepherd’ was dedicated on 29 March 1910.

The School is now a private house, converted by Michael Milne, who has just started to research its history. He would welcome any information, and the loan of any old papers or photographs: they will be carefully looked after and returned. You can contact him on [REDACTED].

Research by Tom Marsh in 1995 found reference to 3 other chapels in Upper Colwall in the 19th century – a Chapel of Ease for Malvern Priory on Wyche Road, a Congregational Chapel on Beacon Road, and a Methodist Chapel on Fossil Bank. If you would like to start to find out more, his sketch map is in the archive.
