



### Jack Field

There is a stile just beyond our house - in fact in days of yore there was a stile in our back hedge - into what is marked as *Jack Field* on the 1841 tithe map. *Jack Field* where might be gathered *Jack by the Hedge*. Where *Jack Frost* lingers. There is of course *Every Man Jack*, *Jack Tar*, *Jack the Lad* indeed *Jacks of all Trades* and although once upon a time every John was also a pet *Jack* to his sweetheart, I have an inkling that *Jack Field* is not anything to do with a person in the strictest sense. *Jack Field* is puzzling. In the neighbouring *Broadley Ground*, where the shorn wheat stumps crunch underfoot, harvesting has brought to the surface fresh shards of long broken crockery. I have a pickling jar full of this field edge flotsam - the standard issue blue and white, the odd piece of slipware - evidence of repast gone by. I almost never find pottery or anything much at all in *Jack Field* and surmise that, historically, it was rarely cultivated or laboured upon.

Today, flicking through a copy of George Ewart Evans' *The Pattern Under the Plough*, I find a reference to survivals of the belief that certain uncanny fields within the parish should be left untilled, and that these fields "sometimes called *Jack's Land*" carried a taboo.

I am reminded that the ancient figure of *Jack in the Green*, close kin to the *Green Man*, is associated with fertility rites, a bringer in of plenty - and that givers in folklore are often takers also. *Jack*, within this context, was the generic name afforded to many of the sprites, imps, and other members of the *Secret Commonwealth* that might slip into human form, bestowing good fortune or alternatively cause all manner of mischief. Oftentimes, as beliefs migrated and mingled, the *Jack* in question would not be a mere agent of capricious supernatural forces but the Devil himself. Thus it was understood that not to exploit the "fairy soil" of such land was a due, a deal made on behalf of the entire community to appease the Devil and in so doing safeguard against havoc and misfortune. The practice of sacrificially offering up land in this manner - in many instances on farm by farm basis - was also referred to as the *Goodman's Croft* - *Guideman's Grunde*, *Halyman's Croft*, *Gudemen's Fauld*, *Goodman's Fauld*, *Deevil's Craft*, *Clooties Craft*, *Jack Craft* were variations.

Here the word *croft* for enclosed farmland (*craft*, *crofft*, *croffte*, *croofte*) is as much Middle English as Scots. *Goodman* in this context is another euphemism for the Devil, a reversal, a feint to draw away bad luck. The church and parliament crusaded hard to stamp out these practices throughout the 16th and 17th centuries, particularly through the use of hefty fines but also by the threat of invoking laws pertaining to witchcraft. Ultimately economic pressures forced farmers to risk paranormal calamity and cultivate all available land and the practice dwindled and died a death during the course of the 19th century. I do not know for certain whether or not *Jack Field* was once set aside as *Jack's Land* - the *Deevil's Croft*. That will require more research. However, the location, on the edge of the village bounds lends itself to be another order of periphery, a liminal space between the everyday and down to earth and uncertain supernatural worlds.

I cross *Jack Field* in the morning half-light - a fellow early walker approaches - more bush and briar than flesh and blood - *Jack in the Green* nods in passing - and I return his nod. It is good to know he still walks his field after all these years.

### Ox Leasow

I climb over the gate between *Jack Field* and *Ox Leasow*, which has been doubly secured with orange baling twine whilst sheep are in residence. *Leasow* is again Middle English (*leesewe*, *lesewe*, *leswe*) from Old English *læs* simply meaning *pasture*. *Ox* speaks for itself. The use of oxen as a draft animal had been widespread and commonplace in Britain for over a thousand years but was already becoming an anachronism when the 1841 tithe map was being drawn out - by 1850 the oxen had been jostled and shoved into memory by social reforms, rural industrialisation and a growing need for speed.

