

## The Growth of Population in Victorian Colwall *by John Fagg*

When we think of population change and migration in Victorian England our thoughts immediately turn to the rapid growth of London, the industrial cities of the northern and midland regions and our coalfield settlements. In contrast the period after 1851 is seen as one in which rural parishes were characterized by declining populations and net out-migration. Jobs in agriculture declined in the face of gradual mechanization and the rapid growth of food imports from the 'new world', while the low wages paid for farm work inevitably encouraged many to seek greater rewards for their labour in urban locations. The fall in the agricultural labour force also meant a decline in the demand for traditional village crafts, a sector already struggling in the face of competition from factory-produced goods.

Unlike Bosbury, Eastnor, and many other Herefordshire parishes, however, Colwall increased its population by 73% between 1851 and 1901; indeed the number of parishioners more than doubled between 1841 and 1911, before stabilizing at around 2000 for much of the 20th century. Emma Mawby's article in the last newsletter [[reproduced in CVS Newsletter January 2017](#)] provides an analysis of the changing employment trends that underlay this growth. Farming jobs certainly seem to have fallen in number, but they may be underestimated due to the difficulty of classifying the many men whose occupation was simply recorded as 'labourer' in 1901. Nevertheless, whatever the loss of agricultural and related employment, it is clear that Colwall benefitted greatly from the existence of a railway station and the initiatives of a small number of local entrepreneurs. Foremost among the latter was Stephen Ballard, the contractor when the railway was built, who – with his sons - later provided jobs in a large vinegar brewery, a sawmill, a brickworks, a gas works, and an ice works. Schweppes opened a mineral water works in 1892 after Ballard had demonstrated the purity of water from springs on his land. Another brewery and water bottling plant, named after the Royal Well, had been built in the far north of the parish in 1870. These sources of employment, were supplemented by the opening of the small Temperance Hotel built by Ballard close to the Stone, and the horse racing course opened by Roland Cave-Brown-Cave in an attempt to encourage tourism and improve the income of the Barton Court estate.

Important though these initiatives were, other developments outside the manufacturing or hotel sectors were to become more significant in the 20th century. Of particular note was the growth of private, preparatory schooling. The Elms School, for example, had 26 pupils in 1901 compared to the Grammar School's six in 1851. The newly-established Downs School had only four pupils in 1901, with the headmaster's family and servants raising the number to nine.

Yet the most significant growth sector was almost certainly domestic service. The figures arising from census returns need to be treated with care here because in some cases owners of large properties were staying in their other homes on census night, leaving only a skeleton staff permanently resident in Colwall. Moreover, it is easy to underestimate the number of staff serving a particular household, since staff recruited locally would often remain at their original place of residence, particularly gardeners. Notwithstanding these caveats, however, the numbers of recorded domestic servants and gardeners rose from 66 in 1851 to 211 in 1901, an increase of 220 per cent! In addition the total of laundresses and charwomen rose from 23 to 50, a rise of 117 per cent in the same period. Some of the gardeners and laundresses may have been self-employed because they were recorded as working on their 'own account' presumably for more than one customer.

What lies behind these hefty increases? One major factor was the arrival of in migrants, wealthy and successful people who could build new houses or modernize others in a country environment away from, yet well connected by the railway to, their normal home or place(s) of business. Emma Mawby's article mentioned the chocolate manufacturer George Cadbury in this context, although in his case the acquisition of Wynd's Point was driven in part by his admiration for its previous owner - Jenny Lind, 'the Swedish nightingale' - and his desire to preserve the house as it

was left after her death in 1887. When the new owner was at home, as he was in 1901, there were ten family members plus five servants in the house and lodge. In 1851 the site had been occupied by an inn keeper, his son and daughter-in-law and one servant. Incidentally Cadbury retained his house in Northfield, Birmingham, close to his factory and garden suburb of Bournville.

In some respects a better example of a wealthy newcomer to Colwall is the manufacturing chemist John William Wilson, a resident of Edgbaston, Birmingham who worked for the family firm (Albright and Wilson in Oldbury) becoming Chairman before joining the Boards of the Great Western Railway and Bryant and May Ltd. The 1891 census records him and his wife in a shared villa in Hanley Castle, but two years later he bought land along Jubilee Drive and commissioned C F A Voysey to design a small country house later known as Perrycroft. Completed in 1895, the year Wilson was first elected to Parliament, it became his summer retreat. So, in 1901, the census records the new MP and his wife in their Westminster flat, while in Colwall seven servants remained in the house and its associated cottages along with a further 11 of their dependents.

Many more examples could be quoted of folk 'living on own means' who made Colwall their only home: Edward Conder, the building contractor who left London for New Court (7 servants and 7 dependents); Tamsin Williams, the widow of a colliery owner in Liverpool, who moved to Redlands Lodge [more likely 'Redlands' - the main Victorian house - Ed] (6 servants and 4 dependents); and Stephen Ballard Senior, originally of Malvern, who bought the Winnings estate in 1837 before building a new house for his wife and family from 1856 onwards

The sheer volume of upper middle class migration into Victorian Colwall, which continued during the interwar years and beyond, represents a form of counter-urbanization akin to that noted in many advanced western economies since the 1960s. In Victorian times it would have appeared in most rural parishes as a minor trend against a backcloth of mass working class migration to the cities. But in a few particularly favoured parishes it was sufficient to lead to population growth. The same phenomenon has been observed in parts of Surrey and in three Berkshire parishes during the interwar years; all three were particularly attractive to incomers in terms of both landscape and access to nearby towns and/or railways. Colwall's magnificent scenery, its railway station and proximity to Malvern surely puts this Herefordshire parish in the same class.

