

NEWSLETTER

OCTOBER 2012

Colwall Village Society

Revealing Our Heritage

An article reproduced from The Birmingham Post Weekend – Saturday 18th March 1995

“Wealth of Water and Wickets” by Ross Rayburn

Colwall picturesquely placed below the Malvern Hills, can lay claim to an unusual double.

The Herefordshire village produces the Malvern Water favoured by the Queen and it also inspired the growth of women’s cricket in England. Opened in 1892, the Colwall factory, owned by Coca-Cola & Schweppes, annually produces 12 million litres of Malvern Water, the natural-mineral water from the surrounding hills.

Its other distinction dates from after the First World War when Mrs. Molly Scott-Bowden, who ran the Colwall Park Hotel, and other lady enthusiasts ‘made the village a focal point for women’s cricket. The festival week started in 1926, drawing women cricketers from all over the country and produced the foundation of the Women’s Cricket Association that same year.

Colwall Cricket Club, one of the country’s most successful village sides, provides the base for the week. Founded in 1872, the club is now seeking around £50,000 to create a second ground in a field alongside its picturesque main ground.

Today, the original Colwall village is just a small countryside outpost consisting of little more than the 13th-century Parish Church of St James and nearby Park Farm, a 16th-century farmhouse just sold after being advertised with a £350,000 guide price.

It was the Ballard family that created the village that survives today in three areas, Colwall Green, Colwall and Upper Colwall, ranging up into the western side of the Malvern Hills. Victorian entrepreneur Stephen Ballard’s work as a railway contractor brought him to Colwall. He was so impressed with the area and the springs running down from the Malverns that he bought three farms.

“He was a civil engineer who started’ the Worcester-Hereford line that brought the first train to Colwall in 1860,” recalls his grandson Stephen Ballard, who ran a 350 acre fruit farm in the parish’ before his retirement. “He brought three farms here,

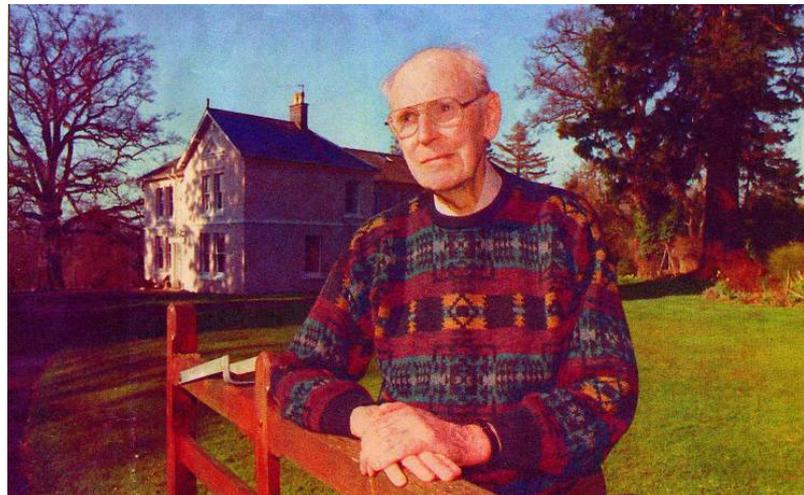
The Winnings, Court Farm and Grovesend Farm.”

The origin of Malvern Water’ can be traced back to the Ballard family. “I have a letter from Mr Schweppes to my grandfather saying they were having the water analysed to see whether it was worth having a factory built here,” says Mr. Ballard, a tall, agile 92-year-old with a dry sense of humour. “He owned the land the springs were on and he contracted with Schweppes. That isn’t the end of the story for they wanted more water and bought a spring right up on the hills at British Camp. “They piped that all the way down and now relatively little of the village has family water.”

“I don’t own much now, I’ve been getting rid of it for the last 20 years”, says Stephen Ballard. “I used to own 1,500 acres and 38 houses. Now I am down to 220 acres and half of the house I live in.”

But the Ballard legacy remains in Colwall in an interesting collection of mansions, lodges and cottages, mostly designed by the first Henry Ballard. “He did a lot of railway construction in Holland and he liked architecture there,” says his grandson. “You can see the Dutch influence because many of his houses have these tremendous eaves.” The Winnings, a somewhat gaunt three-storey stone building perched on a hillside as the road drops from Upper Colwall to the main village, was his first creation where he brought up his eight children.

Stephen Ballard was raised at Grovesend, a magnificent late-Victorian house built by his father alongside a vast



Village Elder: Mr. Stephen Ballard, whose family did so much to shape the village, outside his magnificent home.

oak tree, today owned by Mr. Geoffrey Price, former Hereford & Worcester County Council chief executive.

Ballard's most unusual homes were the attractive little lodges scattered around the parish. "All these buildings were built of concrete. Engineering people are always coming around getting excited by them. They get condensation I think this is probably why the material didn't catch on.

