

# Newsletter

## FEBRUARY 2020

**Colwall Village Society**  
Revealing Our Heritage

### Personal memories of Hope End by Patricia Hegarty

By the end of the Second World War this once grand estate had fallen into dereliction. In 1872 a Mr C A Hewitt had purchased Hope End with the exotic mansion built by Edward Moulton Barrett and 400 acres or so of parkland and farms. Elizabeth Barrett Browning his daughter evokes the idyllic picturesque landscape in the early chapters of Aurora Leigh. But fashions had changed and Mr Hewitt pulled the house down and hauling a lot of the valuable building materials up the slope rebuilt a new house in ornate Victorian Gothic style, dominating the valley looking out towards the Malvern Hills. He kept the Barrett stables in the valley below.



In 1910 the House almost completely burnt down over three days. My father remembered seeing the glow in the sky from Colwall as a small boy of eight and we have a photo of him and his sister Anita sitting on the grand front steps of the burned house. The Hewitts continued to live on in the last remaining fragment, still a considerable house, with the gaunt ruins still standing alongside. During the war trees and undergrowth had invaded the grounds, the Parkland was neglected and badly farmed, the ornamental pools had silted up and the Walled Garden and cottage had disappeared under brash and ivy. When the old people died it is said the fire brigade had to hack their way up the drive.

My grandfather bought the whole estate in 1947. He sold off some land and decided to turn the Barrett stables into a hotel. This was because after the war one of the ways to obtain consent for building materials was to prove that you would be earning dollars. The Americans were very interested in EBB and her American connections. The top house ruins were demolished. I remember aged eight pushing the plunger for the charge. The remaining portion at the north end where the Hewitts had lived was patched up as a habitable house. It still had the scale of a mansion with pillars removed from the Barrett house in the hall and very high ceilings. It was let to my father's cousin Philip Ballard for a time then sold.

Work was started on the stable block. The crescent on the minaret had been used as target practice by game shooters and was reset facing Mecca. Likewise the Clock Tower was pitted with shot and the metal dome had fallen into the room below with circular windows. The clock workings had been removed sometime before to St Annes in Jamaica. My grandfather was a great proponent of concrete. His brother Fred wrote a book on it and it was used on houses in Colwall. In fact my grandfather experimented with adding cinders from the furnaces of the fruit cannery to concrete and also the discarded plum stones from the canning process. The pools at Grovesend were constructed with this and some of the work at Hope End. Decorative concrete balls were set at each corner of the Clock Tower echoing the cast iron balls on thick stems which adorned the corners of the stable block. These were taken down and left in the front cobbled courtyard. Luckily the ogee pillars round the courtyard did not need this treatment but all the outside walls were then whitewashed. Outside the overgrown drives were opened up and the pools dredged. The Walled Garden was used for growing strawberries with a wider doorway punched through the lower corner. My grandfather died, the hotel plan was abandoned and my father turned the buildings into a cold store for apples for the family fruit farms at Colwall. Alternate planks in the wooden floors between the ground and first floor were removed so that cold air could circulate, thick slabs of cork were stuck to the walls with tar and the windows bricked up. Refrigerating machinery was installed. A packing room was created downstairs. Eventually my father gave up growing fruit and the building was left unused.

In the early 1950's some fine oaks from the Park were sold for the restoration of the roof of the Houses of Parliament.

I had always been in love with this charismatic place which my father very generously made over to me in 1970 but was a little at a loss as what to do with it. However with my husband John we set to on a lengthy and extensive restoration of the Stables, the Park and the Walled Garden in 1976 and created what my Grandfather had intended, a small Hotel which we ran for nearly twenty years. The Park contains elements of landscaping by Loudon from around 1809 who is also said to have had some input on the House.

We ran it as a relaxed rural retreat with an emphasis on local and home produced food from the garden which was a little unconventional at the time. The earlier 18th Century Walled garden was restored to full production. We remained a very small concern running it ourselves until 1997 when we reluctantly retired.

Below is a photograph of the Stables at the beginning of the first restoration with my Grandfather in the foreground.



Patricia Hegarty

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## "Troyte Griffith Architect, Artist & Enigma Variation" By Wilfred Harper

