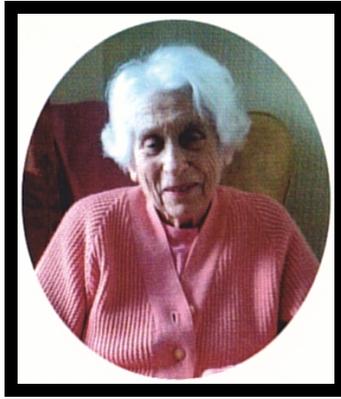


NEWSLETTER

Colwall Village Society

JUNE 2018

Revealing Our Heritage



Barbara Eagles - RIP

It is with great sadness that we report one of our Life Members has passed away. She lived in the house she was born in, by the railway bridge, but eventually moved into Evendine Nursing home where she died peacefully on 20th March 2018, aged 94. Barbara was one of our most prolific contributors to both the archives and the newsletter, many of her postcards being featured in the Colwall books. She could be relied on to supply (or correct!) details about the people or events that happened in Colwall over her lifetime. Sitting in the front row at some of the Society talks with her friend Marged the speakers were often made audibly aware that their facts were being closely monitored.

She will be sadly missed not only by the Society but by the countless friends she made in Colwall as was demonstrated by the packed congregation at St James on the 19th April for the Celebration of her Life.

In response to our request for World War One memories and memorabilia the following was sent to us by Andy Ball, one of our members. He has kindly allowed the various medals and photos to be photographed and copied for exhibiting at the Ale House Festival on 30th June. Hopefully many of you will have a chance to see them.

The Ball Family during the Great War (By Andy Ball)

This is a brief account of one generation of my ancestors in the Ball family during the Great War of 1914-18. I'm fortunate enough, as a grandson of that generation, to have inherited photographs and artefacts from that time which help to bring the events to life.

William Ball my great great grandfather (1833-1919) was owner of a fleet of sailing ships and a well-known public figure in Torquay. I understand that he made his fortune transporting coal from the north east down to Devon. His son, another **William**, my great grandfather, changed from sailing ships to steamships. He was chairman of the River Dart Steamboat Company and a mayor of Torquay.

William, my great grandfather, and his wife Edith Moore had eight children and I have a photograph of the family group which I'd estimate to have been taken in about 1904. These were **William Frank, Mary, Henry ('Harry') Frederick** (my grandfather), **Richard Anthony, Mark Christopher, Robert ('Robin'), Edward ('Teddie')**, and **Marjorie** with birth dates ranging from 1885 to 1903.

The family were wealthy and had a grand house in Torquay. All of the boys were sent, as private boarders to Blundells School in Tiverton, Devon and I'm indebted to the schools current archivist for providing much information about their schooldays.

The period of the Great War was to bring much grief and tragedy to the family. **William Frank Ball**, the eldest of the six brothers served in the cyclist Territorial Corps before the war and was a major in the 7th Devons during the war. He survived the war, eventually dying in 1953, but I believe that he was wounded on active service in France.

Henry ('Harry') Frederick Ball (my grandfather) was attached to the 2/4th Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry and was attached to the 18th Divisional Signal Company. He served in Mesopotamia and was awarded the Military Cross. The citation published in the London Gazette on 23 May 1919 describes how he was '*Awarded the Military Cross for conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty at the Lesser Zab 25th October 1918, and at Sharquat 28th and 29th of October 1918. He displayed marked initiative and resource under heavy fire maintaining communication over difficult country throughout his operations. His untiring energy and coolness were a fine example to all.*' I have a silver cigarette case, one of the most prized family possessions, which commemorates this award. He survived the war and lived during the interwar years in India where he served in the Indian Civil Service. He eventually retired to Lustleigh in Devon where he is now buried.

Richard Anthony Ball, the third of the six sons had been in the officer training corps at Blundells School and had played in a Junior House rugby competition. He never progressed into the senior team and his school record says that '*on account of his health he was not allowed to take part in games*'. He left school in July 1912 and began work at the National Provincial Bank in Torquay. At the outbreak of the war Richard joined the 7th Battalion of the Devonshire Regiment, initially as a private, but soon obtained a commission as a Lieutenant. One of his Captains was none other than his eldest brother William. Richard became attached to the 8th Worcestershire Regiment which was sent to France in May 1916. Action was immediate and tragically Richard did not survive two months on foreign soil as he was killed on July 10th, aged just 20 years. It was little comfort that his senior officers described him as an '*officer of much promise who was exceedingly popular with the men*'. His remains lie in Laventie Military Cemetery.

The next tragedy to befall the family was not due to war. **Robert ('Robin') Ball**, the fifth of the six brothers had entered Blundells School in 1911. He, like all the brothers, had shown great promise having won Foundation Scholarships in 1913 and 1914, and was at the age of 16 already both a House and School Monitor. In the summer of 1916, due to serious illness following blood poisoning, he died on August 23rd, little more than a month after Richard's death.

