

# NEWSLETTER

## Colwall Village Society

# JULY 2011

Revealing Our Heritage

## Our Visit to Hope End by Mike Lewis

Sunday June 12<sup>th</sup> was a very wet day - welcomed by gardeners after a long spell of dry weather, but challenging for a group of intrepid CVS members who were determined to visit our garden at Hope End.

We gathered in the kitchen for a brief talk on the history of the garden. We know that there was a garden in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, but we know very little about it, so we started with J C Loudon, the 'father of English Gardening' as he has been called. We know he had an influence here, because he tells us in his Encyclopaedia of Gardening;

***"Hope End, near Ledbury: J. M. Barrett, Esq. The house and grounds recently improved from our designs; the latter highly romantic by nature, and well wooded."***

What might those designs have been? Sadly, we don't have the originals, but we can take a pretty good guess. In order to do so we need to understand Loudon's background. He was born near Edinburgh in 1783, and his childhood delight in gardens became a career, starting as a draughtsman and assistant to John Mawer at the age of 15. He studied agriculture under Dr Coventry at the University of Edinburgh, and in 1803, at the age of 20, went to London to make his fortune. He immediately started publishing, with his first article being "Observations on Laying Out Public Squares",



and his first book appearing in 1804. He quickly gathered commissions throughout Scotland and England, and in 1809 (at the age of 26) he worked for Elizabeth Barrett Browning's father, who had recently purchased Hope End from Sir Henry Tempest.

At this early stage of his career Loudon was influenced by Uvedale Price, and "delighted in the wild and irregular". In 1806, Loudon had written that the regular style had been rendered obsolete by the advance of civilisation. He did not like Capability Brown, and wrote (echoing Price) "wherever his levelling hand has appeared, adieu to every natural beauty! See everything give way to one uniform system of smoothing, levelling and clumping of the most tiresome monotony"

Price and the early Loudon, were advocates of the Picturesque style. This was a middle way between Beauty – man made, regular, smooth – and the Sublime – wild, terrifying, essentially not measurable. Uvedale Price first published his famous essay on the subject in about 1794 but revised editions were published right through to at least 1801 and reprinted beyond then for many years, so J C Loudon would have grown up with the ideas. Price had said that "the garden immediately round the house was to be formal, the garden beyond to be in the landscape style, and the park to be left to itself. The transition should be gradual".

Incidentally, there was a later connection between Hope End and Uvedale Price, as he was a correspondent with Elizabeth Barrett Browning.

How much of that Picturesque garden designed by Loudon remains? Well, the topography certainly, and many of the mature trees date from about that time. It does feel to me as I work in the garden that the atmosphere is definitely Picturesque – with wild, rather gothic and sombre places, as well as the sunlit parkland. Well, sometimes sunlit...

Loudon later changed his mind about garden styles, and it is interesting to trace how that happened. In 1813, and financially successful, at the age of 30 he made his first European trip including travelling in the footsteps of Napoleons army to Poland and Moscow. Sadly, in 1814 he lost all his money through risky speculation; he revived his fortunes somewhat through further publications, especially on the design of hothouses, and in 1819 was able to make a second European tour to France and Italy. Like many before and since, he was bewitched by Italian gardens.

Tom Turner, in his "English Garden Design" said that "Loudon's conversion to the Italian style is one of the great turning points in the history of English garden design. He was the first theoretician to realise that the century-long quest to imitate ever-wilder versions of nature had led to a dead end."

It was after this conversion that Loudon developed his "gardenesque" approach, so influential in suburban gardens and public parks.

Loudon continued to work incredibly hard. In 1822 he published his *Encyclopaedia of Gardening* and in 1826 he founded *The Gardener's Magazine* – despite the fact that his right arm was amputated in 1825, and he had to teach himself to write and draw with his left hand.

He met his wife through a shared pre-occupation with futuristic ideas. Jane Webb published *The Mummy*, a pioneering science fiction novel in 1827; the book described life in 22<sup>nd</sup> century England, and Loudon reviewed it in his magazine, commenting on the steam ploughs that she described. He asked to meet the author and did so in 1830 when they met (in February) and married (in September).

Loudon and his wife worked as a partnership, and were prolific – she became well-known in her own right. Some of his best known designs date from later in life, including the Birmingham Botanical Gardens and the Derby Arboretum. In a sad irony, he turned his attention to the design of cemeteries shortly before he died in 1843, on his feet, still working, and in his wife's arms.

## **Colwall Village Society Plaques**

After the results of our survey on 'Famous People of Colwall', the committee have decided on, and are actively pursuing, the placement of two plaques. One plaque, to be displayed outside the Royal British Legion Club, celebrates the connection of Bruce Bairnsfather with both Colwall and the Club. The other, to be displayed on the Peter Pedlingham Pavilion in the grounds of the Colwall Cricket Club, celebrates the connection of 'Betty' Snowball with Colwall and Ladies Cricket. The latter plaque is to be unveiled at 5:45pm on 10<sup>th</sup> August 2011 immediately before the start of the friendly match between the annually assembled Ladies Cricket Team and the Colwall Cricket Team.