At least the Ballard lodges have survived as interesting homes in stark comparison to the unwanted concrete tower blocks of the 1960s highlighting Britain's urban landscape. Colwall itself remains an intriguing village spread over a wide landscape. The heyday of its railway, when a train passed through Colwall Station every 20 minutes, has gone. So too have the racecourse and golf course.

No longer can you find a petrol pump in the village, whereas once there were three garages. But this catalogue of losses is not as great as it sounds for this is a village of interesting homes and facilities that most villages lack.

The main village has the Malvern Water factory, a small industrial estate by the station plus a variety of useful shops, including a pharmacy, a general provisions shop (with an inviting cheese counter) and a village butcher's, plus a bank, library and an impressive village hall.

The Colwall Clock is an unusual memorial and there is also a curious rock known as the Colwall Stone, thought to have once been a marking stone in the forest.

"It is the second one," says Stephen Ballard. "The first one was broken up by a drunken blacksmith in the early 1800s."

The village also stages the annual Colwall Flower Show, started in 1875 and Picton Nurseries is famous for its Michaelmas Daisies.

Colwall has two private preparatory schools, The Elms, dating from the 17th century with playing fields superbly located with the Malvern Hills as a backdrop, and Downs, founded in 1900, as well as the Victorian village school.

There are also two private hotels. Near the parish boundary is Hope End Hotel, run by Mr. Ballard's daughter Mrs. Patricia Hegarty. This is found in the converted stables, previously the extravagant Turkish-style country, house where Elizabeth Barrett Browning spent much of her childhood.



Impressive: Sunfold one of the many houses created by the Ballard family, with the Malverns in the background. The mock-gothic house, built by Fred Ballard, is now a bed & breakfast establishment.



Aerial View of Colwall Park Hotel - 1983

In the centre of the village, the Colwall Park Hotel owned by Basil Frost provides an attractive focal point. Inside, on the lower staircase wall, there are three photographs, of the old racecourse. Also on display is a cutting from "The Autocar" in 1922 in which the correspondent lavishly praises the hotel stating: "It is too nice to be within a hotel one can unreservedly praise." He was also impressed with the hotel stables, adding: "One can vary the monotony of motoring by riding over countryside second to none."

Stephen Ballard is a little wary about the latest local authority boundary plans signalling the end of Hereford & Worcester County Council, created in 1974. He feels that being outside Worcestershire will mean less money is available for the village. His wife Rosemary agrees. "Such a lot of money has come over

the hills to this side," she says. "Herefordshire is a poor county itself".

Parish councillor Roy Stockton is more optimistic. "I think the majority are quite pleased that we are going to be solely in Herefordshire again," says Mr. Stockton, who runs the village newsagents with his wife Lilian. "Some feel there will not be so much money available but we are confident we will be able to pay our ways."

Some 75 Years before... an extract from KELLY'S ALMANAC for 1921

(reproduced from a document owned by Barbara Eagles)

COLWALL is a village and extensive parish on the Worcestershire border, with a station on the Hereford and Worcester section of the Great Western railway, 4 miles north-east from Ledbury, 20 east from Hereford and 124 from London, in the Leominster division of the county, hundred of Radlow union, county court district, petty sessional division and rural deanery of Ledbury, and archdeaconry and diocese of Hereford.

The village is supplied with gas by a company formed November, 1897. The church of St. James the Great is an ancient building of stone in the Early English style, consisting of chancel, nave of five bays, aisles, south porch and an embattled tower at the south-west angle of the church containing 8 bells: in the church are brasses with effigies to Anthony Harford esq. ob. c. 1590, and Elizabeth his wife, with children: the east window is a memorial to Mrs. Penelope Custance, wife of a former rector. and there are several memorial windows in the north and south aisles to members of the Bright family: the chancel was restored 1805-6, and in course of the work a unique floor tile of about the end of the 13th century was met with; it is round and exhibits the figure of a man digging, and is no doubt one of a series representing the months: the nave was restored in 1881: the window in the south aisle is in memory of Miss Bright, of Brand Lodge: there are sittings for 300 persons. The register dates from the year 1651. The living is a rectory, net, yearly value £400, in the gift of the Bishop of Hereford, and held since 1900 by the Rev. Charles Harris D.D. of Wadham College, Oxford. The church of the Good Shepherd at THE WYCHE was erected in 1910. There is a Wesleyan chapel at Colwall Green, a United Methodist chapel at Colwall Stone, and an undenominational chapel at The Wyche. The Oddfellows' Hall will seat. about 350 persons, and has a good stage and dressing-rooms; another hall at the Temperance Hotel will seat 250 persons. There is also a free library and reading room. The charities are of about £25 yearly value. Schweppe's celebrated Malvern waters are manufactured here from springs on the Herefordshire side of the hills.