The Enclosures Act of 1801 had been the beginning of their end. A team of six or eight beasts yoked in pairs was just too unwieldy to manoeuvre and plough the new style smaller fields but two or three horses in harness could pull the tight corners and do so with ease and efficiency. I read that once oxen were selected to be a pair they became companions for life, working side-by-side and never far apart. They would be given similar sounding names which rolled easily off of the tongue - the nearside ox would have a single syllable moniker and the offside ox of the duo would have something longer. *Quick* and *Nimble*, *Pert* and *Lively*, *Hawk* and *Pheasant*, *Turk* and *Tiger*.

A stream meanders through *Ox Leasow* and Barton Court peers out from a twitching curtain of trees, the view is achingly bucolic. I squint trying to conjure up the pasturing oxen of yesteryear but all I can imagine are their skeletons under the grassy sod on which I tread. *Ox Leasow* reveals what has been discarded and forgotten - an epitaph to that which once was. The scattered branches of an old willow taken out by a storm a few years ago have formed a semi-circle of weather bleached bones. Still in a state of mourning for long departed oxen, I gather a small bundle of ribs underarm and return home.

# Introducing The Portable Antiquities Scheme Database by Andy Ball

Sometimes in life we come across something that undeniably seems to be 'a very good idea'. Such is the Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS) run by British Museum (and independently in Wales by National Museum Wales).

The Scheme aims to encourage the recording of archaeological objects found by members of the public in England and Wales. In this country we are fortunate enough to enjoy a rich and varied national history and every year several thousands of objects are discovered, many by metal detectorists but also by people walking, gardening, or going about their daily lives.

Finds recorded in the Scheme help advance knowledge of history and archaeology of England and Wales.

In the first 20 years since the Scheme's launch in 1997 over 1.3 million objects were recorded and the current figure now exceeds 1.6m.

The public face of the PAS is the small group of county-based Finds Liaison Officers (FLOs) who provide a first point of contact for the public and whom are gatekeepers to the scheme and are tasked with identifying, researching, and recording the objects found. In Herefordshire our FLO covers both Herefordshire and Shropshire. Finds are recorded electronically on the Scheme's database which is available for all to view at [www.finds.org.uk/](http://www.finds.org.uk/)

The internet has allowed the Scheme to make its records widely and publicly available and advances in digital photography have made it possible to produce and distribute high quality images. The database includes use of a Geographic Information System (GIS) allowing finds data to be plotted electronically and searches to be made easily.

The PAS database allows all records to be searched by date, object type, material, location, and a whole host of other parameters. So what's available in the way of finds records for Colwall Parish?

A dip into the PAS database on 30<sup>th</sup> September 2022 revealed 81 records for the Parish of Colwall. Perhaps surprisingly not all finds are metal and there are a wide range of types of artefacts spanning thousands of years from Neolithic to Modern.

Neolithic items include a knapped flint scraper and several items of debitage (material produced during the knapping of flint).

A late Iron Age object (looking surprisingly similar to a modern spanner!) has been identified as a copper alloy cosmetic pestle.

Roman finds make up a large proportion of items recorded including not only nationally commonplace finds like coins (pictured above) but also a plethora of wonderfully shaped brooches used for fastening and adorning clothing, through to charming personal domestic items like a hair pin and a fingernail cleaner.



The Medieval period includes several items that may seem strange to us today including hooked tags, harness mounts, strap fittings and metal strap ends (as pictured left) basically doing 'what it says on the tin'. Higher status medieval artefacts include two seal matrixes used to stamp wax to seal letters, and a sword guard; whilst the more day-to-day include fragments of metal vessels such as ewers and cauldrons.

Post Medieval artefacts present include coin-like trade tokens which were issued by traders to supplement the lack of available low denomination coinage issued by the crown. Similarly, one jetton is recorded, and these were used as reckoning counters, for counting money and keeping accounts.

The only Modern period item recorded is a Maltese cross shaped medal commemorating the coronation of King Edward VII in 1902, with Ledbury provenance. The PAS database usually only records items over 300 years old but anything unusual and more modern such as this will often merit inclusion.