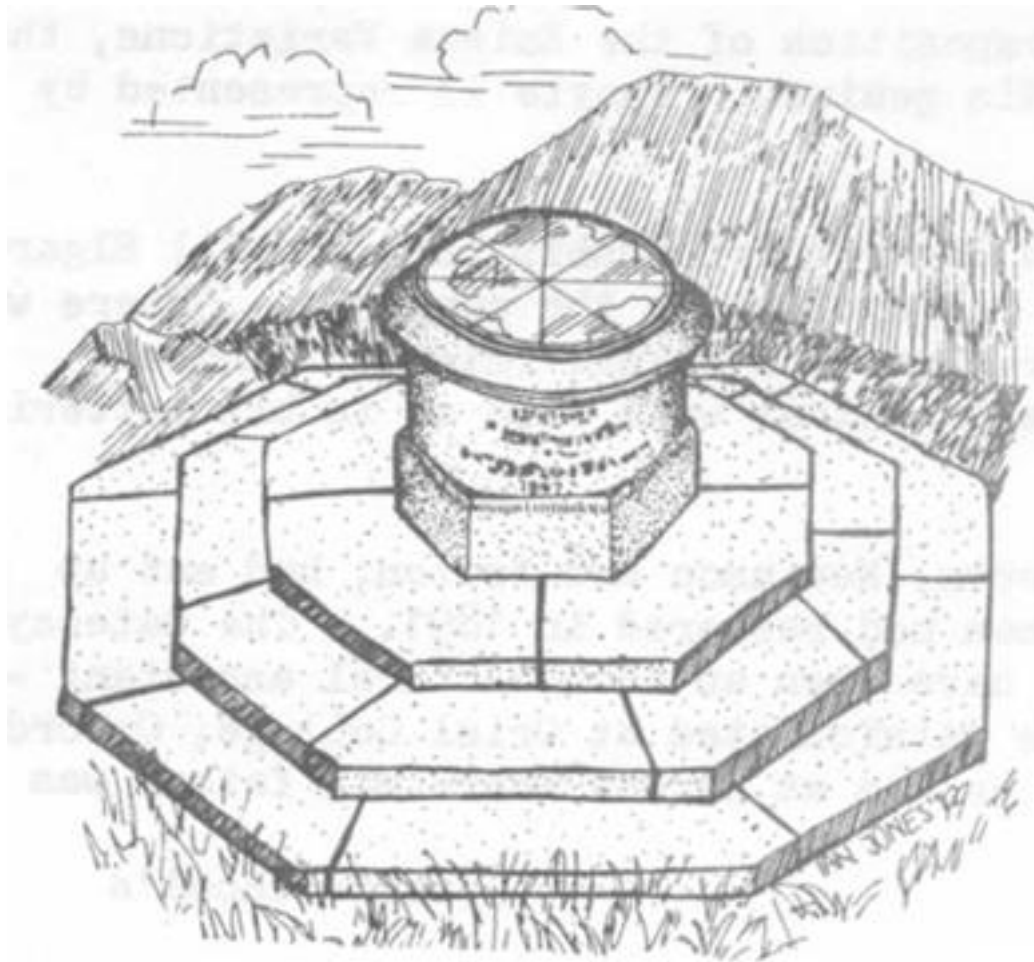
Malvern is an unusual place which attracts unusual people. One of the most celebrated of these is Edward Elgar, who lived here from 1891 to 1904. Less celebrated, though highly-unusual, is his friend Arthur Troyte Griffith, an idiosyncratic figure in Malvern life for almost half a century.

Troyte was a notable architect and a talented water-colour artist who, by his distinctive appearance was known to almost everyone around Great Malvern. He was tall, moustachioed, lean, scholarly-looking though brown-complexioned, and the round shape of his head earned him the nickname of 'Ninepin' among the Elgars and their friends. He always wore a knicker-bocker suit, often with a mustard-coloured tie, a soft hat with a downward sloping brim and a German cape. He travelled about his work and his leisure on a tall bicycle with a green net hammock saddle - probably a Dursley Pederson, a make now extinct.

His best-known work is the toposcope at the summit of the Worcestershire Beacon, erected to mark the 60th year of Queen Victoria's reign - not in 1897 as the inscription suggests, but in 1899. It was the brainchild of the then vicar of Malvern Priory. Troyte was at work on the Toposcope in 1898, taking bearings by theodolite from the summit. Using these he drew a circular map to a radius of the limit of absolute observation, and round it a ring of topographical profile. Almost certainly Elgar took an interest in the toposcope project (he was of scientific turn of mind) and probably accompanied Troyte on his surveying expeditions.

It is to Elgar that Troyte owes his peculiar niche in the rocks of immortality. In 1898, a significant year for both men, Elgar began the composition of the Enigma Variations, the musical portrait gallery which won recognition of his genius. Troyte is represented by Variation No. 7.

Different though they were in many ways, Troyte and Elgar's friendship lasted until Elgar's death. They spent a lot of time together walking and cycling in the country. "There was something dog-like in his quiet admiration of Edward" wrote a mutual friend. Indeed, Troyte became a servant of Elgar's genius, often in practical ways such as in his lettering of Elgar's manuscripts.