Tragedy had not finished with the family, **Mark Christopher Ball**, the fourth of the boys was a 2nd Lieutenant in the 231st Field Company of the Royal Engineers, when he was killed in the Battle of the Lys in northern France on April 9th 1918. He like his brother Richard was also just 20 years of age. His remains are at Haverskerque British Cemetery in Nord, France.

I have the Memorial Death Plaque of WWI (colloquially known as the *death penny*) issued to commemorate the loss of Richard Anthony Ball. Made of gun metal it is stamped with his name. This is just one of the over 1 million issued in total. It's displayed in a simple stand together with a Victory Medal and the British War Medal. A closer inspection of the medals when writing this article revealed that I have in fact one medal for Richard Anthony and one for Mark Christopher, so at some stage in the past the medals must have become mixed up... I hope to discover the corresponding memorial group and re-unite the correct sets.

Mercifully the youngest of the brothers **Edward ('Teddie') Ball** was too young to serve in the Great War and survived to become my main link with that generation. He was a lovely man – quiet, modest, intelligent and caring. He became a technical director for Bulmers cider and lived for many years at Breinton near Hereford where he was a neighbour of his younger sister **Marjorie**. I remember that he found both the immediate family tragedies and the wider events of the Great War a terrible time, something that stayed with him throughout his long and eventful life.

Andy Ball

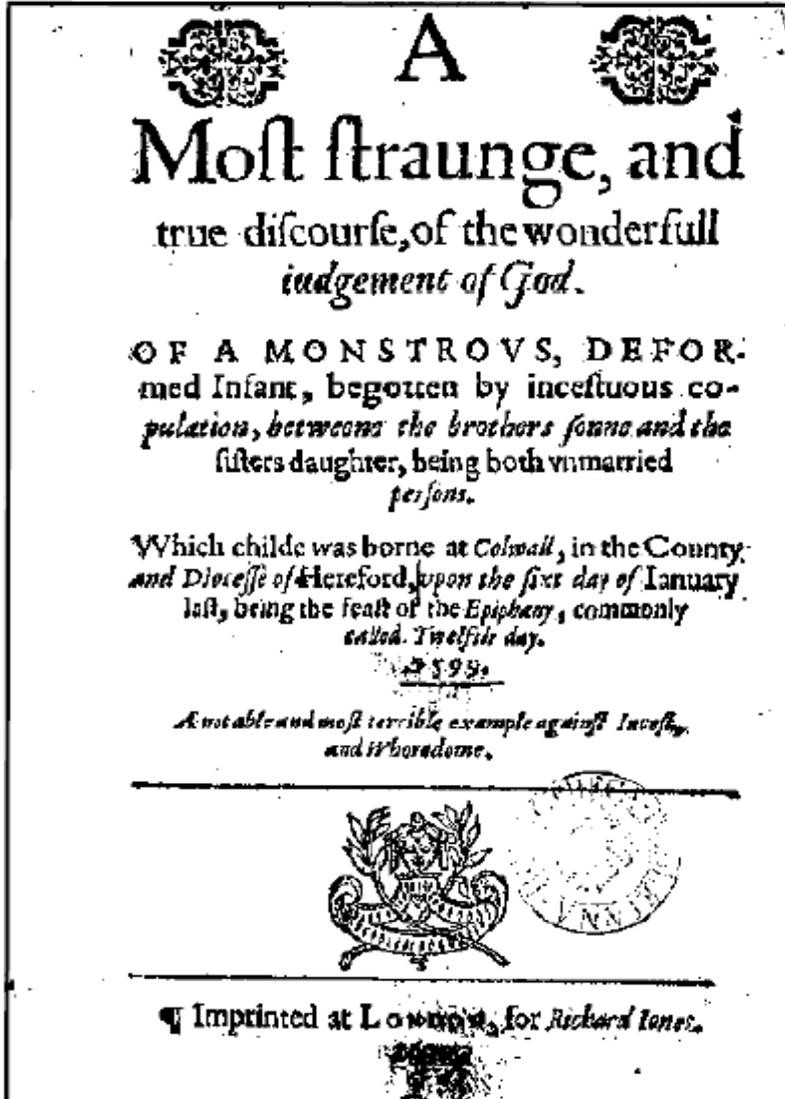
Love, Lust and Incest in 17th-century Colwall (by James Bowen)

Reproduced from Victoria County History Newsletter 'Herefordshire Past' No. 24

A notable event in 17th-century Colwall was the birth of a 'monstrous deformed infant' on the 6 January, the feast of Epiphany or the twelfth day, in the year 1600. A pamphlet, a copy of which is now held in the Bodleian Library, Oxford, was written by an unknown local author and printed and published in London. It was titled '*A most strange, and true discourse, of the wonderfull judgement of God. Of a monstrous, deformed infant, begotten by incestuous copulation, between the brothers sonne and the sisters daughter, being both unmarried persons. Which childe was borne at Colwall, in the country and diocese of Hereford, vpon the sixt day of Ianuary last, being the feast of the Epiphany, commonly called Twelfth day. A notable and most terrible example against incest and whoredome*',

The birth was described as 'A notable and most terrible example against incest and whoredom' and the pamphlet, written from a theological perspective, explains this extraordinary occurrence.