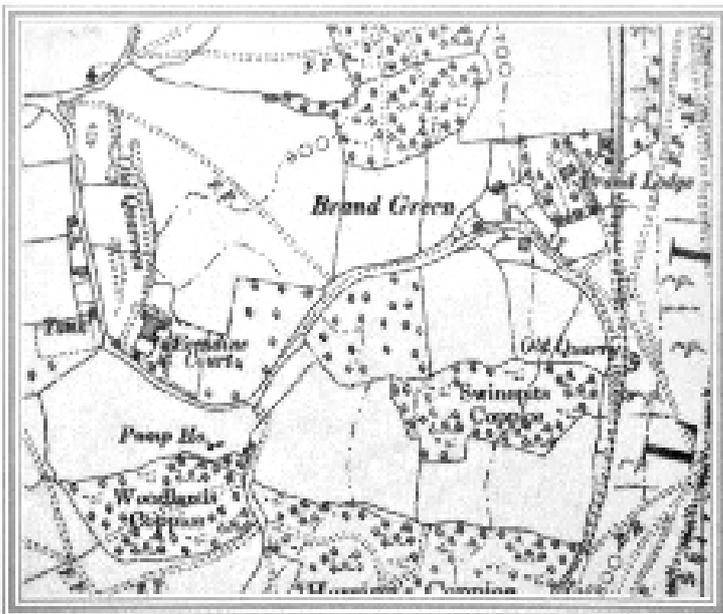
John Fagg

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## Brand Lodge, Upper Colwall by David Whitehead

The discovery of the 'waters' at Malvern Wells in the mid-18th century is well recorded in contemporary literature, but its impact upon Upper Colwall, just over the Hills, is less well known. The Georgian delight in 'prospects' soon brought tourists to the top of the Hills where they discovered the lost land of 'Old Siluria' rolling away towards the Black Mountains. The story of the settlements along the western side of the Hills is usually told in terms of creeping sub-urbanisation from West Malvern and the Wyche cutting, and, following the example of Jenny Lind at the Wynds Point, several fine Arts and Crafts villas were constructed below Jubilee Drive, which was completed in 1887.

However, there was a least one much earlier property, providing accommodation for discriminating gentefolk, set in a



small area of parkland at the top of Evendine Lane – Brand Lodge, where today there is a fine mansion designed by Ernest Newton (1866-1922), an occasional collaborator with William Morris, and Perrycroft, one of the finest Arts and Crafts houses in Herefordshire. It was built in 1911 but was not the first house on the site. The *Hereford Journal* makes frequent references to the amenities of Brand Lodge and its genteel occupants throughout the 19th century, commencing in 1810 when the 'modern built house' was for sale, having lately been the residence of Lady Ann Hamilton and Miss Beckford. The former seems to have been the daughter of Archibald, the 9th Duke of Hamilton, who later (1814) became lady-in-waiting to Caroline, Princess of Wales.

The long advertisement shows that the house was well-suited for a genteel life, with a dining parlour and drawing

room on the ground floor, serviced by a house-keeper's room and a butler's pantry. Upstairs there were 'four best bedrooms and outside a double coach house and stabling for six horses'. Most notably there was 'an excellent cold bath and dressing room with a fireplace thereto'. This facility, whilst very appropriate for a gentlewoman taking the waters of Malvern, was quite a novelty among the minor gentry of Herefordshire. It is known that Uvedale Price of Foxley and Richard Payne Knight of Downton, both MPs and men with strong metropolitan connections had cold baths on their estates, and the latter also enjoyed the luxury of a heated dressing room. In addition, recent archaeology at Harewood Park, near Ross, has led to the location of another bath house located below the terraces of the demolished Georgian house, adjoining a fishpond. Cold bathing was recommended for good health in the 18th century, accompanying other outdoor activities. It appealed to active men but was increasingly being taken up by advanced and blue-stocking women. One of the most lurid divorce cases in this period concerned Lady Worsley, whose regimen for good health included her 'whim' of regular-bathing both at home and at the public baths at Maidstone. A similar facility was available on Castle Green at Hereford in the early 19th century, where men and women were segregated. However, the times were changing, and it was quickly killed-off by emerging Victorian prudery.

