

# October 2023 Newsletter

## Forthcoming Event

Colwall Village Society at Colwall Library Community Hub.

Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> November 2023, 10.00am until 12.00pm.

Pop in to see our display about Colwall people and the first world war. There will be a rolling slideshow and a display about the men listed on the Colwall War Memorial. There will also be the opportunity to buy our new booklet '*Colwall and the Railway*' – please see the article below.

## Forthcoming Talk

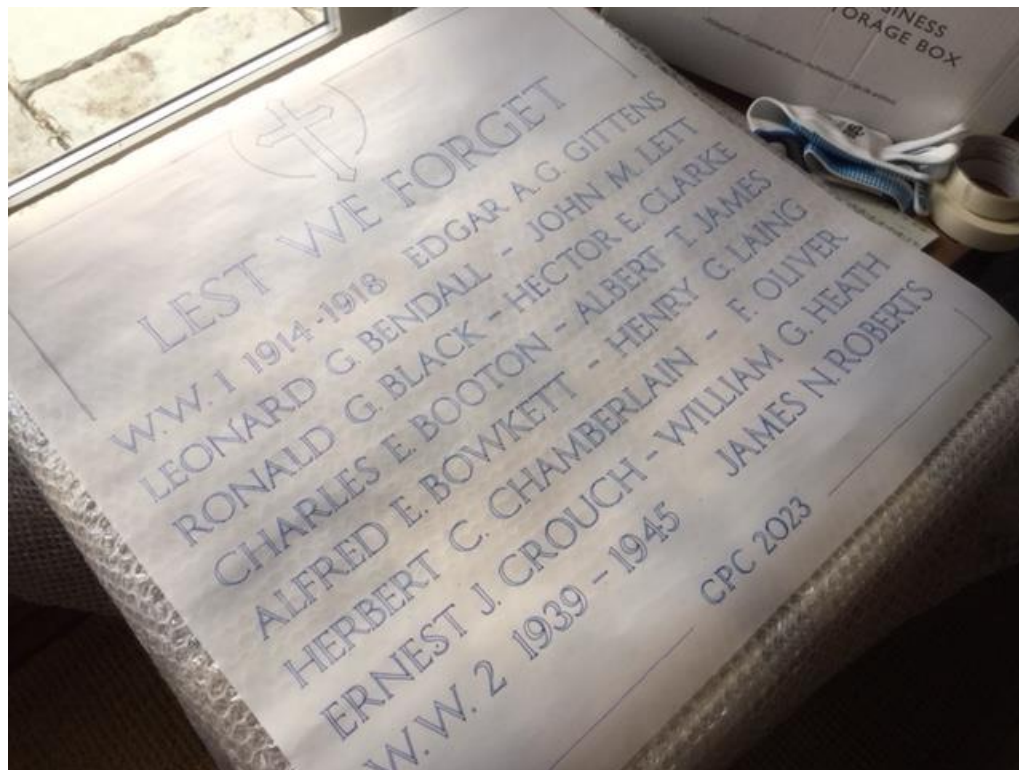
History of Old Court Nurseries by Helen Picton  
at Colwall Village Hall.

Monday 29<sup>th</sup> January 2024.

Doors open 19.00. Talk at 19.30.

## The New War Memorial at the Memorial Garden by Denis Porter

This project came about by a rather indirect route. I was looking for a little 'community involvement' following a conversation with an old friend in Surrey who had been helping his local Church with garden maintenance. I saw an appeal for help with the Churchyard maintenance on a village notice board and I went to the Church on the pre-scribed day to see what was happening.



The event seemed to be well attended and very busy, so I had a walk around the Church including the Memorial Garden. It was a little later when I looked up the war memorial on the website that I became aware that there were 14 names of men from this village or with local connections who had died in the world wars and were not included on the original stone war memorial. (13 names from W.W.1, and one name from W.W.2) These names were listed on a notice in the Church vestry.

Hand-drawn architectural sketch of a classical column capital and base. The capital features a triangular pediment with a "50mm VENT" and "SLATE ROOF" indicated. The column shaft is labeled "HELMHOLZ". To the right, a section view shows a column with a diameter of 240mm and a height of 1200mm, with a 21mm gap. Dimensions for the capital and base are provided. The base is labeled "CAST. IN CONCRETE." and the column is labeled "200mm GND."

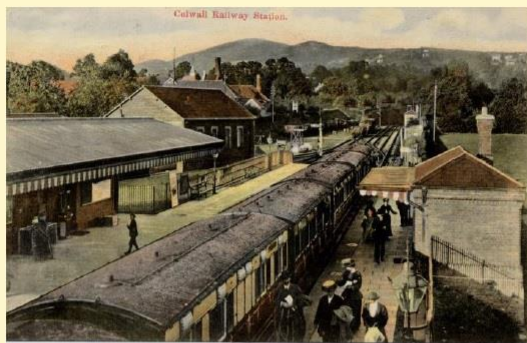


The Parish Council are responsible for the maintenance of the War Memorial and having discussed the idea with Cllr. Rod Lane (Chairman) it was agreed that I would prepare a stone memorial slab to be located in the ground, near the existing memorial.

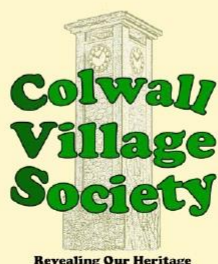
I am very pleased to have been associated with this memorial. Work on the memorial was mainly done outside and spread over several winter and spring months and while some days I might have added a whole name, on other days I might only have produced one or two letters before getting rain soaked, or fingers frozen to the chisel!