It describes how a young maiden, Francis Browne, the daughter of an unnamed Hereford yeoman, broke off a relationship with a young man 'of competent wealth' without explanation despite having had their marriage bans read out in church. She then lived as a servant with one of her uncles who had three sons residing in the adjacent parish of Mathon then in Worcestershire. The maiden and one of the young men 'because hee as hir so neere kinsman... lay together & shee was gotten with child'. The pamphlet remarked that as a result of God's displeasure 'this scorneful & unconstant wench', after a full nine-month term, gave birth to 'a monster' in one of her uncle's houses at Colwall.



The pamphlet is significant in that it describes in detail the disfigurement of the infant based on empirical observation, reflecting provincial understanding of the laws of incest and fornication with a view to such monstrous births. It also reflected contemporary debates in society about religion and scientific thinking especially the work of Francis Bacon (1561-1626). The description of the infant referred to a larger head than normal with no hair or eye brows, unusual projecting eyes ('the right eye verie small like a blacke sloe'); a flat nose without nostrils and a small deformed mouth with no gums, jawbones or lips; and a 'wrinkled and riueld' mouth which would today be termed facial clefting. Only the ring finger had a nail and the end finger was separate from the others. It was noted that there was no evidence of the infant's sex, although it was remarked 'urine issued out at a small hole in ye proper place: of note for difference, resembling some token more proper to male, then female.' Physically the infant's knees were close to the belly, legs fixed to the buttocks and there were further deformities to the limbs. For instance the right foot was bowed leftwards and flesh joined the toes and fingers. When the infant was born the three female midwives assisting with the birth took the infant to one side 'thinking it had no life' and left it uncovered for half an hour at which point it

cried. The midwives, fearing that it would die before reaching the church, called for the vicar of Colwall who baptized the infant naming it 'what God will' ('*Quod Deus Vult*'). Its baptism and burial was entered in the parish register. The infant lay for a further two days and nights without sleeping and died on the third day. The pamphleteer outlined a series of religious arguments highlighting 'the causes of all these evils in man or woman', the Christian discourse against uncleanness, and the pitfalls of sin, lust and adultery, presenting it as an exemplar of divine retribution for fornication and a warning for those thinking of committing such an act.

It has been pointed out that despite the precise observations of the author, his 'traditional view of causation', influenced his interpretation which meant that it was 'never used to inform rational thinking about the medical danger of incest and consanguineous unions and the scientific cause of deformity'. Indeed it has been argued: 'His ignorance of advances in modern medical thinking and his inability to review theoretical ideas (both of incest and monstrous births) in the light of his empirical data underline the need for his work to be supported by a wider intellectual community. Nevertheless this account of a 'monstrous birth' shows how in Colwall, a parish in rural Herefordshire, educated members of the local community could make personal observations that contributed to the development of the scientific interpretation of nature in the 17th century, alongside a puritanical denunciation of incest and fornication.'

James Bowen

The Society has enjoyed another successful year holding four public meetings:

- (1) **April 2017**
Penny Platt on the History of Cider.
- (2) **June 2017**
Duncan Bridges on the work of the Malvern Hills Conservators.
- (3) **September 2017**
Mike Lewis on Elizabeth Barrett Browning
- (4) **January 2018**
Joe Hillaby on Craswall Priory.

After ten happy years as Chairman, I am now resigning and look back on the years since 2008 noting that the Society has achieved a great deal including:-

- much improved newsletters in colour
- installation of plaques to famous residents
- publication of a History/Water Map and three booklets - 'Discover Colwall', 'Bygone Colwall' and 'Colwall Folk' (whose sales continue - mainly by Colwall Post Office - and contribute enormously to our funds)
- exhibitions at various local events
- organisation of about 40 public meetings, most of which were directly connected to Colwall
- achieved a significant membership total

I would like to thank all the past and present members of our hardworking Committee who are responsible for this progress, and I particularly thank the Secretary, John Atkin, for his invaluable help. Thanks to the 'refreshment department' and to Natasha and Poppy at the Post Office.

Finally, I wish the Society well for the future, secure in the knowledge that it will continue as an essential part of the Colwall community.

My kind regards to you all.

Michael Milne

Future Talks

10th September 2018

'Directing the 'Antiques Road Show' at Eastnor Castle'
by Mike Jackson

21st January 2019

A Film on Hop Picking in Herefordshire
by Julia Goldsmith of Catcher Media

Followed by Q&A session on hop-picking
(*all part of the 'Life through a Lens' project based on the photographic archive of Derek Evans.*)

29th April 2019

Annual General Meeting

Followed by a talk

'The King's Thirds on the Malvern Hills'

by George Demidowicz

From the Editor

CONTRIBUTIONS in the past seven years, with some notable exceptions, have been very few - any articles will be received with grateful thanks! Corrections and additions to the information in newsletters are always welcome.

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