## Charles Bruce Bairnsfather (Born 9th July 1887 – Died September 1959)

Charles Bruce Bairnsfather, the son of Thomas Bairnsfather and Amelia Every, was born in Muree, India, in 1888. Bruce's father was a Lieutenant in the Bengal Infantry. After attending schools in India and Stratford-upon-Avon, Bruce joined the British Army. Bairnsfather found army life boring and left the Royal Warwickshire Regiment and enrolled as an art student at the Hassall School of Art. After completing his training he produced advertising posters for products such as Lipton Tea, Players' Tobacco and Flowers Beer.



On the outbreak of the First World War Bairnsfather rejoined the Royal Warwickshire Regiment and within a couple of weeks had been promoted to the rank of lieutenant. After the Battle of Mons the British Army was desperately short of trained soldiers and Bairnsfather was quickly rushed to the Western Front where he served with people such as Captain Bernard Montgomery and Lieutenant A. A. Milne. Bairnsfather, who was put in charge of a Maxim Machine-Gun section, was shocked by trench-life and even refused to take leave, fearing that once he left, he would find it too difficult to return. During the Christmas of 1914, Bairnsfather came close to being court-martialled after joining German soldiers in what later became known as the Christmas Truce.

While on the Western Front, Bairnsfather drew pictures of trench life and in 1915 *The Bystander* magazine began publishing his drawings. Bairnsfather's work and his character 'Ole Bill', were extremely popular with the soldiers in the trenches and this helped sales of the magazine.



In April 1915, Bairnsfather took part in the 2nd Battle of Ypres. After enduring a chlorine gas attack, Bairnsfather was badly wounded by a shell explosion. Doctors at London General Hospital diagnosed him as suffering from shellshock. While in hospital, 'The Bystander' commissioned him to do a weekly drawing for their magazine. Instead of being sent back to the Western Front, Captain Bairnsfather was given the task of training new recruits at the Albany Barracks on the Isle

of Wight. It was during this period that Bairnsfather created his famous cartoon character, Old Bill. During the Second World War Captain Bairnsfather was appointed as an official cartoonist to the American Forces in Europe. This included contributing drawings for the American Forces newspaper, *Stars and Stripes*. In 1951 he bought Kempsey Cottage, in Evendine Lane. His cartoons are highly sought after as collectors' items, and members of the Royal British Legion in Colwall, where he often drank, treasure the drawings he made on their wooden bar doors.

Bruce Bairnsfather died in September 1959.

# Elizabeth "Betty" Alexandra Snowball

(Born 9 July 1908 in Burnley, Lancashire – Died 13 December 1988 in Colwall)

Betty Snowball is best known as an English sportswoman. She played international cricket in the England women's cricket team, and also played international squash and lacrosse.

She scored 189 runs against New Zealand in the fourth women's Test match in 1935, setting a world record for the highest individual innings in women's Test cricket which was not surpassed for over 50 years, until Sandhya Agarwal scored 190 in 1986. It remains the third highest Test score by an Englishwoman.

She was born in Burnley, Lancashire, and became an opening batsman and wicketkeeper.

She played in 10 Test matches from 1934 to 1949, including the first women's Test against Australia in Brisbane in 1934. She toured to Australia twice. She scored 613 runs at a batting average of 40.86. Behind the stumps, she took 13 catches and 8 stumpings.

After her cricketing career, she retired to Colwall in Herefordshire to teach cricket and mathematics at The Elms School, where Michael Singleton was headmaster.

She died on 13th December 1988 in Colwall.



## Future Talks

**19<sup>th</sup> September 2011:**

**Rebecca Roseff:** 'Colwall Chase'

Everyone knows about Malvern Chase but Colwall Chase (or Ledbury Chase as it was sometimes known) is less familiar. Yet it was very important to the Bishops of Hereford, sending them off to the Court of the Pope in the 13<sup>th</sup> century to establish their rights over it, and it shaped the layout and whole character of the village of Colwall. This talk will look at the evidence for Chase, from its earliest beginnings back in the mysterious Anglo-Saxon period, to its end from the 15<sup>th</sup> century onwards when wealthier tenants expanded their holdings into the wild hunting lands.

**23<sup>rd</sup> January 2012:**

**David Lovelace:** 'The Battle of Colwall Park'

**23<sup>rd</sup> April 2012 [AGM]:**

**Duncan James:** 'Some Old Properties in Colwall'

**29<sup>th</sup> October 2012:**

**Tim Bridges:** 'Coddington Church'

**Finally ...**

My thanks to our contributors. Articles on Colwall related subjects (however tenuous!) are always welcome.

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Corrections and additions to the information in newsletters are always welcome, as are CONTRIBUTIONS!

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