At Brand Lodge the bath house was probably fed by a natural spring, and today there is still a water garden on the south side of the house, presumably continuing to exploit a natural water source. At The Lodge, just south of Ludlow, the Salweys also constructed a water garden to accompany their Georgian bath house, which has recently been restored. In total the grounds at Brand Lodge extended to ten acres in 1810 and included a pleasant shrubbery walks and several pieces of meadow and pasture. The owners also enjoyed grazing rights on the Hills, which was no doubt useful in providing herbage for hungry coach horses. The advertisement also has a lyrical description of the location of the house 'delightfully situate on the south-west side of Malvern Hill, commanding a most beautiful and picturesque view over a very fine extent of country'. It was also one mile from 'the celebrated waters of Malvern Wells' and close to the turnpike road from Worcester to Ledbury, where London mail coaches passed every day except Sunday, and in the midst of fine sporting country with several packs of fox and hare hounds within a short distance.

From a later advertisement in September 1813 it seems that Brand Lodge was bought by Henry Singleton Esq, whose 'elegant furniture ... purchased new within two years' was for sale together with the 'truly desirable villa'. There is a detailed description of his tasteful furniture, mostly in mahogany and including à la mode 'tent bedsteads with check (sic) hangings and matching window curtains'. There is no mention of the bath house, but this is still there in May 1826, associated with a kitchen garden not referred to previously. The villa at that time had been in the occupation of the Hon Colonel Cocks, the brother of Lord Somers of Eastnor. Again the setting is eulogised and the situation 'within a few hundred yards of the delightful terraces of Malvern Wells, to which it has easy access'. Viewing could be arranged via Mr. Joseph Barnett of the Winnings, Colwall.

Within a few months a new tenant had been found – Samuel Rush Meyrick (1783-1848) and Llewellyn, his 22-year old son, who had spent the summer negotiating with the ladies of Goodrich Manor for the purchase of Goodrich Castle. Llewellyn was in fragile health and probably came to take the waters and enjoy the walks in the bracing 'wind coming from the Cambrian Mountains'. He found the house quiet and 'on the most beautiful spot to be found on earth'. During 1827 some significant visitors called at the Lodge to visit the Meyricks, these included Francis Martin, recently returned from Russia where he conferred the Garter on the new Emperor, Nicholas I and John Chessell Buckler (1793-1894), artist and architect who shared with Rush Meyrick a passion for gothic architecture and was at this time building Halkyn Castle in Flintshire in the Tudor Gothic style. He had also been sketching at Goodrich Castle. (Rosalind Lowe, *Sir Samuel Rush Meyrick and Goodrich Court* (2003), p 108).

In 1818 Brand Lodge had makes an appearance in *A Malvern Guide* by John Chambers and is described as 'a neat villa....the front painted white, and shaded by a range of evergreens which give it a picturesque effect'. Col Cocks was occupying the property, but it now belonged to Mr. Bright, presumably a member of the family settled at Brockbury Hall to the south-east of Colwall church since the 17th century. Chambers is equally flattering about the setting of the house 'in a romantic spot (with) a fine view of the Camp' (British Camp) and a 'very extensive prospect to the westward'. He ends on a down-to-earth note that the house, being protected by the north and east winds, is not affected 'with that greater degree of cold peculiar to elevated situations'.

In March 1830 Brand Lodge was available to let 'furnished and in good repair' with particulars available from a Ledbury solicitor or Joseph Barnett of the Winnings. It was still in the ownership of Mr Bright and within a few years was occupied by the legendary 'Misses Brights' whose social graces, philanthropy and cultural patronage brought Brand Lodge to the attention of the readers of both the Hereford and Worcester papers in the next few decades.

**David Whitehead**

## FROM THE ARCHIVES

For many years I have been delving into my family history. Like many people I started too late to chat to older relatives. My starting point was free online sites such as familysearch.org. I then visited the library where I could access the free Ancestry Library Edition website. Last year I was given a subscription to Find My Past website. This site includes the 1939 Register and has a wealth of information. I could not only access people but also property details.

As I had lived at Perrycroft Lodge, I typed in the address and found not only John Wilson, Head, widower aged 52 his profession and birth place, but also his sister Mary together with details of the cook, housemaid, parlour maid and kitchen maid. The estate housed William Godsall, gardener from Kempley, the head gardener, two stablemen and a coachman plus their families.

The Herefordshire Archives and Record Centre provide free access to Find My Past. It also runs a series of workshops including 'Getting Started with Ancestry/Find My Past' and another on 'House History'. I have been on several of the workshops run at Fir Tree Lane, Hereford and would recommend them.

What is stopping you exploring your own or local history?

**Be Warned** – this research is very addictive.

Mary Clayburn

## ATTEMPTS TO RECRUIT COMMITTEE MEMBERS HAVE FAILED!

**Despite the fact we have well in excess of 150 members no-one seems willing to get more involved.**

**With only six Committee meetings a year, surely there must be someone prepared to give up a few hours?**

**There is a very real risk that the Society may not be able to function beyond the next AGM.**

### Future Talks

**11<sup>th</sup> September 2017**

'Hope End and Elizabeth Barrett Browning'  
by Mike Lewis

**22<sup>nd</sup> January 2018**

'Craswell Priory: A triple Unique Grandmontine Cell in the Marches'  
by Joe Hillaby

**23<sup>rd</sup> April 2018**

**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING** followed by  
'The Design and Planning of the new Colwall Village School'  
by Joyce Clifford

### From the Editor

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

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