Pedlingham's Shop, Colwall Green



Colwall Race Course from just above Sally Beds, Evendine

Colwall Park Racecourse is situated close to the railway station: four meetings are held annually for steeple-chase and hurdle racing. Kilbury Camp, the Herefordshire Beacon and the Malvern Hills are objects of local interest. An eighteen-hole golf course was laid out on the Old Castle Banks in 1912, and a club house was erected in 1913, but has now ceased to exist. The Colwall Stone is possibly the remains of an ancient cross; a similar stone can also be seen in the church-yard, but is in a better state of preservation. Near the Herefordshire Beacon is the house once the residence of the late Madame Lind-Goldschmidt ("Jenny Lind"). Hope End. destroyed by fire in 1911 was a noble modern mansion, occupying a commanding position between Malvern and Ledbury: it was erected by the late James Charles Archibald Hewitt esq. D.L., J.P. in place of a former house which was the early residence of Mrs. Barrett Browning, and subsequently the scene of many of her writings; it was of this place she wrote:—

"Green the land is where my daily
Steps in jocund childhood played;
Dimpled close with hill and valley,
Dappled very close with shade;
Summer snow of apple blossom
Running up from glade to glade."

Barton Court is the residence of Allan Heywood Bright. esq. J.P. and Perrycroft, of the Rt. Hon. John William Wilson J.P. The Ecclesiastical Commissioners are lords of the manor of Colwall. Mrs. Rayner-Wood, Mrs. Jane Hewitt, Messrs. Ballard and Allan Heywood Bright J.P. are the chief landowners. The soil is mixed. Mostly brashy. The chief

crops are wheat, beans, fruits and hops. The area is 3,831 acres of land and 4 of water; rateable value, £13,793; the population in 1921 was 2,043 in the civil and 1,913 in the ecclesiastical parish. Part of the ecclesiastical parish of Mathon or West Malvern in Worcestershire is in this civil parish.

Parish Clerk, Charles Pedlingham.

Post. M. O., T. & T. E. D. Office. Colwall, -William Plowman, sub-postmaster. Letters are received through Malvern Post Office, Colwall Green. Mrs. Frances Watts, sub-postmistress. Letters received from Malvern. Colwall, 1 mile distant, is the nearest money order & telegraph office

PUBLIC ESTABLISHMENTS.

Free Library, opened in 1899. George Thomas Badham, hon. sec. ; Cyril Badham, librarian

Oddfellows Hall. Alfred George Parmee, proprietor

Police Station, Colwall Green. Sydney Whittaker, constable in charge

SCHOOLS.

Public Elementary (boys), founded in 1649 by Humphrey Walwyn esq. of the Grocers' Company as a Grammar school: the old school house was rebuilt in 1796 & a new schoolroom erected in 1851: considerable additions were made in 1883; about 60 boys are educated. The trust of the school has been reorganised under a new scheme by the Board of Education; Samuel Jackman, master

Public Elementary, Valley (girls), built in 1865 & enlarged in 1894, for 130 children; Miss Elizabeth Ellwood, mistress

Public Elementary, Hill (mixed), for 96 children

Railway Station, Frederic Newnham Drew, station master

PRIVATE RESIDENTS.

Allen Reginald Osbourne J.P., The Woodlands, Upper Colwall

Baird Mrs, Evendine House, Colwall Green

Ballard Ernest, The Old Court

Ballard Fred J.P., Maybole

Ballard Misses, The Winnings

Ballard Stephen, Grovesend

Baskerville Miss, Mapleton

Bexon Joseph D., Royal House, Upper Wyche

Binyon Thomas W., Hoe court

Blore Arthur William, Grey House

Boyd Miss, Southview

Bright. Allan H. J.P., Barton Court.

Bulkeley Mrs., The Malt House

Button Charles, Gazley

Cadbury Mrs., Wind's Point, Upper Colwall

Campbell Col. John Edward Robert D.S.O., D.L., J.P., Linden

Chorley Mrs. Charles R., The Gables

Cockrane Mrs., Brook House

Collett Mrs., Laburnam Cottage

Croome Mrs., Rose Brae

Cummins Miss., Meadow Croft

Davies Mrs., Mason, Seathwaite

Emberson Mrs., Glenwood

Empsom Miss F., Cowl Barn

Griffin Miss, Greenlands

Harris Rev. Charles D.D. (rector), Ty-Gwyn

[Editors Note – unfortunately, the next page is missing!]

Future Talks

29th October 2012:

Tim Bridges: 'Coddington Church'

28th January 2013:

Mark Archer: 'The Restoration of Perrycroft'

22nd April 2013:

Dr Janet Cooper: 'The Work of the Victoria County History at Eastnor'

16th September 2013:

Amanda Simons: 'British Camp'

Colwall Diamond Jubilee Celebrations

So far we have not received any photos! If you have any you are willing to have copied then please contact any Committee member. Hard copies will be scanned and those on memory cards copied, both will be returned quickly.

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

If you are prepared to receive your newsletters by electronic means, please register with the email address below. Corrections and additions to the information in newsletters are always welcome, as are **CONTRIBUTIONS!**

Newsletter Editor: Derek Rees, [REDACTED]
or hardcopy c/o Colwall Library

email: cvsnewsletter@colwall.info