
COLWALL VILLAGE SOCIETY

Newsletter

June 2006

What happened?

The Dowsing Experience Day was a great success for the 20 students thanks to Roland Trafford-Roberts and Carl Attwood who permitted access to the grounds at Old Colwall and St. James's, and to the excellent tuition of Peter Ewence – *and* it was one of the good weather days in May.

Our education began at the front of Old Colwall on the site of an earlier wing of the house. Peter had marked out with tapes where the wall structures had stood. Using two L shaped wires (made from wire coat-hangers) held out horizontally, one in each clenched fist, he demonstrated how the wires swung to cross over as he walked over the shadow of the former walls. There were many sceptics to this trickery but with a bit of practice and encouragement twenty pairs of shuffling feet and outstretched arms were halfway on the road to believing in something they did not understand.

We were shown how to detect a wall, where it turned a corner, a tree or pillar and how to mark their position on the ground with tapes. The next phase set three groups dowsing in separate areas of the grounds mapping out the now disappeared pathways, trees and garden structures which were confirmed as shown on the 1905 Ordnance Survey Map.

At the end of the morning session every one of the students was able to get a positive result although sometimes the interpretation of the mapping results proved difficult. Peter gave us some very sound words of warning not to make any outrageous claims about our findings. Findings should be compared with outlines of structures known to exist elsewhere and should remain speculative until confirmed by other means such as archaeological excavation or other supporting documentation. We tackled the afternoon session at St James's full of confidence (and amazement) and some students graduated to using more sensitive equipment such as forked twigs or nylon rods.

Several of the students have expressed a wish to meet to share information and experiences and to do some fieldwork together in an evening, gaining confidence from each other. Anyone interested in taking an active part in trying to decipher the hidden history lying within the parish should contact me (Graham Cowan, [REDACTED]) and perhaps if there is sufficient demand a further event could be organised.

A write up of the day's events, photographs and sketch maps will be on view at the Society's September meeting.



Award for sculpture

The trip by the Friends of Malvern Springs and Wells to view the decorated wells this year made a detour to Schweppes in Colwall to present the St Werstan Award – a plaque named after a Malvern hermit – for the Stone Bottle Fountain, sculpted from a single ton block of York stone.

Cora Weaver and Bruce Osborne (in Victorian dress) present the award to members of the Schweppes management.

Recording in St. James' Churchyard

The Herefordshire Family History Society plan to visit Colwall churchyard on **Saturday 5 August** to continue their recording of monumental inscriptions. They would welcome local help towards this long term project – 20 years so far – to cover all the parishes of Herefordshire. If you would like to help please contact the Co-ordinator Angela Golding [REDACTED]

Wyche and Colwall Horticultural Show Saturday 12 August 2 – 5 pm

At the show this year we hope to have an exhibition of vintage pictures of Jubilee Drive.

Blacksmiths in Colwall

Marion Percy

These days it is not easy to realise the importance blacksmithing was to the life of a village community. Sometimes blacksmiths were also farriers and the evidence for their work is still found in parts of Colwall. With the help of one or two friends in the village, I have been discovering what a thriving industry blacksmithing was in Colwall.

My earliest records are from the census of 1876 when there appear to be two blacksmiths at Chances Pitch, a wheelwright living on Colwall Green and a blacksmith who was also a shopkeeper. There is no indication where any of them worked.

The Rogers family must have been long established smiths in the village, Edward John being mentioned in the 1879 and 1900 censuses and Allen Rogers was a wheelwright, carpenter, timber merchant and smith at Colwall Stone in 1900.

The census of 1900 brings in new names to the trade. Richard Corbett had a smithy on the corner of Stowe Lane and Mill Lane where horseshoes are still being dug up in the garden. He also worked in the middle of the village at the smithy opposite Schweppes, probably working with or taking over from Allen Rogers. It was a complex of long low buildings in the corner of Pedlingham's field and included a wheelwright's as well as a blacksmith's shop. It was shown on maps before Oak Drive and Acorn Close were built. 'Greenfield' was once called All Saints Villa and was where Ted Rogers lived. From 1926 to 1938 he was the blacksmith, no doubt taking over from his father and/or uncle.

Walter Martin is described as a journeyman blacksmith in the 1926 census. Every morning he drove to the smithy in Mill Lane in a pony and trap. About this time John (Jack) Hales took over the blacksmith's shop in buildings in Upper Colwall. So here we have yet another smithy! The buildings were opposite the entrance to Knell Farm near Rodways Bank. In the late 1920s Jack Hales moved to the Mill Lane smithy and worked there presumably when Walter Martin retired or he may have worked alongside Walter in a new smithy next to the present Village Hall. Here he worked from the 1930s to the 1950s. One shed has only recently been removed and the garage to 'Forge Cottage' stands on its site.

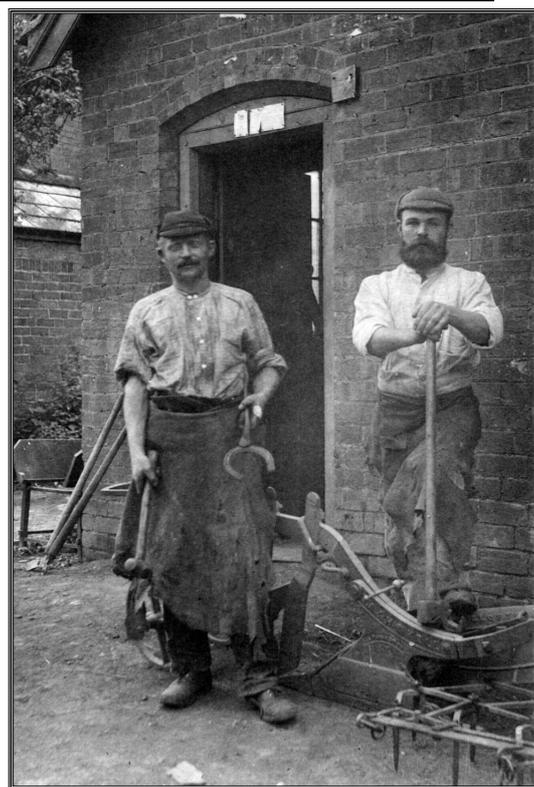
Have *you* dug up any horseshoes in *your* garden? I am sure that there is still much to be discovered. Please let me know if you can fill in any gaps, or are able to correct any false information.

I would like to record my thanks to Barbara Eagles and Les Hughes. I am so grateful to them for their good memories and their willingness to lend me photos and records.

Dame Laura Knight (1877 – 1970), one of Britain's most eminent woman artists, was represented by a number of paintings in a recent sale at Philip Serrell of Malvern. One was a view from Belle Vue Terrace, Malvern, during a rainstorm. It fetched £40,000. A watercolour view from the hills towards Ledbury and Hay Bluff realised more than £2,000. Dame Laura lived in Colwall for some time, painting local farming scenes.. Some years ago when the present chairman of the Village Society first bought his house in Colwall, he happened to mention it to the Lady Mayor of Ealing in west London. 'Oh, I spent my honeymoon there,' she said, 'at the Park Hotel, and we were served breakfast by the artist Laura Knight.'

Contributions, corrections and additions to the information in newsletters are always welcome.

Newsletter editor: Susan Bond [REDACTED]



Richard Corbett and his brother - blacksmiths

*Photo kindly donated to the archive by
Richard Corbett's granddaughter.*