

NEWSLETTER

JUNE 2015

Colwall Village Society

Revealing Our Heritage

PURLEY HOUSE by Mariegold Ward

At our January meeting we had an interesting talk on 'Stone Buildings and Structures in Colwall'. The following is an account of the stone-built cottage I live in.

Situated near the bottom of Purlieu lane, it is almost entirely constructed of locally quarried Silurian limestone full of early marine fossils. When we bought the property at auction just over fifty years ago it was called 'Purlieu House' but we decided to change the name to 'Pack Horse Cottage'. This was influenced by the fact that the Purlieu was once part of an ancient trackway used for transporting salt on packhorses from Droitwich into Wales. The Purlieu with the brook running alongside it also forms the parish boundary between Colwall and Mathon. Spelt either 'Purlieu' or 'Purley' this word is derived from the Norman French '*pour allez*', and often referred to a strip of land on the edge of a forest.



Pack Horse Cottage

With exterior walls at least eighteen inches thick, the cottage is divided internally into two separate (and almost identical) parts by a central brick wall. On the ground floor two deep inglenook fireplaces stand back to back on each side of the divide, together with two bake ovens. A large iron potholder fixed on a pivot still survives above one of the hearths, and the wooden mantle-shelf above it supports a carved rack for holding roasting spits. The outer walls of the bake ovens are curved and they each contain a long brick-built upper chamber for baking with second smaller

one beneath for holding hot ash. Originally alcoves for back-to-back wash boilers occupied the space between the fireplaces and the exterior wall of the house but these had been done away with already before we took possession of the cottage and replaced with a corridor and doorway connecting the two living-rooms. Similarly the large, irregular slabs of limestone which once served as the floor of the cottage had also been removed and reused as paving stones outside. Most of the woodwork in the house, including the doors, floorboards and staircases, is constructed from planks of elm, with two strong oak beams supporting the living-room ceilings. The bedrooms on the first floor were also divided by the interior wall when we first arrived, but we had a passageway made through so that now the two halves of the cottage have been transformed into one. Two twisting wooden staircases and their landings still remain at either end. Apart from the house itself, two other limestone buildings exist. One is a former workshop or small stable with wooden rafters, which stands by the entrance gate, and the other is an ancient privy tucked away beyond an outhouse.

When we bought the house we were given no information concerning its history, nor the date of its construction. However, eventually I paid a visit to the Hereford Record Office to search for clues and after spending an entire day there I finally discovered the name 'Purley' in an index of property records for the Bright family. The Brights lived at Barton Court, Colwall and were wealthy landowners and Bristol merchants during the late seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Several reference numbers were given in the card index and, on showing these to the archivist, a large bundle of parchment documents was extracted from the storeroom for me to examine. It took numerous subsequent visits to the Record Office to read through all these documents and have them photocopied, and while I was there I also took the opportunity to search parish records.

The following is the result of my research.



The Ancient Privy

Purley House, as it was first called, was built in the mid-eighteenth century by a carpenter, William Abbetts, and one of his sons, William junior, who was also a carpenter. All the woodwork inside the cottage bears testimony to their craftsmanship. Situated over a mile away from Colwall village or any other habitation, the house stood in isolation on sloping meadowland surrounded by woods. Unfortunately William died early in 1761, leaving his wife Mary a widow. An entry in Bishop's Transcripts for the parish of Colwall reads bleakly: Buried. Wm. Abbetts. Jan. 23 1761. The parish register also records the baptisms of three of William and Mary's children: Joseph in July 1738, Sarah in July 1744, and Benjamin in August 1746. I could find no record for William junior's baptism, or for William and Mary's marriage. Perhaps they were not living in the parish of Colwall at the time. An Indenture dated May 7th 1761 ('in the first year of the Reign of our Sovereign Lord George III') shows that Mary, evidently finding herself short of money, took out a £10 mortgage on the property. The provider of this mortgage was a Samuel Arnold, yeoman, of the parish of Castlemorton. The Indenture describes the property as '*All that new erected Cottage or Tenement with the Garden and Orchards thereunto belonging with their and every of their appurt's all situate lying and being in the Parish of Colwall aforesaid in the said County of Hereford and now in the Tenure and Occupation of the said Mary Abbetts and William Abbetts {i.e. William junior}, together with all Outhouses Edifices Buildings Barns Stables Gardens Courtyards*' etc. However, two years later, on 24th March 1763, Mary Abbetts sold the property to a Mr. Moses Daffey, yeoman, of Colwall for the sum of £56. It was agreed that Moses Daffey would refund the £10 still owed for the mortgage to Samuel Arnold and the remaining £46 would be paid to Mary Abbetts and William Abbetts junior. (Forty-six pounds is the equivalent of about £3,450 in today's money.) Moses Daffey later moved to Bishops Frome. He let Purley House to tenants, one of whom, William Jones, is described as a lime burner. In 1785 Moses obtained a £45 mortgage on the property from Edward Owens, a tailor of the parish of Bosbury and two years later this mortgage was increased to £55. In 1791 a 'Lease and Release document was drawn up between Moses and John Daffey of Colwall transferring the property to John for the sum of £105.