## Colwall and the Railway



### Colwall and the Railway



Colwall Village Society has previously produced several books including 'Colwall Folk' and 'Discover Colwall' and we are delighted to say that we have just added another booklet 'Colwall and the Railway' to this set of publications.

The subtitle for the new work is '*A celebration of how the coming of the railway helped shape a Herefordshire village*' and it contains an eclectic collection of railway-related short articles about Colwall and the railway since its arrival in the village in 1861.

This has been very much a community effort and we are indebted to several local people who helped to write the content and pull the publication together.

We must acknowledge the inspiration, gentle guidance and practicality of Gareth Calan Davies (Beyond the Hills Community Station Partnership Lead Manager) for whom this is one of several similar projects, together with funding from Beyond the Hills Community Station Partnership.

We hope that the booklet will be an interesting read for local people, visitors and railway enthusiasts alike and the aim has always been to raise awareness of Colwall's impressive heritage

and to tempt more people to use our cherished railway facilities.

This ties in nicely with some other work, led by Colwall Parish Council, that is quietly going on to improve facilities at Colwall railway station to include the provision of an original Great Western Railway bench to the platform and to provide a new display board which will include local heritage information.

'Colwall and the Railway' costs £5.00 and will initially be available at the discounted price of £4.00 to CVS members.

Copies will be available to buy from Colwall Post Office from the end of November; at forthcoming Colwall Village Society talks at Colwall Village Hall and at our open morning session at the Colwall Library Community Hub on Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> November.



## The Colwall Holy Thorn by Andy Ball

'The Folk-lore of Herefordshire', written by Ella Mary Leather in 1912, is a wonderful source of folk-lore for the county and the book contains an intriguing historical reference to many Holy Thorn trees then present in Herefordshire, including one apparently growing in Colwall.

Holy Thorns are the focus of much myth, legend and religious iconography – perhaps the most famous being the Glastonbury Thorn. By repute the original Glastonbury Thorn can be attributed to Joseph of Arimathea, the saint fabled for bringing Christianity and the Holy Grail to the British Isles shortly after the time of Jesus's crucifixion.

Arriving by boat over the flooded lands that covered the Somerset area at the time Joseph arrived near the current site of Glastonbury Tor. Stepping on land, on or around the time of Christmas Day, he is said to have implanted his wooden staff in the ground. Miraculously the staff rooted, grew, and bloomed to become the Glastonbury Thorn.

The tree is distinguishable from the common form of Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*) since unusually it flowers twice, and not once, annually. The second flowering is technically a “pre-bloom” and occurs in midwinter. The main blooming time is in the spring. Holy Thorns are now recognized botanically as being *Crataegus monogyna* ‘Biflora’ and are likely to have originated as a genetic mutation, or sport, of *Crataegus monogyna*.

The original Glastonbury Thorn was first mentioned in a pamphlet published by Richard Pynson in 1520 called ‘*Lyfe of Joseph of Armathie*’, probably published by Glastonbury Abbey. The unusual flowering time was seen as a mark of divine favour. Following the dissolution of Glastonbury abbey in 1539 and its substantial demolition in the reign of Elizabeth I, the continuing health and flowering of the Holy Thorn tree was seen by Catholics as “*a Testimony to Religion, that it might flourish in persecution.*”

The original Holy Thorn was much propagated by grafting and may well have been the source of the trees that Ella Mary Leather describes as being present in 1912 at “Wormesley, Rowstone, Dorstone, Colwall, Stoke Edith, Kings Thorn and Tyberton”.

In her account she describes how “*It is believed that the Holy Thorn blossoms at exactly twelve o’clock on Twelfth Night, the time so they say, at which Christ was born. The blossoms are thought to open at midnight and drop off about an hour afterwards. A piece of thorn gathered at this hour brings luck, if kept for the rest of the year.*” Ella Mary Leather described how she joined one of the groups who went out annually to view the blossoming spectacle.

She saw it herself at Wormsley in 1908 and it was an event that happened at other locations sometimes to the annoyance of landowners if gathering and occasionally unruly crowds caused damage to their property. At Clehonger, the landowner, incensed by the damage done to his garden, began to cut down the Holy Thorn but he abandoned his efforts when blood flowed from the trunk of the tree...

The practice of going out in mid-winter to watch Holy Thorn bloom continued well into the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and in 1950 the BBC visited Kingsthorpe in Herefordshire, hoping to catch a glimpse of a Christmas legend - the flowering of the Holy thorn tree, on the eve of the twelfth night of Christmas. The resulting short BBC Newsreel item was originally broadcast on 9<sup>th</sup> January 1950 and is still available to view on the BBC online archive at [https://www.bbc.co.uk/archive/christmas\\_holy\\_thorn/z4kmpq3](https://www.bbc.co.uk/archive/christmas_holy_thorn/z4kmpq3)

Research into the location of the Colwall Holy Thorn tree is yet to reveal its location. Hawthorns are tough, long-lived trees that are useful in hedgerows and gardens and they are a boon to wildlife.

It may well be that a Holy Thorn tree still exists locally, quietly blooming at around Christmas time.

Interestingly *Crataegus monogyna* ‘Biflora’ is readily available from nursery growers including from Frank Matthews in Worcestershire (<https://www.frankpmatthews.com/catalogue/ornamental-trees/crataegus/crataegus-mon-biflora/>)

It might be a useful tree to seek out and plant locally to help keep the tradition of a Holy Thorn in Colwall alive, and, of course, there’s always the chance of seeing some lovely, midwinter, white blossom...

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