**The Toposcope on the Worcestershire Beacon**

Troyte's employer, the London based firm of architects, Nevinson and Newton, had set up a branch office in the Priory Gateway, which Nevinson had restored in 1891. The Gateway now houses the Malvern Museum. Troyte appears to have been an architectural assistant -he had no formal architectural qualifications. He matriculated at Oriel College, Oxford in 1885 though he did not graduate and before that he was at Harrow where his father was that school's first science master. After Oxford, Troyte spent some time abroad, mostly in Spain, studying architecture and painting, before coming to Malvern in about 1896.

Nevinson and Newton were the architects of a new church, All Saints, The Wyche, begun in 1902. Its design is of basilica plan form, with a chancel apse and a roof fleche housing the bell and ventilator. The plans are preserved and they are in Troyte's hand, though just how much of the design is his is the subject of local speculation. However, it is certain that he did much of the detail work and it is probable that he was the architect-on-site. Troyte's extraordinary thoroughness is illustrated by the assertion that he selected at the Quarry every piece of Malvern stone used for the outside vertical surfaces. The result justifies this formidable task. All Saints is one of the finest and most attractive Malvern stone structure in all the Malverns. Troyte held that Malvern stone walling at its best was unsurpassable (though at its worst it is drab and not particularly sound). The church stone is pink, from comparatively rare veins of that colour, and beautifully laid. The interior walls, which are of red Hereford brick, are also beautifully laid and pointed. There are many other details within the church and of its furnishings which proclaim Troyte's hand, especially the carved and gilded reredos which is known to be of his design.

The church was consecrated in November 1903. Soon afterwards Nevinson & Newton ceased operations in Malvern and Troyte took over the offices. Here he practiced as an architect on his own account until about 1935, when he moved to Priors Croft in Grange Road. Though he was often modern in his philosophy he was old

fashioned in his ways. He never installed a telephone or a typewriter. His business was conducted in person (he cycled everywhere) or by hand written letter in his neat script. He employed an office boy and a cleaner but no architectural assistant. He drew every detail with almost engineering precision; he tolerated no slipshod work, he examined every item on every invoice and timesheet and would not pass anything which did not satisfy him.

He built many houses of high quality around Malvern and beyond - even as far as Kidderminster. One of them was chosen Country Life House of the Year 1910. He worked on schools and other public buildings, and so highly regarded was his work that he never lacked employment even in the 20's and 30's, when many houses in Malvern stood empty.

In his spare time he played chess, painted a great number of water-colours, served on the Fabric Committee of Malvern Priory (and produced many fine drawings) and was Secretary of Malvern Concert Club. The Club (still flourishing) was founded by Elgar in 1903 with Troyte's help, and probably out of his devotion to Elgar Troyte was its faithful Secretary and sometimes its Treasurer as well for nearly 40 years, until his death.

He never married. He seems to have been ill at ease with women and with children. Entirely in keeping is a story about Troyte's being shown a builder's catalogue of window frames, each illustration including a lady looking out. "I want windows, not women." Troyte expostulated. Also in keeping is the recollection of a lady known through her family to Troyte as a child, but ignored by him in chance encounter. He lived with a housekeeper in a smallish Malvern-stone house just off the Wells Road, near All Saints Church and not far from the house in which Elgar lived from 1899 to 1904.

Elgar's death in 1934 must have been a great blow to him for there seems no doubt that Elgar was the illumination of Troyte's life. Troyte designed the headstone for the grave of Alice and Edward Elgar, and the bronze plates which adorn the houses in which Elgar lived.

His own grave in Malvern Wells is unmarked by headstone, and is enscribed simply and austere

**'Arthur Troyte Griffith, 17 January 1942'.**

Reproduced by Courtesy of TIC Malvern

Wilfred Harper



## A new Newsletter Editor



After many years of fantastic service Derek Rees has decided to stand down as Newsletter Editor and I've offered to be his successor. Many of you may recognise me through walking my two black and white collie dogs Chloe and MacKenzie around the village. I've lived in Mathon Road, Colwall with my partner Wendy Thompson since 2013. Originally from Essex and East London I moved to Worcester in 1986 and subsequently spent much of my working life in local government in property administration / I.T. roles before becoming a career change horticulturalist and doing a full-time HND qualification at Pershore College in 2003-2005. Since then I've been self-employed as both a home energy rating consultant and a jobbing gardener. Now in semi-retirement I thoroughly enjoy living in Colwall. I love the fabulous environment and sense of community here, and I am a Trustee of Colwall Orchard Group. I have a lifelong interest in history – especially the industrial revolution onwards – and like making the connections between past human activity and the surroundings that we see today. Derek is a very hard act to follow but I'll endeavour to maintain the high standards that he has set.

**Andy Ball**

### Future Talks

**27<sup>th</sup> April 2020 [AGM]:**

Dr. John Harcup OBE

'Jenny Lind – Colwall Days and Before'

**14<sup>th</sup> September 2020:**

Mark Warby

'Bruce Bairnsfather: Creator of WW I "Old Bill" cartoons'

**Finally ...**

My thanks 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!

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