For the first time the house is described as '*All that Cottage or Tenement now called or known by the Name of the Purley*', instead of merely 'that New Erected Cottage'. I can find no information as to how Moses and John were related, but another legal document shows that John Daffey 'late of Morecroft, Colwall' died intestate in 1797. His eldest son, also called John, then inherited the property. However, on the 20th January 1791 the Purley '*with the garden and several pieces or parcels of arable and pasture land*' had been leased to a Thomas Lewis, yeoman, of the parish of Colwall for a

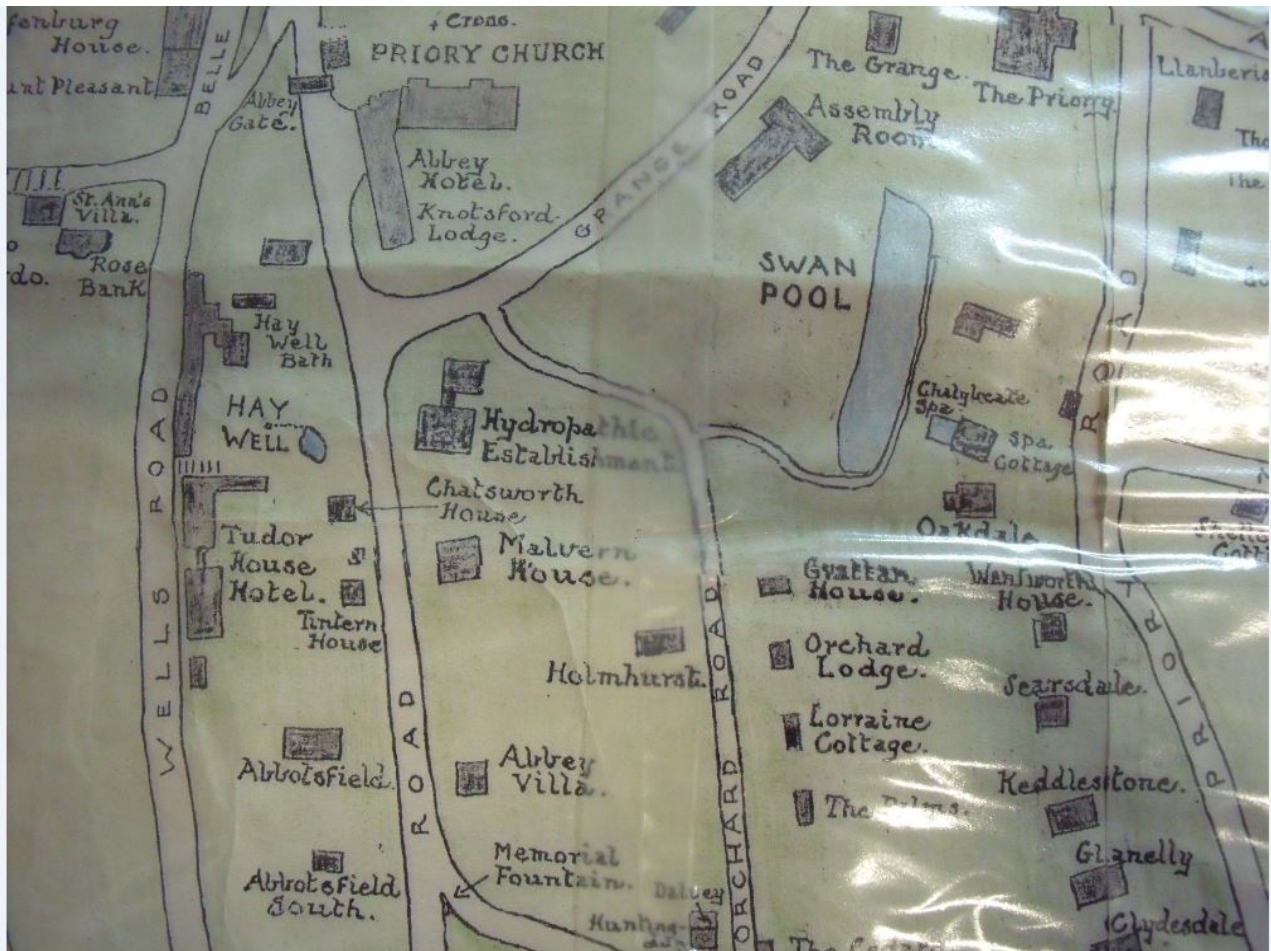
yearly rent of eight guineas. In the Indenture of lease numerous stipulations were made regarding the upkeep of the property, such as repairing fences, scouring ditches and preserving the fruit trees from damage by grazing cattle. In April 1802 John Daffey junior took out a £60 mortgage on the Purley, which was provided by John Cooper, a carrier of Ledbury. Then two years later, on 12 December 1804, John Daffey sold Purley House to Joseph Bowers, a yeoman of Colwall, for the sum of £144. However, soon afterwards Purley House and the adjoining land passed into the possession of Lowbridge Bright and became part of the vast Barton Court estate for the next hundred years. The Tythe Map of 1842 marks 'Purley House & garden' as plots nos. 48 & 49, owned by Henry Bright, occupied by William Nutting. Census records for the following decades give the names of subsequent tenants whose occupations included: shepherd, lime burner, 'stone riser for lime burning', and quarryman. The tenant in one half of the cottage in 1911 was a gamekeeper, Alfred Turner, described as 'worker for a Gentleman'. When a large part of the Barton Court and Colwall Park Estate came up for Auction at the Park Hotel Colwall on 25th November 1915, Purley House (then called Purlieu Cottage) was Lot 75. It was described as a double cottage let to two tenants at a total annual rent of £25.14s. These tenants were named as Mr. T.H. Rodway and W. Holt Needham, Esq. (for Gamekeeper). Unfortunately I have no record as to who bought our house at that auction.