Colwall has had a few instances in history where significant archaeological artefacts have previously been found locally. One of the most interesting stories dates back to 1650 when a gold bejewelled coronet or bracelet 'of a size to be drawn over the arm and sleeve' was found by a labourer whilst digging a drain at a cottage near Wynd's Point. He took it to Gloucester where he sold it to a jeweller for £37. The jeweller sold it to a London goldsmith for £250 and he, in turn, disposed of the stones alone for the sum of £1,500. A wonderful example of capital gain but what an incredible loss of what was most likely a wonderful artefact thought now to probably date back to the 10<sup>th</sup> century. Had it been found today it would have been treated as treasure under the 1996 Treasure Act and it would have been saved and recorded on the PAS database for all to see and marvel at.

## **The Colwall Parish Charity (Charity Number 240461) by Clive Rayment**

Our recent article in The Colwall Clock and Coddington Recorder was probably the first time many of you will have heard of this long-standing local charity. We are delighted to have the opportunity to expand a little bit more on the history of this charity for the Colwall Village Society.

A report on the Charities of Colwall by a Henry Meates in 1895 suggested there was some evidence of parish land being owned for the benefit of the poor going back as far as 1614. However, a more reliable and documented history of the Colwall Parish Charity was brought together in an official document by the Charity Commission dated 16<sup>th</sup> June 1966. This document sets out the history of the Colwall Parish Charity going back to 1807 when Elizabeth Brydges founded a charity in her will for the purpose of "the relief of poverty" in Colwall. In 1874 Elizabeth Rosetta Peyton founded her charity, broadly with the same charitable objectives, followed by Frances Maria Peyton in 1900. Then, in 1935, the ancient charity known as the Poor's Land was regulated by a scheme of the Charity Commissioners. All these charities were for the benefit of the people of Colwall. The charity of Lowbridge Bright, founded by will proved in court in 1818, was set up for the benefit of the people of both Coddington and Colwall. All five charities were merged into a single charity by this order of the Charity Commissioners. A sixth charity was added in 1993; the Allen Charity, administered by the Parish Council at the time. This amalgamation of charities is now known as the Colwall Parish Charity. It is often referred to as the Colwall Parish Charities and in earlier times; "The Coal Charity".

Today, this very local charity, works discreetly with a range of organisations and groups, to find and help those in need in the parish of Colwall with Coddington. The Rector of the Colwall Benefice, which includes Coddington, currently the Revd. Melanie Horton, is Chairman of the board of Trustees.

The charity makes a small number of grants on an annual basis from its income, usually around Christmas time, in the form of Supermarket vouchers. The sums of money involved are small. Unfortunately, over the years the charity's financial resources have altered little and so the value of what we can do is so much less than it once was. Faced with the current cost of living crisis the Trustees had determined to increase the financial resources of the charity by inviting donations. Money raised would be used to increase the value of what we are able to do, both in terms of help and support during the current crisis and, if funds permitted, increasing the charity's capital.

Our appeal has been very successful. We have received generous support from individuals and a number of local organisations which has meant that we have been able to increase the number of people we have been able support this Christmas. For the first time in a long time we will also be able to offer support during the rest of the winter and in the late autumn of this year.

If you would like to make a contribution, it is not too late. Please send your cheque, made payable to Colwall Parish Charities to; The Rector, Colwall Rectory, Walwyn Road, Colwall. WR13 6EG. If you would like to donate by BACS or find out more about the charity and what it does, please contact either The Rector, Melanie Horton, on 01684 540330 or the Charity's Administrator, Clive Rayment on 07891 668124.

We would be pleased to hear from you.

*Newsletter Editor: Andy Ball,*

*email:*

*Colwall Village Society website address: [colwallvillagesociety.org.uk](http://colwallvillagesociety.org.uk)*