The Will of Charles Dickens and The Malvern Connection

by David Hodgson

Charles Dickens was a frequent visitor to Malvern, his wife Catherine suffered ill health and having heard of "The Cure" affected by Malvern water it was arranged to visit the town to see what could be done for Catherine.



Hand drawn map of Knotsford Lodge from around 1890

Dickens made arrangements for Catherine to come to Malvern with one of her trusted maids, Ann Brown, to find suitable accommodation, the family would stay at Knotsford Lodge where they would occupy the whole of the first floor. If we look at the 1851 Census for Malvern we find Catherine at Knotsford Lodge together with her sister Georgina Hogarth also Ann Brown the maid to Catherine.

John Knotsford was a wealthy man of Malvern who died in 1589 having been predeceased his wife Jane who died in 1582. After the Dissolution of the Monasteries in 1539 John Knotsford purchased most of the Priors lands and monastic buildings. There is a monument to the Knotsford family in the Priory. In the late 1840's the Jacobean Abbey House and Guesten Hall were demolished. The Abbey Hotel and Knotsford Lodge were built on the site. Knotsford Lodge now forms part of the Abbey Hotel.

Charles Dickens was in London around this time, his father John was seriously ill and died on March 31st 1851. Dickens made several visits to Malvern at this time. The Railways were now in several parts of the County but had only reached as far as Worcester. Dickens came as far as Worcester on the train then onto Malvern by horse drawn coach. There were seven coaches a day between Worcester and Malvern. It wasn't until the 1860s that trains came to Malvern.

In September 1851 Charles Dickens came to Malvern with his family for a short holiday and wrote an account of it in October 1851.

To Be Continued...



Chairman's Report to AGM 20th April 2015

I am very pleased to report on another successful year for the Society, whose membership now exceeds 200.

We held three public meetings:

(1) 20th April 2014

Professor Richard Bryant explained in an easy to understand manner how Colwall was affected by the last Ice Age.

(2) 15th September 2014

Jenny Harrison and Nicholas Neve gave us a thought provoking talk regarding information they had uncovered concerning the names of the fallen listed on the Colwall War Memorial. Carl Attwood provided a little musical interlude.

(3) 26th January 2015

Beth Andrews gave a very polished and interesting talk about the different types of stones to be found in Colwall's buildings and structures in Colwall.

In addition, we mounted a 'then and now' exhibition of photographs for both the Colwall Fun Day and the Horticultural Show. The exhibitions led, indirectly, to the drafting and publication of the Society's new book 'Bygone Colwall', which went on sale from 18th April 2015. Copies are available tonight for purchase.

We will install a new plaque - this time at 'The Winnings' in honour of Stephen Ballard on Saturday 2nd May 2015 at 10.30 am.

My gratitude goes to all of you - our members - for your support, coupled with a warning - your Committee is getting ever older and with the departure of Marion and Becky we face an uncertain future. The Society needs a new injection of volunteers to ensure the Society's aims are maintained.

Finally, I express my and the Society's sincere thanks to all of the Committee viz, John our very efficient Secretary, Margaret our dedicated Treasurer and Membership Secretary (now restored to full health) and to Gwyneth for standing in for Margaret during her illness, Derek not only for splendid Newsletters but also the exhibitions and his major effort into producing 'Bygone Colwall', Marion, Susan, Rebecca and Barbara. Thanks also to the refreshment department led by Penny.

Michael Milne

Future Talks

14th September 2015

NB: Cancelled due to ill health

16th November 2015

An Auden/Britten/'Night Mail' evening.
(Film, Music and Narration)

25th January 2016

Cora Weaver on 'The History of Malvern Water'.

18th April 2016 AGM

Ron Shoesmith on 'Alfred Watkin'.

20th June 2016

Gary Butler on 'The Restoration of the Ledbury Master's House'.

From the Editor

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!**

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